



India's best: Visitors to the festival checking out the various products on sale.



Interesting: Lim having a look at wares being sold at one of the booths at the exhibition hall; (below) a performance by the Era Dancers.

A shopping event like no other

Thousands visit five-day festival for shopping and cultural shows

THOUSANDS of people thronged the recent five-day Penang International Indian Shopping Festival 2009, which showcased a spectacular variety of goods ranging from fabrics to delicacies, as well as a plethora of colourful cultural performances.

Organised by the Penang Hindu Endowment Board and Agenda Suria Communications, the event held at the Penang Times Square from Wednesday till Sunday was billed as the first of its kind in the northern region.

It featured over 60 exhibitors, both local and foreign, under one roof. There were over 30 exhibitors from India and Pakistan, with traders from Kashmir, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Gujarat and Kerala showcasing the best products of their respective regions.

"We have literally brought all of India to Malaysia. A consumer trade fair like this is certainly the right platform to strengthen our business relations with India, and we hope it would help lure more potential investors to Penang," said Agenda Suria chief executive officer Jaggarao Simancha.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng felt the tremendous response towards the festival augurs well for the state, and expressed

his hope that future editions would be a main event on the tourism calendar.

"Apart from business, this festival can also attract more tourists as it showcases the full diversity of Indian culture. It also reaffirms Penang's status as the region's preferred shopping destination," he said in his speech.

Lim and other dignitaries later took part in the lighting of the *kutuvillaku* (traditional oil lamp) and garlanding ceremony. There were also dance performances by Era and D'Universal.

Due to the festival's overwhelming success, board chairman A. Thanasekharan said that the organisers were already looking forward to next year's edition, which he hopes will have a minimum of 100 booths.

"It is definitely something different, with entertainment, shopping and cultural showcases all under one roof," he added.

On another matter, he said the hilltop Murugan temple near the Botanical Gardens was expected to be ready by 2011.

In addition to that, the board has also applied for planning permission for a multi-purpose air-conditioned hall with a capacity for 2,000 people, to be built adjacent to the temple grounds.

