

Nation begins partying despite the rain



Families gathering along the coastline of Marina South to catch the Black Knights aerial display. The show was one of the events held yesterday to mark the nation's 50th birthday. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

The Jubilee Weekend may have got off to a wet start, but spirits remained high among the thousands who turned up yesterday at parks, museums and the Marina area to mark the nation's 50th birthday.

About 10,000 people packed Marina Barrage and its surrounding area yesterday morning to watch the Black Knights perform. The 25-minute aerial show was cut to 21 minutes due to the rain.

Nevertheless, marketing manager Josephine Sia, 40, who was there with her family, said it was exciting. "Despite the downpour, everyone here is enjoying himself."

Some were also at the barrage for a picnic held by non-profit organisation Families for Life. Picnics were held at three parks in Pasir Ris, Sembawang and West Coast for another 16,000 people.

Picnic baskets could be bought

from Families for Life at \$10 each, with proceeds going to The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

Speaking to reporters at the event, Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin said the turnout was "fantastic" despite the rain and the heavy traffic.

Earlier, over nine thousand people had turned up at Marina Bay at 8am for the Community Chest Heartstrings Walk. The 4km walk, which involved everyone from children to the elderly and those with disabilities, raised more than \$2 million for charities supported by the Community Chest.

At 9am, the first participants to return from the walk were greeted by a surprise visitor – Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who mingled with the crowd and took selfies with them.

Meanwhile, at the Woodlands

Waterfront Park, a new mobile application featuring trails around Singapore was launched yesterday. Called SG Heart Map Tours, it features seven self-guided trails based on 50 spots identified to be the most significant to Singaporeans.

Many also took the chance to visit museums for free. Queues of a few hundred people were seen at the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands, which is offering free admission for locals and permanent residents until tomorrow.

At around 1pm yesterday, the wait at the end of the queue was estimated to be around three hours.

Braving the rain in the queue was civil servant Matthias Wong, 41, who was with his children and his friend's family. "We just happened to be in the area and decided to drop by. The wait was okay as we took turns. The usual admission

Passing showers won't affect show

The show will go on, even if it rains. Responding to media queries, the National Day Parade (NDP) executive committee said the parade "will proceed as planned if there are passing showers over the Padang".

However, in the event of inclement weather, including heavy rain and/or high lightning risk, the NDP executive committee "may decide to truncate certain parts of the parade", the committee said in a statement yesterday. But it did not say which parts these might be.

The last time it rained during the parade was in 2008. Despite the heavy drizzle that year, the show went on.

Jermyn Chow

fees are a bit pricey for a trip with the whole family," he said.

The turnout was also higher than usual at eight places run by the National Heritage Board where admission is free until Monday. Visitorship was four times bigger than the regular average daily turnout, with over 22,000 visitors across the eight places, which include museums, as of 6pm yesterday.

Yesterday evening, the National University of Singapore (NUS) held its biggest Rag Day yet at the Marina Bay floating platform. About 1,750 students performed to thank the public for their contribution to charity. Rag Day is part of NUS' Rag and Flag event, which raised \$451,120 in all for beneficiaries such as Pathlight School.

Linette Lai, Cheryl Faith Wee, Pearl Lee and Yeo Sam Jo