

Thaipusam traffic chokes roads



Traffic snarl: A long queue of vehicles (right) forming on the Jelutong Expressway leading to George Town.

Thousands of Hindu devotees line chariot route

By **TAN SIN CHOW**

sctan@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: Many major roads here were jammed up with traffic yesterday as thousands of Hindu devotees thronged the streets to observe the annual Thaipusam festival.

Sungai Pinang Road and the city-bound lanes of the Jelutong Expressway were the worst-hit as motorists who took these roads to avoid the Thaipusam chariot route were caught in massive traffic jams.

A police spokesman said traffic started to pile up on the two roads from 11am.

"The jams lasted for several hours but everything was under control as there was ample police manpower to control the traffic," he said.

Other roads where traffic congestion

was reported included Datuk Keramat Road, Scotland Road, Residensi Road and Anson Road.

The annual procession of Lord Muruga's silver chariot through the streets was greeted with pomp and gaiety. Devotees smashed thousands of coconuts to pay homage and thank the deity for prayers answered.

Many others carrying silver trays laden with garlands, incense sticks and fruits waited anxiously along the route to hand over the offerings to the volunteers on the chariot for blessings.

Onlookers, among them foreigners, converged on the pavements to witness the procession while capturing the event with their cameras and video recorders.

Contract manager Siah Kean Wee, 38, said he made it a point to pay homage to Lord Muruga by smashing 3,000

coconuts, besides giving colourful flowers, fruits, half a coconut and a garland as offerings.

"This is my 10th year offering prayers during Thaipusam," Siah said.

More than 1,200 devotees enjoyed a free lunch at the Ivory Cares Thaneer Panthal (refreshment stall) on Jalan Datuk Keramat.

They were served with tomato rice and three vegetarian dishes by volunteers and Ivory staff.

Ivory Properties Group corporate communications assistant executive Janice Lim said this was the fourth time the company had set up a stall for the celebration.

"We also broke 1,500 coconuts," she said.

Police, Rela, Federal Reserve Unit and Civil Defence personnel were kept busy ensuring smooth traffic flow.



Pomp and gaiety: (Top) Devotees crowding around the silver chariot bearing the statue of Lord Muruga along Chulia Street while two 'lions' entertain visitors at the G Hotel Thaneer Panthal.