

25 AUG 2002

Walk

15,000 TO WALK THEIR WAY INTO MALAYSIA BOOK OF RECORDS

MELAKA, Aug 25 (Bernama) -- A total of 15,000 people are pooling their efforts to walk non-stop for 560km in 118 hours, a feat which will earn them a place in the Malaysia Book of Records.

The first group of about 1,000 participants was flagged off by Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam in front of the Independence Declaration Memorial in Bandar Hilir here at 1am today.

Along the route in Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor, groups of about 200 people each will continue the challenge until the journey ends in the federal administrative capital of Putrajaya.

The non-stop independence group walking event is organised by the National Civics Bureau in the Prime Minister's Department.

It is themed "On the Ruins of Melaka Fort We Built Putrajaya", after a poem of the same title written by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The event's media officer, Saiful Bahar Mohd Arshad, said the final batch of walkers was expected to reach Dataran Putra in Putrajaya at 10pm on Aug 29.

At the flag-off, Malaysia Book of Records assistant general manager Irene Liong witnessed the signing of a certificate to endorse the record bid.

Saiful Bahar said the participants would be greeted by Dr Mahathir on arrival at Dataran Putra.

The independence walk had been held in various states since Aug 12 before the participants gathered here last night to embark on the walk from Melaka to Putrajaya.

In his speech, Mohd Ali said the younger generation should learn from the country's history so that mistakes of the past would not be repeated.

"Because of greed, the craze for power and misunderstandings...the strong Malay empire that dominated trade in the Southeast Asian region with 84 spoken languages fell into the hands of the Portuguese who had only several small ships," he said.

Present at the ceremony was Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman, who is chairman of the Independence Journey 2002 Main Committee.

-- BERNAMA

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