

01/09/2000

Show of unity on N-Day (HL)

SHAH ALAM, Thurs. - Malaysians from all walks of life gathered at Dataran Kemerdekaan here this morning to celebrate the nation's 43rd National Day with a show of unity.

The event saw love for the nation transcending political affiliation with Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor and DAP vice-chairman and Kepong MP Dr Tan Seng Giaw joining in the festivities.

A downpour at the tail-end of the ceremony did not dampen the spirits of more than 11,000 participants from various organisations, the man-in-the-street and foreigners who had thronged the area since early morning.

Hosted by Selangor, this year's celebrations took place at the field behind the Grand BlueWave Hotel and the Umno Selangor building.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali arrived at 7.45am shortly after the Cabinet Ministers, dignitaries and VIPs were seated.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah arrived soon after and were met by Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah.

The day's programme began about 8am with the singing of the Negaraku to the accompaniment of music by the Royal Malaysian Air Force band.

Shouts of "Merdeka!" and "Malaysia Boleh" ushered in the recitation of the poem Keranamu Malaysia by a multi-racial group of five secondary school students from across the country.

Two new patriotic songs - Jalur Gemilang and Keranamu Malaysia - made popular following frequent airing over television, were sung by the choir from Institut Bahasa Melayu Malaysia.

This was followed by a colourful field performance by some 2,400 schoolchildren from 13 schools in red, blue, white and yellow costumes as well as various national dresses such as baju kebaya and saree.

They executed interesting formations such as the Jalur Gemilang, a wave movement and the hibiscus to the accompaniment of traditional and modern music.

The much-awaited march-past followed, with members of the public surging towards the fringe of the field facing the dais for a better look at the participants, oblivious to calls to keep back.

Among the highlights of the parade was the parade by the Agricultural sector contingent which had participants wearing farming and fishing costumes.

There were also modern agriculturalists, complete with mock notebooks and handphones.

A profusion of floats was in the procession, the most unique being that of the Malaysia Book of Records.

Featuring the nation's tallest man and woman measuring 2.4m and 2.1m respectively, the float was pulled by Malaysian strongman P. Letchemanah.

Other highlights included the appearance of the newly-launched Proton Waja and the Bufori.

Not to be forgotten was the impressive march-past by various music bands.

Contingents of interest included Kejayaan Malaysia, Persatuan Anak-anak Merdeka and the Malaysian Humanitarian Foundation.

The day's events were crowned with a spectacular aeroplane formation by

the Royal Malaysian Air Force which left the crowd impressed.

Checks with St John Ambulance personnel showed that a few in the crowd had found the day's festivities too long to bear.

A man who had fainted and another who had injured his leg were hospitalised. Two others were treated at an army ambulance on standby.

The day's celebrations went off so well that Malaysians and tourists present could not help but praise the authorities for the commendable show.

Larry Lim, 38, of Section 9, Shah Alam, who had been watching Merdeka rehearsals for the past few nights, found the ceremony "beautiful", while Kim Vandenbroak of the Netherlands was impressed with the fact that the parade took place "smoothly with no stops."

The day's proceedings came to an end just before 11am and those who were present left with an obvious sense of euphoria.

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