

07/11/1999

## A walk on the patriotic side

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Patriotism was clearly in the air as more than two million people participated in the Walk for the Nation which took place simultaneously at 193 places nationwide today.

Adults, teenagers, children and mothers carrying their babies took part in the walk at about 8am to support Malaysia's bid to host the 15th Asian Games in 2006.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who led more than 10,000 people in the walk at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, said the strong support from the people would give Malaysia a better chance of hosting the Asian Games.

The walk, the biggest in the country so far, was recorded in the Malaysia Book of Records.

"Hopefully, with the show of strong support and enthusiasm from the people, the Olympic Council of Asia will consider Malaysia's offer to host the games," he told reporters after the 2.6km walk around the lake.

He said 2,001,660 people or 10 per cent of Malaysia's population had registered for the walk nationwide.

"I am proud of the good response from the public which shows their commitment in supporting the Government's efforts in its bid to host the games."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's chance of hosting the games was high as it was the only Asean country offering to be the host after Indonesia's withdrawal.

Other countries making a bid to host the Asian Games are Qatar, India, Syria, Uzbekistan and Hong Kong.

Earlier, the Prime Minister participated in a 20-minute mass aerobics session organised by Kuala Lumpur Senamrobik.

Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim who led walkers at Taman Sena Indah in Kangar said the response to the event reflected the Malaysia Boleh spirit.

Participants in Kuala Terengganu walked through the scenic Batu Buruk beach and the town centre, led by a 20-member brass band from the 512 Territorial Army camp in Padang Midin.

In Kota Baru, Kelantan, the flag-off locations included Padang Perdana, where some 50,000 people went on the 3km walk.

The walk was flagged off by Kota Baru MP Ilani Datuk Isahak.

Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib flagged off about 45,000 walkers before joining them in the walk around the Perak Stadium.

Joining him were several artistes who are participating in the three-day 14th Malaysian Film Festival which started in Ipoh yesterday.

The participants, led by a band from Sekolah Kebangsaan Jelapang, walked 2.5 km.

Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad who launched the State-level event at Stadium Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Paroi, Seremban, said the country was capable of staging international-level sports meets following the success of the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur last year, an event which was made possible by the support of the rakyat.

Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon flagged off around 5,000 participants at the Esplanade on the island early this morning while Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shariff Omar flagged off the leg from Mengkuang Dam in Seberang Perai for about 39,000 walkers.