

31 AUG 1999

Merdeka-Parade

THOUSANDS THROG MERDEKA SQUARE FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- It was a show of patriotism, unity and plain rejoicing by the thousands of Malaysians who thronged the Merdeka Square here today for the customary parade to mark the country's 42nd anniversary of Independence.

Families concerned about securing vantage points started converging at the square as early as 5.30 am to view the last National Day parade of the century.

This time around the parade came complete with Malaysian high-achievers who sailed round the globe, conquered the Everest and walked to the North Pole, among others.

The obvious presence of camera and video-camera-totting foreign tourists proved that the spectacle of multi-racial and multi-cultural Malaysians enjoying themselves on the most significant day of the year, and in bright sunshine at that, was too good to miss.

From a special dais in front of the ever-familiar city landmark, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah took the salute from the march past comprising various contingents.

The Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah was also present.

On the dais his majesty was flanked by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Cabinet members and deputy ministers.

Similar National Day parades were also held in state capitals and towns nation-wide.

This year's celebration, which carried the theme "Together Into The New Millennium", began with the hoisting of the national flag - "Jalur Gemilang" -- to the accompaniment of Negara Ku, the national anthem.

Preceding this, four air force helicopters bearing the Jalur Gemilang and the tri-service flags of the Defence Forces made a fly-past when the King and Queen arrived at the Sultan Abdul Samad building complex at 8am.

Dressed in full regalia of the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces, the King inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by officers and men of the First Battalion Royal Malay Regiment.

A 14-gun salute accompanied the declamation of a special poem entitled "Together Into The New Millennium".

A 2,100-strong gymnastic troupe comprising children in overalls and evenly divided in the four colours of the national flag stole the limelight with their precision formations, including that of the 42nd National Day logo.

The Malay Language Institute choir sung this and past years' National Day theme songs.

More than 9,000 people, segments of them donning colourful and futuristic outfits, also took part in the march past alongside contingents representing the private sector, associations, uniformed services, school and military brass bands.

As they passed the royal dais to salute the King, marchers sang aloud their contingents' songs.

Horse-mounted units and police and military dogs also took part in the parade besides racing cars of the Malaysian Formula 1 team, various makes of the national car namely the Proton, Perodua Kancil, Perodua Rusa as well as that of the national motorcycles, the Jaguh and Kriss models.

Spectators unable to enter Merdeka Square lined up along Jalan Raja Laut instead to watch the more than 100 contingents, including complements of military armoured personnel carriers and tanks.

An air force MiG-29 roared above the Merdeka Square as the march past was about to come to a close followed by a flight formation of four MiG-29 and F/A 18 Hornet fighter jets.

Malaysian made MD-3 trainer light aircraft also flew over the Merdeka Square twice.

National heroes, making their debut at this year's parade, lifted the mood of the celebration.

They include Mount Everest climbers, North Pole para-jumpers, the Reed brothers who walked on the North Pole and sailor Datuk Azhar Mansor, the world's first mariner to circumnavigate the globe on an east-west route.

The crowd was visibly awed and pleasantly surprised when the MiG-29s made a second fly-past as the King and the Queen were preparing to leave the square.

In KANGAR, the Regent of Perlis Syed Sirajuddin ibni Syed Putra Jamalullail took the salute from a march past by 110 contingents, including horse and elephant-mounted units.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim was also present.

Also on parade was a 200-metre-long banner put up by staff of the Kangar Municipal Council, which among other things, reminded citizens to pay up taxes.

In KUANTAN, 7,000 people in 64 contingents representing the government and the private sector as well as NGOs took part in the state-level National Day parade at the municipal field.

The Regent of Pahang Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah took the salute from the march past as four air force trainer aircraft hovered in a fly-past.

District-level parades were held state-wide from 3 pm onwards with state executive councillors reading out Menteri Besar Datuk Adnan Yaakob's National Day message.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin took the salute from 131 contingents comprising 10,000 marchers at the state-level National Day parade held at the Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah Stadium.

Royal Consort Nur Zahirah and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad were also present.

The show-stealers include 1999 Tour of Terengganu cyclists and a procession of 14 military and 40 police vehicles as well as bicycle-borne members of schools' police cadet corps.

In LANGKAWI, a parade was held at the Langkawi Sports Complex where District Officer Haji Ismail Hamid read out Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid's National Day message.

A 550-strong group of teachers on the island formed the largest contingent while the opposition party, PAS, sent a 100-man team to parade alongside civil servants, hotel staffers and special children, among other participants.

A flypast by a microlight aircraft of the Langkawi Flying Club also featured in the celebration.

For the first time in the town's history, PAPAR played host to the state-level National Day parade for Sabah which was attended by thousands of locals and out-towners.

Those residing in Kota Kinabalu chose to travel to Papar town by rail to avoid traffic congestion by taking as early as the 5.30 am train.

The Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai took the salute from the march-past.

Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam and members of the state Cabinet also

joined the people for the celebration.

While 60 contingents took part in the Papar parade, about 5,000 also took part in a similar parade in Tawau, on the Sabah east coast.

In KOTA BAHARU, 10,000 people celebrated National Day at a rally at Stadium Sultan Mohamad IV while 3,550 others representing 95 contingents took part in the parade.

Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, 8th Brigade Commander Brig Gen Hashim Yahaya, state police chief SAC 1 Datuk Mohamed Yunus Othman and state executive councillors were present.

Addressing the crowd Nik Aziz reminded them that Islam teaches followers to appreciate national independence physically and spiritually.

Later in the afternoon, Kelantan Umno liaison chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah addressed a mammoth Umno-organised National Day gathering at Padang Merdeka in Kota Baharu.

In Johor, the state-level National Day parade was held in MUAR, about 176km from the state capital, Johor Baharu.

In fact the religious aspect of the celebration began yesterday itself with special prayers and quranic recitals at the Tangkak town Jamek Mosque followed by a flag-raising ceremony and cultural shows at the Tanjung Emas square last night.

As for today's parade at the Muar High School field, more than 17,000 people attended the celebration, including Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, state executive councillors and heads of department.

Addressing the gathering, Abdul Ghani said that to succeed in the new millennium the nation would have to continue drawing strength from the people's unity, the country's stability and strong leadership.

In BUTTERWORTH, Pulau Pinang Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir and wife joined thousands of people to observe National Day at the municipal field.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and state executive councillors were also present to watch 75 contingents take part in the parade.

The contingent from the State Secretariat emerged best among the public sector participants while Petronas was best among the private sector contingents.

In IPOH, the Sultan of Perak Sultan Azlan Shah and the Raja Permaisuri Tuanku Bainun attended the state-level celebration in front of the City Hall complex.

Seventy contingents comprising 3,640 participants took part in a parade which was preceded by cultural performances and five top students from secondary schools in the city reading out a loyalty pledge.

Meanwhile, later in afternoon the Sultan and the Raja Permaisuri attended a National Day tea party hosted by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib for about 3,000 people.

In MELAKA, unlike past National Day celebrations, this year's state-level event was held for the first time at the partially-completed Historical Square.

Customarily past National Day parades were held at Padang Pahlawan in Bandar Hilir.

The Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahbuddin and wife Toh Puan Marfuza Sheikh Mohamed Osman, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin and wife and State Secretary Datuk Wira Abdul Aziz Omar were among the thousands who witnessed today's parade.

After the band in attendance played the national and state anthems Syed Ahmad inspected a guard of honour mounted by 103 officers and men of the 10th Royal Malay Regiment.

This was followed by a flag-raising ceremony, a poem recital and rendition of patriotic songs, three shouts of "Merdeka" and a march past by

the participating contingents.

In SEREMBAN, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar and the Tunku Ampuan, the four Undangs, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Samad and wife Puan Sri Hazizah Tumin witnessed the state-level National Day parade at the municipal field.

Seventy-two contingents took part in the parade.

Addressing the function Mohamed Isa reminded the people to appreciate and not to abuse independence or else they would lose the attendant benefits that came with it.

In BINTULU, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud addressed the state-level National Day celebration.

A total of 62 contingents involving some 2,500 people participated in the National Day parade.

Sarawakians also celebrated National Day by having two entries into the Malaysia Book of Records in the true spirit of "Malaysia Boleh".

The first was the unveiling of the nation's longest "Jalur Gemilang" made by 14 students of a Kuching-based business school yesterday.

They used 46 bales of material and 110 litres of paint to produce the 1.6 km-long national flag beating a 1.23-km-long one made two years ago.

The students started working on the flag on Aug 16 and completed it last Wednesday.

Malaysia Book of Records' Corporate Manager Irene Liong was present to endorse the students' feat which she said would be listed in its next edition next year.

The second accomplishment, by local English-language teacher Michael Lu, 38, would also be listed in the book's next edition.

Lu's claim to fame was riding a mountain bike in difficult weather conditions and terrain from Aug 29 from Bukit Goram in Kapit Division to Sibu town today, covering a total distance of 191.51 km.

He had cycled for 14.3 hours over three days along the valley of the nation's longest river, the Batang Rajang which is more than 400 km long.

Malaysia Book of Records executive researcher Ms Siew Sze Yih was on hand to endorse Michael's feat, following him from Kapit until the town here.

The Member of Parliament for Sibu and town council chairman Robert Lau Hoi Chiew, in welcoming Lu, said the teacher's adventure would contribute to the development of the Rajang basin's adventure-tourism potentials.

In ALOR SETAR, 136 contingents took part in the state-level National Day parade at Stadium Darul Aman.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and other state dignitaries were among the 10,000 people who witnessed the parade featuring military and school bands as well as cultural troupes.

Three Kedah Flying Club light aircraft thrilled the crowd with their aerobatic display.

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-- BERNAMA

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