

PM joins Kaamatan fest
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KENINGAU: The simple act by the Prime Minister cutting seven padi stalks amid the rhythmic beating of gongs had a crowd of more than 15,000 in this interior Sabah town in cheers.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's harvesting of the padi was to mark the launch of the national-level Kaamatan festivities.

The enthusiastic response from the audience, comprising largely ethnic Kadazandusuns and Muruts from this district as well as nearby Tambunan and Tenom, was testimony to the fact that it was first time the event was held in their heartland.

Joining him in cutting the padi on a special stage at the Keningau sports complex were Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman, Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan – the Kadazandusun Huguang Siou or paramount leader – and Information, Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim.

Earlier, upon his arrival at the sports complex, Najib accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor were welcomed by the beating of gongs and *kompang* with members of various communities dressed in their traditional costumes.

They were then entertained to a variety of performances including dances of Sabah's diverse ethnic communities such as the *sumazau* of the Kadazandusuns, *monggingol* of the Rungus and *magunatip* of the Murut.

The crowd were also entertained to performances by local artistes including Marsha, Jimmy Palikat and Salmah Johari.

The Prime Minister said the Kaamatan festivities could be likened to a thread being woven into a tapestry showcasing the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity.

He said harmony was key in ensuring progress while noting that Sabah's rapid development was due to the close relations between the state and federal governments.

"The Barisan Nasional government will do its best to ensure all Malaysians continue to have bountiful blessings and this can only be done if there is harmony between the people and the leaders," Najib said.

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