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National Day celebrations mark 'victory over economic crisis'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - This year's National Day celebrations will not only mark the country's independence 42 years ago but also its "victory" over the economic crisis, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Before a large crowd attending the colourful Bangsar Youth Carnival and Parade tonight, the Prime Minister said economic pressures had gripped the country over the past year and had taken their toll on businesses and the lives of the people.

But the country had successfully weathered the storm. Therefore, he said, the country "had the right" to celebrate this success.

Dr Mahathir said: "This year we celebrate not only our 42 years of independence, but also our victory over the (economic) pressures which forced many people to go bankrupt and created problems for the banks and Government."

The Prime Minister said Bank Negara's announcement that the economy had recorded a 4.1 per cent growth in the second quarter of this year was a testament to the people's resilience.

"We are out of the recession," he declared, to the huge applause of the crowd, adding that this was the result of country's own efforts and methods.

"I am convinced that in the third and fourth quarters, we will be able to achieve economic growth like before."

Dr Mahathir paid tribute to the people who had proven the ability of a multi-racial society to live together in peace and prosperity.

He also called on Malaysians to forge ahead to strengthen the economy.

"When the economy grows, we will all enjoy a good life," he said.

It was a carnival in the truest sense of the word where thousands turned up to witness a colourful event organised by the Youth and Sports Ministry.

It was held in conjunction with National Day and was an exuberant tribute to the nation's young, seeking at the same time to instil in them a sense of patriotism.

Organising committee chairman Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said it was the first ever youth festival organised in conjunction with National Day.

She said Bangsar was chosen as it was one of the areas which were patronised by youths.

"It is also the heart of Kuala Lumpur," said Shahrizat, who is also the MP for Lembah Pantai.

Thirty-eight contingents from various organisations and companies participated in a spectacular parade, which took the normally bustling Bangsar atmosphere to an evening of gaiety and colour. A fireworks display later added to the fun.

Bangsar, already crowded on ordinary days, swam in a sea of people from all walks of life - the young, the young-at-heart, the aged.

Attracted to the promise of a day chock-full of good, clean fun and bright lights, the public had turned up in droves since the morning to either participate in the contests and quizzes or look at their favourite musicians.

Guests included Sea Games gold medallists and record-setting yachtsman Datuk Azhar Mansor.

The event was supported by Bangsar residents' associations, the Federal Territory Youth and Sports Department, Bangsar Business Council and Jalan

Telawi hawkers with the assistance of the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd.
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