

# Semadang Tagang Festival 2017 a spectacular success

By Robert Kenneth Anak Henry

**KUCHING:** The third edition of Semadang Tagang Festival 2017 in Kampung Semadang, Padawan, held at the end of July was a big success for two reasons.

First, the festival has helped to create awareness among the public on the importance of having a clean river with the implementation of the Tagang System at the Semadang river since 2007.

Second, the festival has helped to promote the local culture to the outside world and enrich the locals in many ways.

Datuk Dr Jerip Susil, Sarawak's Assistant Transportation Minister, who officiated the festival was obviously delighted with the success of the third edition of the festival held from 28-30 July.

The Mambong assemblyman was elated to see the growing number of people attending the event and is confident of a bigger turnout next year.

The three-day festival started with music and dance on the first day and continued with the fishing competition the next morning along the Semadang River, cooking competition, children's colouring competition and zumba dance in the afternoon and the Miss Tagang beauty pageant in the evening.

The activities continued on

Sunday with the bamboo rafting and kayak race.

Kampung Semadang headman Samson Mangang pointed out the festival had benefited the villagers who took part in the food bazaar, adding that there were 35 stalls selling food, beverages, handicraft and jungle produce.

"Four homestays in the village were fully occupied during the three-day festival," he said adding that the stall operators too made good income as foods and drinks were sold out.

Telvis Joe Nakan, 50, one of the stall operator who sold satay and other barbecue items, and drinks, said he made good money during the three-day festival.

In the fishing competition, Albert Royseon from Bau who caught three Baung won the first prize and took home RM500 in cash while local Groka Anak Moos who caught two Baung (catfish) and one Lampam (carp) won the second prize of RM300 cash and a trophy.

Third was Yanto Johog who caught a Tegadak and a Baung, and walked away with RM200 in cash and a trophy.

A Bidayuh lass from Kampung Simpok, Padawan, Jacqueline Ayong was crowned Miss Tagang Semadang 2017 after she defeated 11 other contestants to win

RM1,000 cash, and a RM5,000 scholarship from UCSI University, trophy and sash.

The undergraduate from Kota Kinabalu was also voted Miss Tagang Popular and walked away with RM500 cash, trophy and sash.

First runner-up and second runner-up went to Viviana Lin Winston and Felicia Michelle Juran respectively.

In the kayak race, Unimas One and Unimas Two teams won the first and second place while third placing was won by Dasanrama Fire.

Meanwhile, the bamboo rafting competition was won by Kampung Pain/Bojong team and the cooking competition was won by Doris Mapus.

Foreign visitors too gave the thumbs up to the Semadang Tagang Festival 2017 saying it was a great and meaningful event.

Khun Swe Phyoo, 21, from Yangon, Myanmar found that the event provided the festival-goers a new experience especially looking at the many activities such as fishing competition, kayak race, bamboo rafting, beauty contest, music and dance.

"Lots of home-stays around the villages are drawing the visitors' attention. They are easily accessible and recommended for culture

and nature explorers," he added.

Meanwhile, Leander Michandawe, 22, of Pontianak, Indonesia found the festival amazing.

"I really loved so much about it especially the various competitions like fishing, cooking, dart, kayak, bamboo rafting and also the beauty contest," he said.

Leander also observed that the surrounding communities were very enthusiastic in participating in the competitions.

"The various food sold at the festival is also very interesting especially the traditional food such as the lemang and I hope this kind of event will be done again in the future," Leander said.

Robinson Ken, 22, from Penampang, Sabah described the festival as a spectacular show of sustainability of nature and tourism working hand in hand that benefited both the organiser and participants.

"It also goes to show how tourism helps local communities grow their entrepreneurship skills and elevate their economic position," said Robin adding that the three-day festival enabled tertiary institutions to play a part in helping the local community as well.

For Wong Ivon, 20, of Cheras, Kuala Lumpur it was a whole new experience for her.

"As I was born and raised in KL which is a busy city, there are limited opportunities for me to immerse in nature and learn about the local ethnic traditions. Staying overnight in the village provided me the chance to experience their daily life there," she said.

Kun, Leander, Robinson and Wong were among the 38 UCSI University students who came to the festival and participated as volunteers and participants of various competitions held during the three-day festival.

This writer, who was also festival director, said the festival would certainly continue next year.

"It is everything I dreamed off. It is a festival that we can call our own and which Kampung Semadang folks are proud about because we created and developed the event to what it is today."

This year's event witnessed greater participation from the locals and the surrounding communities as well as foreign tourists including from Germany, Mauritius, China, South Korea, Pakistan and Indonesia who stayed overnight at homestay facilities in the village.

For next year, early promotion would be launched to attract bigger participation for the bamboo rafting and kayak race. - Bernama