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JAGGARAO SIMANCHA

Potpourri of delights at Indian shopping fest



Colourful ornaments: One of the traders showing the decorative products at his stall.

THE Second Penang International Indian Shopping Festival 2010 kicked off over the weekend at Penang Times Square, attracting an estimated 10,000 visitors on its first two days.

Bringing together around 120 local and foreign exhibitors who showcase Indian products under one roof from now until Sunday, the event is touted as one of the largest Indian festivals outside of India.

Besides Malaysian participants, a host of traders from Kashmir, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Gujarat and Kerala are promoting products such as handicraft, textiles, sarees, punjabi suits, jewellery, fashion accessories, leather items, packed food as well as spices and condiments.

Joint organisers Malaysia-India Chamber of Commerce (MAICOM) and Agenda Suria Communication Sdn Bhd expect to attract 200,000 visitors for the nine-day event, twice as many as last year's edition.

"We've brought all of India to Penang,

Besides shopping, there's also a great lineup of entertainment. A lot of products showcased here are unique to their respective regions and can't be found in the local Little

India," organising chairman Jaggarao Simancha said during the opening ceremony on Sunday.

According to him, the majority of visitors were from outside Penang, with some even taking a bus from as far as Singapore to visit the festival.

The organisers are targeting sales worth around RM15mil.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the festival offered an excellent conduit for both Indian and Malaysian business communities to foster a healthy relationship, a partnership that began as early as the 9th century AD when bartering prevailed.

"Today, India's fashion has blossomed into a world art, winning accolades from a wide spectrum of admirers. Its artistry and imagina-



Upbeat mood: A dance performance by D'Universal Dancers during the opening ceremony.

tion on display simply dazzles the psyche of visitors," Lim said.

He also felt the event, which coincides with "Visit Penang Year 2010-2012" campaign, had great significance as it helped attract more tourists.

"The festival has been a smash hit not only amongst local Indians, but also the Malays, Chinese and even foreigners," he added.

The festival's Arts, Culture and Community Programme also celebrates a range of Indian cultures through music, dance, visual arts and performances.

Professional musicians and groups will be performing a variety of music and dance routines representing the many local Indian ethnic groups throughout the festival.