

Najib gets warm welcome in JB
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HUNDREDS of state and Barisan Nasional (BN) flags, and banners featuring the face of the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak adorned the way leading towards the venues of his visit to Johor Baru recently.

Najib had come to Johor for the state-level Chinese New Year celebrations along with the state and community leaders.

Despite a light drizzle, thousands of Johoreans still managed to follow the lead of the flags to grab the chance of meeting the country's top leader and greet him at the CNY celebrations the at Econsave supermarket in Senai.

The traffic congestion started a few kilometres from the venue. Cars were parked all along the side of the road. There was a festive air as the people were clearly excited that the PM was visiting their neighbourhood.

Although I did not go into the supermarket where the event took place, colleagues who were there said that not only the locals, but the foreign workers, were also excited by the visit and wanted to be a part of the event; such is the draw that the prime minister has on the common people.

After getting past the jam created both by cars and human, my colleague Jassmine Shadiqe and I made our way to Bandar Putra in Kulai Jaya to wait for the prime minister and his entourage, who were scheduled to pick some of the first lucky people in Johor Baru to be chosen to buy a house under the 1Malaysia People's Housing Scheme (PR1MA) scheme.

Thousands of people filled the hall as they waited eagerly for Najib to arrive in the hope that their names would be among the lucky 402 picked that day.

Lion and dragon dances greeted the PM, his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

There were red and blue lions. It was the first time I had seen a blue lion. I was told that blue lions were usually used during BN functions.

Many people jostled to try to get close to the PM as they gave him a warm welcome. Some were heard grumbling with disappointment when they were stopped by the bodyguards.

His popularity became even more evident with the loud cheering that accompanied the screening of a CNY advertisement featuring the PM.

It was my first time covering the prime minister's event and having had a firsthand experience of how people respond to it, I will be sure to arrive early the next time and be prepared to wriggle my way through the eager crowd to reach a strategic spot to report the news.

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