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Rousing welcome awaits Abdullah in Penang

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PENANG: Penangites will receive incoming Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with happiness and pride when he makes his inaugural visit as the country's premier to his home state on Saturday.

Abdullah will arrive at the Bayan Lepas International Airport at 3pm, where 30,000 people are expected to greet him, said Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Abdullah will present a short speech at the airport before leaving for Kepala Batas, where a motorcade

of 2,000 bikers will lead him to the Penang Bridge via Jalan Tun Dr Awang.

From there, he will visit his mother to seek her blessings, and then attend prayers and break fast at the mosque near his house.

"We are proud and happy to receive Abdullah, who is making his first stop after taking over from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. We want to congratulate him and I will do that on behalf of Penangites at the airport," Koh said.

"This will be a brief yet joyous ceremony for him from us ... it will be a highly significant ceremony for his homecoming."

Asked about security measures for the event, Koh said there should be no problems as the police and army will be on the alert.

"I'm sure there will be public order. Abdullah has requested for a brief ceremony to avoid burdening anyone."

Bernamea reports that several roads, including the Penang Bridge and the North-South Highway, will be closed in stages to provide a smooth journey for Abdullah's convoy.

The convoy will pass through Jalan Tun Dr Awang, the Bertam toll plaza, Jalan Ahmad Badawi and Jalan Perak.