

Najib Joins Thaipusam Celebrations In Batu Caves

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak witnessed the Thaipusam celebrations by 1.6 million Hindus and foreign tourists at Batu Caves here today.

The Prime Minister and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor arrived at Batu Caves compound at 10.30 am and were received by MIC leaders, including its president Datuk Seri G.Palanivel, local community leaders and Hindu religious heads.

Seen among the sea of Hindus were kavadi carriers, bare-footed devotees and the shaving of heads in conjunction with the festival, which is an official event in the national tourism calendar.

Devotees thronged the Sri Subramaniyar Swamy temple there to fulfill their vows and to seek penance for their sins in conjunction with the festival.

Members of the public and foreign tourists also thronged the venue to join in the festivities. Thaipusam is a festival celebrated by Hindus in the world during the month of 'Thai' in the Tamil calendar to celebrate the birth of Lord Murugan.

In IPOH, more than 10,000 Hindu devotees including foreign tourists flooded Arul Subramaniar temple at Gunung Cheroh here since yesterday evening to celebrate the festival.

The occasion was filled with various religious activities including the colourful procession of Lord Murugan from Sri Maha Mariamman temple in Sungai Pari.

Perak deputy police chief Datuk A. Paramasivam was among those present at the temple.

In GEORGE TOWN, more than 100,000 Hindu devotees thronged temples along Jalan Kebun Bunga and Jalan Air Terjun today.

The festival procession also attracted foreign visitors and photographers out to capture Hindus heading to Sri Arulmigu Balathandayuthabani temple located on top of a hill in Jalan Kebun Bunga by climbing 512 steps.

By 12.30 pm, the place was flooded with Hindu devotees carrying kavadis or milk pots and the number of visitors is expected to soar until late tonight.

P. Munusamy, 42, of Taiping, Perak said this year he carried a kavadi decorated with pheasant feathers to pray for the safety and prosperity of the country.

"This year, I feel my vow is really special. I usually make vows for myself and family. This time, I am asking for peace in the country. No more tragic incidents like MH370, MH17 and

floods. I pray for all the people to be healthy and stay united," he said when met while putting on the kavadi at Rope Walk here.

Meanwhile, Japanese tourist Takemura Aoto, 34, was amazed with the celebration and the value of strength demonstrated by Hindu devotees in fulfilling their vows.

"Such a beautiful pain...It was exciting to be part of the celebration. The feeling is really good," he said, adding that he also prayed at a temple in Jalan Air Terjun here.

The festival also gave opportunities for petty traders who have been camping since Sunday for the three-day religious occasion.

Zaiton Karim, 36, and Azhar Yob, 40 said they did not mind working till late night selling peanuts and drinks at Jalan Air Terjun here.

She said they earned about RM800 a day and have been trading during the festival here the last six years.

"We are open from 9 am to 12am. The area is very strategic and our stall is easily accessible to the people," said Zaiton, who came from Pendang, Kedah.

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