

31 AUG 2001

Merdeka-Celebrations

MALAYSIA CELEBRATES NATIONAL DAY WITH UNITY SPIRIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysians today marked the 44th anniversary of their country's independence in the spirit of unity and determination to forge ahead in all fields.

Parades, prayers and gatherings were held across the country in which people of all races took part in the spirit of "Keragaman Malaysia", the theme of the celebrations.

Some 10,000 people jammed the Dataran Merdeka from early this morning to watch the National Day parade and other events held to mark the occasion.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, and the Raja Permaisuri Agong, Tuanku Hajjah Siti Aishah, graced the celebrations.

Joining Their Majesties on the special dais in front of the historic Sultan Abdul Samad Clock Tower Building were the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Cabinet Ministers.

Members of the foreign diplomatic corps and hundreds of tourists from far and near were held spellbound for two and half hours as they watched the National Day parade and other events such as cultural dances, floats procession and band displays in fine weather conditions.

The celebrations began with the rendition of the Negara Ku and soon after there was a fly-past by five air force helicopters carrying the Jalur Gemilang and the Armed Forces flag.

His Majesty then inspected a guard of honour and this was followed by the reading of the "Rukun Negara, led by five secondary school students.

The recitation of a poem titled "Kamilah Warga Keagungan Bangsa" in between a 14-gun salute further fanned the patriotic spirit in the people present.

A total of 2,300 school children formed the National Day 2001 logo and theme "Keragaman Malaysia".

All in all 86 contingents and bands took part in the National Parade here this morning.

In ALOR SETAR, the Sultan of Kedah watched the state level National Day march past along with more than 10,000 people at Medan Tunku.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and State Executive Councillors were also present.

A total of 152 contingents involving more than 5,000 people took part in the march past which began at Jalan Telok Wanjah and ended at Medan Kota near Masjid Zahir, about a kilometre away.

The "Nasi Kandar" and the State Assemblymen contingents attracted the most attention at the celebrations.

In PONTIAN, the venue for the Johor state level celebrations, a total of 108 contingents which included members of uniformed organisations took part in a kilometre-long march past from the Pontian Stadium to Bandar Baru Pontian.

The programme included the reading of a National Day pledge by children of various races born on Aug 31. Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman released hundreds of multi-coloured balloons to symbolise the country's freedom and the people's determination to cling to their independence.

In KANGAR, an elephant swathed in the Jalur Gemilang added colour to the Perlis state level National Day march past in which 106 contingents

involving more than 12,000 people took part.

The elephant was brought from Thailand to lead the Kangar Municipal Council contingent to evoke the cultural memories of the Perlis people. On reaching the main dais, the elephant bent its knee as a show of respect to the Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim.

Also taking part in the march was a cavalry contingent from the State Veterinary Services Department.

In SEREMBAN, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan Tuanku Ja'afar and Tunku Ampuan Najihah, the Undangs of Jelebu, Johol, Rembau and Sungai Ujong and the Tunku Besar of Tampin, as well as Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad and Puan Sri Hazizah Tumin watched the National Day celebrations at the Seremban Municipal Council padang.

A total of 5,000 people in 88 contingents from the various government and private sector agencies took part in the march past.

In KOTA KINABALU, 75 contingents from state and Federal departments, schools and non-governmental organisations took part in the Sabah level National Day parade in the grounds of the Kota Kinabalu High Court.

The march past started at the High Court grounds and ended at Padang Merdeka.

Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai took the salute and reviewed the parade. Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat was also present.

In KOTA SAMARAHAN, Sarawak, a heavy morning downpour did not dampen the spirit of the people taking part in the National Day parade at the Sports Complex.

In solidarity with those getting wet in the rain, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and State Cabinet Ministers went on to the padang to shake hands with the heads of the 99 contingents without the cover of an umbrella.

In KOTA BAHARU, 31 camel brand bicycles from the Kelantan Camel Bicycle Club and 33 horses from the Kelantan Equestrian Club added colour to the state level National Day procession in Jalan Mahmood in front of Stadium Sultan Mohamed IV.

The old bicycles flying the Jalur Gemilang were ridden by young people to symbolise the vehicles used by the early freedom fighters.

A total of 4,200 people in 120 contingents took part in the parade which was reviewed by Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and watched by thousands of people.

In TAIPING, some 10,000 people gathered in Jalan Panggung Wayang to watch the Perak level National Day parade which was reviewed by the Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Nazrin Shah.

Also present were the Raja di-Hilir of Perak, Raja Jaafar Raja Muda Musa, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and state dignitaries.

Some 5,000 people took part in the parade in 96 contingents representing government agencies, schools and non-governmental organisations. The state level celebrations have been centered outside Ipoh for the first time.

In KUANTAN, a drizzle did not prevent about 15,000 people from going to the Kuantan Municipal Council Padang 1 (Padang MPK1) to watch the Pahang level National Day parade.

The Regent of Pahang Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakub and State Executive Councillors watched the parade in which 88 contingents representing government agencies, schools and NGOs took part.

The celebrations began with the inspection of the guard of honour by Tengku Abdullah and this was followed by the singing of the Negaraku and an airshow.

In MELAKA, 103 contingents from schools, universities, government

agencies and public and private sector bodies took part in the state-level National Day celebrations at Padang Pahlawan, Bandar Hilir.

The three-kilometre long march past ended in Jalan Hang Tuah.

Melaka Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahabudin, Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam and State Executive Councillors watched the parade along with 10,000 people.

In PENANG, thousands of people thronged the Municipal Council Padang at Butterworth to watch the state level National Day march past in which 86 contingents involving some 7,200 people took part.

Penang Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, State Assembly Speaker Datuk Yahaya Abdul Hamid and State Executive Councillors were also present.

The celebrations included cultural performances by the various races and the rendition of patriotic songs and poems.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin and Permaisuri Nor Zahirah as well as Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang attended the state level celebrations at the Lapangan Shahbandar.

Some 5,000 people watched the celebrations in which contingents from government departments, the private sector and schools in Kuala Terengganu took part.

-- BERNAMA

AZE MRA AFY AAM