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2,000 guests from abroad expected for parade

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Some 2,000 guests from 40 countries, and 300 foreign journalists will be flying in for the annual "Colours of Malaysia Parade 2001" which starts on Saturday at Dataran Merdeka.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the number of foreign guests for the parade, held for the third time, had increased from 1,300 last year.

"The parade will be covered by the foreign and local media. We hope it will be showcased to international viewers to popularise Malaysia," he said at Stadium Titiwangsa today.

The Colours of Malaysia 2001, which would be Malaysia's biggest annual cultural and tourism event, is a month-long cultural extravaganza, ending on June 24.

Abdul Kadir noted the event had gained international recognition, going by the bookings by tour agencies in Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore.

He hoped Malaysians would congregate at the Dataran Merdeka in full force, even though RTM, TV3 and ntv7 will telecast the parade "live".

The parade, scheduled to begin at 8.30pm, will be graced by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datuk Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife Datin Seri Hendon Mahmood will also be present.

This year's theme is "The Legends of Malaysia", and 17 troupes comprising 5,166 performers from the various States will participate.

Abdul Kadir said the ministry, together with Istana Budaya, would be presenting the opening act accompanied by a choir, to the beat of Malay drums.

The parade starts at Dataran Merdeka and will wind through Jalan Raja Laut, Jalan Semarang and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman. Local artistes X-Factor, Eisyah and Elly Mazlein will also entertain the public.

A full-dress rehearsal will be held tomorrow night.

(END)