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Thousands flock to Putrajaya to celebrate neighbourly spirit

PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - Excitement and fun were the order of the day when droves of people headed for the nation's administrative centre for the Putrajaya Carnival 2003 today.

The weekend carnival saw thousands of people heading out to Precinct 8 despite the heavy rain, to celebrate the spirit of neighbourliness and to get to know one another.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi launched the event at 4pm. With the theme Pemimpin Bersama Rakyat or Leaders with the People, the event was also an opportunity for Malaysia's leaders to mingle with their countrymen.

As the evening wore on, the rain let up, which allowed merrymakers like Khairunnisa Mohd Yussof to truly begin enjoying themselves.

"It is a really cool carnival. I could never attend the carnival held at Bukit Jalil as it was too far, so I am happy to be attending one now," said the bubbly 19-year-old shampoo girl. She added that coming to her first carnival was a dream come true.

Siblings Nur Athirah Nadiah Mohamad, 10, and Nazim Fahmi, eight, both found the carnival had "wonderful" and "amazing" attractions.

Nur Athirah said she enjoyed watching the entertainers performing while Nazim liked to observe the crocodiles.

"I also like reading, so I bought a book at an exhibition at one of the tents," said the elder one shyly, struggling to keep her balloons from flying away.

Customer service executive Kesavan Pillai, 25, said: "It is a nice atmosphere. You can see Malaysians of every race here and that is really great."

The event was very much like TV3's Sure Heboh carnival, he said. Incidentally, TV3 is the event manager.

Visitors were treated to energetic performances by artistes such as Datuk Shake, Nurul and Ajai, and Izlyn.

Many pedlars took the opportunity to sell their wares.

Apart from the individual traders, there were about 100 tents with 200 participating traders.

TV3, TMNet, the Election Commission, A' Famosa Resort and the Putrajaya Corporation also participated.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Senator Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the event was also held to provide a place for family outings.

"If there is good response, we will make it an annual event," he said.

Carnival secretariat Zahid Johan Lani said 15 tents featured TV3 programmes, among which were Nona, Jejak Rasul and Misteri Nusantara.

He said performances by artistes were on at 10.30am, 4pm and 8.30pm and would last about two hours. Tent operators were happy with the response from visitors.

Mohammad Hassan Maruan of Putrajaya Corporation's corporate services department said he was optimistic that the company's booth selling souvenirs like T-shirts, pewter items and stationery, would be popular.

A' Famosa Sales and Marketing Sdn Bhd marketing executive Yip Wei Tak said his company brought a young elephant, "Amoi", which cheekily hosed visitors down with water to liven up the atmosphere.

"Tata", an eight-year-old female orang utan, was also popular with the

visitors.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will close the carnival at 8.30pm tomorrow.