

## **Can't religious festivals be spared from politicking?**

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The Malaysian Insider featured a photo of the Prime Minister of Malaysia and his wife being garlanded with a gigantic floral garland at Batu Caves on Thaipusam.

The very size of the garland alone is not the only thing that raises many questions.

Why are the temple authorities allowing politics to take centre stage at the religious festival venue?

Are we so desperate that we no more can differentiate the very essence and meaning of the sacred religious observance on Thaipusam from ugly political canvassing?

In the first place why have such a huge monstrous garland of fresh flowers to embrace only the PM and his wife?

Should not the devotees and the deities be the centre of reverence and piety and recognition?

Should not the values and meaning of Thaipusam be the centre of celebrations and the limelight?

Surely such a huge garland would have cost much in terms of money and man hours.

Why could not these be spent for the worship and sacrifice that is the highlight of the celebration?

In the first place, did the PM or his spouse not have that sense of humility and sensitivity to advise the erring, ego-fanning temple keepers against this ugly, opulent show of hero-worshipping with such a gigantic garland?

And why is the Prime Minister speaking about 'nambikei' - about "you trust me and I will trust you" at a place and moment where men and women gather from far and near to pay penance and make offerings to their respective deities?

And why make a public relations-cum-marketing stance by announcing the allocation of millions of ringgit for a new centre at Batu Caves on Thaipusam?

If the intention to support a noble idea is untainted, surely it could be announced at any other platform on any other day and would it not have made a positive difference?

All those who continue to abet, condone and support the desecration of such significant religious events like Thaipusam with tainted politicking or glamour-politicking should feel ashamed. Please do not venture to justify the act.

Wonder what the Indian politicians have to say. Wonder what the Hindu religious leaders have to say.

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