

16 SEP 2002

Merdeka-Celebrations

AGONG CLOSES MERDEKA MONTH CELEBRATIONS IN COLOURFUL CEREMONY

PORT DICKSON, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail, closed this year's Merdeka Month Celebrations at the carnival site here tonight.

Present at the colourful ceremony was the Raja Permaisuri Agong, Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid.

It was also attended by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad.

The royal couple was received on arrival by Abdul Kadir and organising committee chairman Datuk Mohd Khalid Yunus.

The King and Queen were escorted to the main stage by a procession of people carrying spears, bunga manggar, bunga pahar and umbrellas to the sounds of traditional music performed by a group of 30 musicians.

As soon as they came to the stage, the national anthem was played by the Royal Malaysia Police band.

This was followed by speeches by Abdul Kadir and Mohamed Isa, and the raising of the Jalur Gemilang accompanied by the playing of "Negara Ku" again.

Cultural performances came next after which local artistes like Ahmad Jais, J. Sham, Siti Nurhaliza, Siti Nordiana, The Girls and Twinkle took the stage.

Visitors were then treated to a special musical "Keranamu Malaysia" which traces the struggles of five Malaysian leaders starting with Datuk Onn Jaafar's fight against the Malayan Union proposal in the 50s.

The others leaders whose struggles were featured were Malaysian's prime ministers -- Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong then declared the Merdeka Month Celebrations closed, immediately after which there was a five-minute fireworks display.

In his speech, Abdul Kadir said the Merdeka Month Celebrations were aimed at uniting Malaysians of all races, religions and political affiliations.

"We also hope that our efforts will raise patriotism among the people besides drawing more foreign tourists to the country and encouraging domestic tourism," he said.

Abdul Kadir said although the celebrations, which kicked off on Aug 17, have ended tonight, the government hoped the patriotic feelings would not go away.

"The merdeka spirit must always be there in our hearts so that it (Malaysia's independence struggle) is not forgotten by all Malaysians," he added.

Mohamed Isa, in his speech, thanked the federal government for choosing Negeri Sembilan as the locataion for the closing ceremony.

He said having it on Sept 16 was significant as that was the date Malaysia was established in 1963.

--BERNAMA

APG SK