

31/08/2001

Millions celebrate National Day throughout the nation

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - At the stroke of midnight, shouts of "Merdeka" reverberated across the nation with millions of people from all walks of life and racial backgrounds ushering in the 44th National Day in true spirit of patriotism.

This was evident at Dataran Merdeka here tonight where at least 100,000 people, five times as many as those who gathered for the Merdeka Day celebrations in 1957, filled almost every inch of the square.

As in previous years, the highlight was the countdown to midnight which started with the arrival of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali at 11.30pm. Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, ministers and other dignitaries.

At the stroke of midnight, Dr Mahathir shouted "Merdeka" seven times, followed loudly each time by the sea of people.

This was followed by the hoisting of the Jalur Gemilang by Malaysian Naval Academy recruits.

Patriotic songs, such as Jalur Gemilang and Keranamu Malaysia, were sang by a choir.

The crowd was also treated to a 10-minute fireworks display.

Dr Mahathir also received a Jalur Gemilang from Malay Journalists Association of Malaysia president Yazid Othman, who had led a superbike expedition around the country to instil patriotism.

The flag was handed to the expedition by Abdullah when he launched the Merdeka Month celebrations on Aug 17.

The crowd, which began gathering from as early as 6pm, was also entertained by popular artistes such as Siti Nurhaliza, Senario and Jamal Abdillah.

The Merdeka celebrations were also evident in other parts of the capital. The Fiesta Street Sungei Wang began as early as 6pm and included performances by KRU and Trez, and a breakdance show.

KLCC, Bintang Walk, Plaza Low Yat Boulevard, Sunway Lagoon Resort, Mines Shopping Fair and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang were also abuzz with performances by artistes like Anuar Zain, Jason Lo, Fauziah Latiff, Winnie Kok and many more.

Merdeka eve was also celebrated at Dataran Labuan, Sabah; Dataran Sejarah Ayer Keroh, Malacca; Dataran Seremban, Negri Sembilan; Padang Majlis Perbandaran Kuantan, Pahang; and Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.

It was also ushered in at Stadium Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah, Kuala Terengganu; Dataran Tunku Alor Setar; Stadium Sultan Mohammed ke-IV Kota Baru; Stadium Sheikh Ahmad Kangar; Dataran Kemerdekaan Shah Alam; Padang Merdeka Kota Kinabalu; Taiping, Perak; Padang Kota Lama, Penang; and Dataran Pontian, Johor.

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