

Wesak Day: No procession in Penang due to Covid, devotees can visit temples

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Penang Wesak Celebrations Committee chairman Datuk Dr Loh Hock Hun said the committee had decided to cancel the procession for another year due to difficulties controlling the crowd. - BERNAMA pic

GEORGE TOWN: There will be no Wesak Day procession this Sunday in Penang for the third consecutive year due to the Covid-19 pandemic but devotees are allowed to visit temples to seek blessing.

Penang Wesak Celebrations Committee chairman Datuk Dr Loh Hock Hun said the committee had decided to cancel the procession for another year due to difficulties controlling the crowd.

"Annually during the procession, there will be more than 10,000 devotees attending and it is a challenge to control them (crowd)...hopefully next year, we can have the procession back," he told Bernama when contacted here today.

Prior to the pandemic, Wesak Day in Penang would be celebrated with a floats procession annually, joined by tens of thousands of devotees.

Devotees would also visit temples the day before and on the actual day to light joss sticks, lotus candles, offer flowers, bathe the Buddha statue and take part in chanting sessions.

However, Loh said devotees are allowed to take part in the ritual of bathing the Buddha statue at the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) building in Burmah Road for this year's Wesak Day which falls on Sunday.

He said the ritual of bathing the Buddha statue will begin from 7.30pm to 10pm on Saturday and from 6am to 10pm on Sunday.

"The MBA hall can accommodate about 1,000 people at one time and we will ensure that all devotees adhere strictly to the standard operating procedures," he said.

He said coincidentally, this year is also the 60th year since Wesak Day became a national public holiday in Malaysia and MBA will commemorate the event on Saturday.

"The official Wesak Day celebration ceremony will be held on Sunday where Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow will be officiating the event," he said.

Wesak Day commemorates the day Siddharta Gautama Buddha was born, the day he achieved enlightenment and also the day of his death. -- BERNAMA