

PM disappoints by not naming new Penang BN chief

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Thousands turned up to welcome the 'Dragon Year' with Prime Minister Najib Razak at the Penang BN open house today, while the media fraternity was pregnant with expectations that he would name the new state BN chief after much speculation.

However, Najib, who was accompanied by his wife, Rosmah Mansor to the event held at Tanjung Marina, did not make any such announcement but instead relayed the usual BN public messages of peace, security, economic growth and unity, while telling the rakyat that with the sense of belonging and togetherness, Malaysia can achieve its goals.

teng chang yeow gerakan secretary generalGerakan secretary-general Teng Chang Yeow (left), who was tipped to be the new state BN chief, declined to comment on the matter beyond saying he has yet to meet Najib over the appointment.

It seems unlikely that Najib would make the declaration without meeting Teng, although Malaysiakini had reported last November that the BN national chief had already agreed to his appointment.

Meanwhile, Najib arrived at the venue at about 5pm, accompanied by state Umno chief Zainal Abidin Osman, Teluk Bahang assemblyman Hilmi Yahya, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Nor Mohamad Yaacop, Gerakan chief Koh Tsu Koon and state party chief Dr Teng Hock Nan.

Najib, who wore a deep red batik shirt, was greeted by Chinese drummers and a 20-ft water dragon dance, which accompanied him right to his table.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng arrived with his wife, Betty Chew, and his entourage of assemblymen and state executive councillors about 20 minutes before Najib's arrival.

The group caught the attention of the crowd when the assemblymen and state exco members merely stood around Lim and his wife who were seated at the main table.

When asked why they were all standing instead of being seated, Komtar assembly rep Ng Wei Aik tried to explain that the tables were not specifically reserved for them.

"It is the same at every BN function. We are used to it already. We will stand," he said.

But Bukit Bendera MCA division vice-chief Tan Khai Beng who witnessed the scene remarked: "They are thick-skinned to attend BN's function. They have no shame."

PM promotes 'moderation'

Later, Najib arrived at the main table and shook hands with Lim, but did not sit next to him.

There was a little commotion before the national anthem was sung as Koh was seen trying to delay it as Rosmah was yet to arrive at the table.

She was still on her way through the crowd as many, especially women and children, reached out to shake her hands.

In his speech, Najib said he was happy to see all the delightful faces at every open house event he had attended since the morning.

"They would not look so happy if we were not doing well economically, if our investments are poor, or if our export markets are getting smaller," he said.

Although the water dragon may signify better business prospects, but Malaysia did well globally due to "proper, good and systematic" planning, he added.

He then promoted the concept of "moderation" as he did recently in a global forum for moderates, saying it was a Confucius concept, and urging Malaysians to uphold it for the sake of the unity.

He assured that all the handouts given by the government lately were "sincere and had no hidden intentions".

"It is a sincere gift from our hearts. You can take it and if you do not want to take it, it is also okay... all we want to do is help the rakyat," he said.

Koh said the number of people who attended was about 20,000 - 10,000 under the tent and another 10,000 patronising the various food stalls outside.

But at the end of the event, when Najib was on his way out, only about 1,000 were around to bade him goodbye.

A tourist from Europe who declined to be name remarked: "It is a Chinese New Year event, but we see mostly Malay-Indian crowd."

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