

31 AUG 1997

National Day (roundUp)

NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS KICKS OFF WITH A GRAND NOTE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's national flag "Jalur Gemilang" fluttered graciously nationwide in conjunction with the 40th National Day celebrations amidst call to the people to be wary against "enemies" out to undermine the country's success achieved thus far.

If in the past, the sacrifices to defend the country's sovereignty was shouldered by politicians and the armed forces, this time around the burden has shifted to the corporate figures to ensure Malaysia's economy continue to remain vibrant though faced with currency attacks by foreign manipulators.

"What we have built in the past 40 years can be destroyed by them (foreign manipulators) in several weeks," said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his National Day message last night, referring to the attack on the Malaysian Ringgit and the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE).

This time, the people's struggle is not only to take pride with the slogan "Proud To Be Malaysian" but to prove their contributions, irrespective of whether small or big, to the country as colonisation can still occur in a new form.

Meanwhile, the National Day was celebrated with pomp and splendor throughout the country by people from all walks of life.

"Jalur Gemilang," the name given to the Malaysian flag, was paraded in the National Day procession at the Merdeka Square while millions were seen hoisted atop commercial buildings, residences, along roads and on vehicles.

Although the haze was still enveloping the country, the Royal Malaysia Air Force (RMAF) pilots went ahead with the fly-past with five Nuri helicopters bearing the national flag and that of the armed forces.

The national-level celebrations were witnessed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar, Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Cabinet ministers, foreign diplomats and thousands of people who thronged to the Merdeka Square to watch the colourful event.

Fifty-seven contingents and 38 uniformed bands took part in the field performances and march past.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad sprang a surprise when he arrived at the Merdeka Square driving a red Perodua Kancil bearing registration number Perodua 1001 with his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

He was greeted to a loud applause from the crowd.

Also present at the celebrations themed "Moral Virtues Towards A Successful Society" were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail.

More than 1,000 students displayed various attractive field performances including formation of the National Day Logo and the Kuala Lumpur Tower using blue, red and yellow flags.

The procession participated by more than 10,000 people clad in their respective departments or company uniforms was an added attraction to the festive atmosphere that prevailed at the square.

Some contingents wore uniforms with the colours of "Jaluran Gemilang" blend with silver, gold and metallic green in Malay traditional costume complete with the head gear.

RMAF's latest state-of-the-art acquisitions -- F/A-180 Hornets, MiG-29, MiG-29N Fulcrum and Hawk fighter jets -- took advantage of the fine weather

to make a fly-past when the vehicle contingents were passing the parade ground.

In SANDAKAN, a total of 120 contingents involving 20,000 people took part in the state-level celebrations at Jalan Leila here.

The participation of the 25-member mounted squad, who paraded the national flag from Kota Kinabalu to this town, added colour to the procession held in fine weather but hazy conditions.

The horse-riding squad left Kota Kinabalu on Aug 24 to complete the 340km journey to here.

Fifty decorated motorcycles specially brought from Tawau also took part in the parade witnessed by the Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai and his wife Toh Puan Rukaiyah Datuk Panglima Abdullah.

Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee and state cabinet ministers were also present. Sabah hosted the celebrations last year.

In KUCHING, a drizzle did not dampen thousands of people who flocked to Padang Merdeka here to attend the National Day gathering.

A total of 112 contingents comprising government departments, statutory bodies and uniformed organisations attended the gathering.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, his wife Puan Sri Laila Taib, deputy chief ministers Tan Sri Alfred Jabu and Datuk Dr George Chan, state cabinet ministers were also present.

In KOTA BAHARU, ninety-three contingents comprising 4,000 people took part in the National Day parade at the Sultan Mohamad IV Stadium here.

In his speech, Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat acknowledged Malaysia's remarkable economic growth during the 40 years of independence which had led to the people's improved living standards.

In KANGAR, the Raja Muda of Perlis witnessed the National Day parade by 114 contingents involving more than 4,000 participants at Padang Bandaran here.

A contingent comprising those who opposed the Malayan Union also took part in the three-kilometre long procession around the town.

The Raja Muda also released 40 doves to symbolise Malaysia's 40th Independence Day.

In PULAU PINANG, the National Day celebrations at the town padang were witnessed by the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Shariff Omar and state executive councillors.

The state-level celebrations started yesterday with tahlil prayers at the Kepala Batas mosque attended by hundreds of Muslims including Hamdan.

In IPOH, 3,000 people from 153 contingents took part in the National Day parade at Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab which started at 8am.

The procession was held simultaneously in all the nine districts in Perak.

Three Wasp helicopters from the Lumut-based 499 Squadron Air Wing of the Royal Malaysian Navy performed the fly-past carrying the "Jalur Gemilang", Perak and navy flags.

In MELAKA, the celebrations kicked off with the hoisting of the national flag at the Bandar Hilir Independence Declaration Memorial.

Some 5,000 people from 84 contingents participated in the procession at Padang Pahlawan.

In KUANTAN, the Tengku Mahkota of Pahang Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah joined the people in witnessing the state-level National Day parade at Jalan Mahkota here.

Fifty-six contingents with 6,000 people took part in the procession which passed through major roads in this town.

Present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, state executive councillors, heads of government departments and agencies.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, some 10,000 people from 140 contingents participated in the state-level National Day celebrations here.

Before the procession started, the Sultan inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by members of the 18th Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment. --  
BERNAMA