

29 JAN 1999

Thaipusam

A RECORD TWO MILLION PEOPLE TO CONVERGE AT BATU CAVES

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 29 (Bernama) -- Batu Caves near here is bracing for a record number of two million visitors to converge at the temple this weekend to celebrate Thaipusam -- more than double the 900,000 who came last year.

It was earlier projected that this year's Thaipusam would attract about one million people.

Sri Subramaniaswamy Temple committee chairman R.Nadarajah said today the figure was revised based on the latest feedback from the police.

He said it was also due to the fact that this year's Thaipusam falls on Sunday and so Monday is a holiday in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and other states and Federal Territory Day also falls on Feb 1, a public holiday in KL.

"Hence this year, we are not only expecting more devotees but also local and foreign tourists in view of the long weekend," he told Bernama.

Nadarajah said the temple committee was finalising preparations and stepping up security in collaboration with the police in view of the expected huge turnout.

He said the number of tourists was expected to increase to 20,000 this year.

He also said the temple committee would submit a memorandum to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urging the government to declare Thaipusam a public holiday for the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

The memorandum would be submitted through MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu on Sunday, he said.

Nadarajah noted that the committee had been requesting the government to declare Thaipusam a public holiday in Kuala Lumpur for more than a decade.

"We will not give up. We hope next year, Thaipusam will be a public holiday in Kuala Lumpur," he added.

Meanwhile Batu Caves was a hive of activity with large numbers of people moving in and out of the temple grounds.

Food and souvenir stalls are beginning to line up the road leading to the temple.

Temple officials and volunteers were also busy preparing to provide free meals to the visitors.

--BERNAMA

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