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Chinatown marks Merdeka

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ON Aug 30, Petaling Street will come alive with activities and entertainment in a grand celebration to mark Merdeka Day and the smooth progress of beautification work in the Chinatown area.

The Merdeka Eve celebration, which includes a visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at 11am, is jointly organised by the Kuala Lumpur Hawkers and Petty Traders Association, Garment Traders' Association and Nan Ann Chinese Guilds' Association.

Themed Perhimpunan Patriotik Raksasa Masyarakat Malaysia, the mammoth gathering is scheduled to start at 8am while activities will be held throughout the day.

Deputy Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Fu Ah Kiow, who visited Petaling Street on Monday, encouraged the traders to fly the Jalur Gemilang and urged them to take part in the gathering.

He also distributed the Jalur Gemilang to hawkers, petty traders, shoppers and a few foreigners who were in the area at the time.

Fu later viewed the progress of the Petaling Street beautification project, which is being carried out by Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

To date, Phases One and Two of the project have been completed while work is ongoing on Phase Three, which is expected to be completed before the end of the month.

Phase Four will begin soon after and is expected to be completed by October.

"The traders are encouraged to take part in the Merdeka gathering to show their appreciation of the beautification efforts on Petaling Street.

"The hawkers are happy that business has improved with more shoppers, especially foreigners, thronging the area since the project started. This is a good sign and when work is completed, business will be further boosted," he said.

He reminded the traders to maintain a cleanliness culture and said cleaning the area once a day would not be enough as there were too many people shopping there.

"I will remind City Hall to meet hawkers and petty traders on this. The pavements should be in tip-top condition and rubbish discarded properly.

"This is to present a good image to tourists - that Malaysia is a clean country. The hawkers and petty traders should not just depend on City Hall but must work together to keep the place clean," he said.

KL Hawkers and Petty Traders Association adviser Datuk Tan Tiong Hong said the gathering on Merdeka Eve was to remind the younger generation not to forget the ordinary traders who had made the country great by contributing to its economic growth.

College students around Petaling Street have also been urged to compose poems on the theme of integrity, trustworthiness and loyalty to the King and country. Three poems will be selected and the students given the opportunity to recite them to Dr Mahathir during lunch on the day.

Also present during the visit were MCA Bukit Bintang chairman Datuk Dr Lee Chong Meng and Perhimpunan Patriotik Raksasa Masyarakat Malaysia organising chairman Datuk Ang Say Tee.