

27/04/1999

Grand welcome for new King, Queen

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah were given a grand welcome at Parliament Square today.

They were received on arrival by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali before proceeding to the royal dais.

The national anthem was played by the Royal Malaysian Air Force band led by Kapt Zulkifli Shafie while a 21-gun salute was fired.

The King then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by 107 officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Royal Malay Regiment, under the command of Mej Rafizi Shariff.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, his wife Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, Chief Justice of the Federal Court Tun Eusoff Chin, Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail and Dewan Negara President Tan Sri Mohamed Ya'acob.

The King and Queen, accompanied by Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah, were later introduced to Cabinet Ministers and their wives.

The King's five-year term begins today and ends on April 25, 2004.

Schoolchildren cheering and waving the national flag, lined the entrance to Parliament to welcome the King and Queen.

Earlier, about 4,000 students and workers lined Jalan Raja in front of Dataran Merdeka as the royal motorcade passed the Sultan Abdul Samad Building at 9.25am en route to Parliament Square.

They waved the national flag and chanted "Daulat Tuanku" (long live your majesty).

Before that, in Shah Alam, 3,000 well-wishers gathered at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah building to send off the Sultan for the swearing-in ceremony.

The royal couple arrived at 8.15am and were received by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar.

The Sultan, who is an honorary Captain in the Royal Malaysian Navy, inspected a guard of honour mounted by 136 RMN officers and men. This was followed by a 21-gun salute.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, as Minister-in-attendance, accompanied the Sultan to the federal capital.

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