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Thousands usher in celebrations

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - A drizzle did not dampen the spirit of thousands of Malaysians who gathered at Dataran Merdeka tonight to usher in the 40th National Day celebrations.

Led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, shouts of Merdeka! reverberated through the air as the clock on the Sultan Abdul Samad building struck midnight.

The celebrations were made even more eventful with the naming of the national flag - Jalur Gemilang - by Dr Mahathir.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received flags from runners who had paraded the national colours around the country. The flag was hoisted as the Negara-ku and several other patriotic songs were sung.

The Malam Merdeka celebrations kicked off at 8.45pm with cultural performances organised by the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry. There were also traditional arts like makyong, wayang kulit and dikir barat.

A documentary entitled Dairi Merdeka was also screened. The highlight for many must have been the fireworks display which lit up the sky.

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