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Ministry appeals for use of site for food fiesta closing ceremony

JITRA, Fri. - The Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry is appealing to the Kedah Government and police to reconsider its application to use the area near the Pekan Rabu bazaar in Alor Star as the venue for the closing ceremony of the Fruits and Food Fiesta celebration next month.

Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said it was a shame if the venue could not be used for the ceremony as millions of ringgit had been spent renovating and sprucing up the place, which is also known as Che Det Mall.

"This is a golden opportunity for Che Det Mall to host a major event organised by the Federal Government.

"The wide publicity received by the mall will make it more popular," he said at a Press conference after checking the preparations for the closing ceremony of Citrawarna, or Colours of Malaysia, at the Darul Aman Park here.

The traditional Malay bazaar that has become a landmark in the State capital is closely associated with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who traded there during the Japanese Occupation. The bazaar and its surrounding areas were redeveloped in 2001 at a cost of RM13 million.

The co-operative that runs Pekan Rabu, Koperasi Pekan Rabu Alor Star Bhd, then proposed to rename the complex Che Det Mall and the pedestrian walkway beside the complex as Che Det Walk, in Dr Mahathir's honour.

Che Det is Dr Mahathir's pet name, but the Prime Minister expressed his reservations at the name change.

Abdul Kadir said the application to use the venue was rejected because it would cause traffic problems in the area.

"I appeal to the State Government to reconsider. We have bigger traffic problems in Kuala Lumpur, but major roads there have been closed without causing any undue difficulties."

The Fruits and Food Fiesta is a month-long celebration, which is in its third year.

Various promotions will be held to encourage Malaysians and foreign tourists to sample the various food and fruits of the country.

"During the period, we will encourage everyone to eat out, whether at food courts or hotels," said Abdul Kadir. He urged municipal and town councils nationwide to identify suitable sites that could be turned into food courts during the month.

The event will be launched in Kota Kinabalu on July 4. The closing ceremony is scheduled for July 26.