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Tenom residents gear up for PM's visit

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Tenom, a rural town some 200km from here, is buzzing with activity as it prepares for the visit of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali on Saturday.

More than 20,000 people from Tenom and its neighbouring districts will gather at the field in Tenom to give the Prime Minister and his wife, who are expected to arrive at about 2pm, a colourful traditional welcome.

All hotels there had been fully booked for more than a week, forcing late comers to stay in Keningau about an hour's drive from Tenom.

The local authorities there are also preparing for a massive traffic jam, which rarely happens in Tenom.

The visit to Tenom is part of Dr Mahathir's two-day official visit to Sabah.

First on the Prime Minister's itinerary on Saturday is the opening of the Sabah Bumiputera Economic Congress 2001 at Pacific Sutera Hotel here.

He would then fly to Tenom, where he will perform a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Tenom-Beaufort highway, followed by a "Dinner With the People" and a meeting with Keningau and Tenom Umno division members.

On Sunday, Dr Mahathir will depart for Lagud Sebrang, about 15km from Tenom, to open the Lagud Sebrang Agriculture Park and he will later have lunch with the local people at Hotel Perkasa.

At noon, he will return here to lay the foundation stone for the new Federal Complex at Likas Bay.

Dr Mahathir will end his visit with a Press conference at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport.

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