

**Significant Gawai And Kaamatan Visit Awaits Najib
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By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 27 (Bernama) -- The Kaamatan and Gawai Dayak celebrations will have new significance when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak makes important visits to the interior of Sabah and Sarawak early next month to witness the celebrations.

As pointed out by Deputy Minister for Information, Communications and Culture Datuk Joseph Salang, it is a very rare occasion for the Prime Minister to visit two longhouses in the interior areas of the Iban heartland in a single day, especially when the celebration is held on the third day of the Gawai Dayak.

"Many Ibans are excited about coming and shaking hands with the Prime Minister. People feel grateful that the national leader will spend some time to visit them during Gawai. It is rare opportunity for this ordinary longhouse folks to meet him," he said.

Najib is scheduled to make a one-day "Gawai Dayak" visit to the Iban heartland of Betong, Pakan and Julau districts in Sarawak on June 3 to witness the annual harvest festival of the Dayak community.

The Prime Minister and wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor will be the "Tuai Pengabang" or chief visitors when he visits Betong, before proceeding to the 34-door Rumah George Chungut, Nanga Nansang, in Pakan near Sarikei for the celebration.

Later, he is expected to attend a similar celebration at Rumah Jana anak Saweng at Matop, Julau.

The celebration in Betong is organised by PBB, while Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) is organising the gathering at Rumah George Chungut, which is also the longhouse of SPDP president Tan Sri William Mawan Ikom.

The other gathering at Rumah Jana at Matop, Julau, which is about a 30-minute drive from Sibu airport is organised by Parti Rakyat Sarawak.

After the "Gawai Dayak" visit to Sarawak, Najib is scheduled to visit Sabah, travelling to Tambunan and Keningau, the heartland of the Kadazandusun and Murut (KDM) communities on June 9 and 10.

Pairin is the paramount leader or Huguan Siou of the Kadazandusuns in Sabah and currently serving as deputy chief minister of Sabah.

Pairin, who is also Keningau MP, said Najib will travel to Keningau on June 9 to attend the national-level Kaaamatan celebration before proceeding to officiate the ground-breaking ceremony of the KDM College in Tambunan the next day.

Tadau Kaamatan is a harvest festival celebrated in the state of Sabah. The festival marks the end of the harvesting season and the beginning of a new season. It is very much associated with KDM culture and is always close to the hearts of the people, especially in terms of rapport, unity and harmony.

"We are extremely proud that Keningau, which is located in the interior of the state has

been selected as the host for the national-level Pesta Kaamatan this year. It's really an honour for the people in the interior," Pairin said in an SMS to Bernama.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili, meanwhile, told Bernama that several programmes were being finalised for Najib's visit to the interior of Sabah, including a plan for him to visit Rumah Besar OKK Sodomon in Bingkor, Keningau that once hosted his father the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

The Rumah Besar, the home of OKK Sedomon Gunsanad, a well known interior native leader, hosted Razak in 1962 when he came to Keningau to explain the proposal to create a new nation called Malaysia to the native chiefs and community leaders in areas of Keningau, Tambunan, Pensiangan, Nabawan, Sook, Ranau and Tenom.

Razak went on to become Malaysia's second prime minister (1970-1976).

Tun Razak also made several pledges at the Rumah Besar in 1962 in order to convince the skeptical interior leaders of the Malaysia idea.

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