

01 JUN 2003

Gawai-Celebration

SCHOOL AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS BRING ADDED GAWAI CHEER

KUCHING, June 1 (Bernama) -- The school holidays, coupled with a three-day public holiday in Sarawak beginning today for the Gawai Dayak celebration has brought added cheer to the state.

Tuesday will also be a state holiday as a replacement for the first day of the Gawai today.

The celebration this year is also expected to be extra special with the national-level Gawai open house at Dataran Sibul, Sibul starting 7.30pm June 14.

Timbalan Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin is expected to grace the open house accompanied by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Gawai Dayak celebration, like the Pesta Kaamatan in Sabah, is an occasion where people from the various Sarawak Bumiputera communities give thanks for a bountiful harvest and hope for a better one next year.

This year's event is also more joyous especially for federal government civil servant who are expected to receive their half-month bonus payment today.

This windfall has resulted in many opting to spend their holidays in their provinces, at local holiday resorts or even in the peninsula or Sabah, as evident in Kuching city which seems pretty quiet today.

Meanwhile, some 5,000 city folks thronged the Gawai open house held at the Dewan Suarah here today.

Among the VIPs present were Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin Abang Barieng, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and state cabinet ministers.

The Gawai Dayak, celebrated on June 1 and 2 every year by the Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu communities, began last night with dinners attended by people from various races.

-- BERNAMA

RDY EMK