

26 MAY 2002
Colours-Parade
KING LAUNCHES "COLOURS OF MALAYSIA" FESTIVAL

KUALA LUMPUR, May 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's proud cultural heritage mesmerised locals and tourists alike as the streets of Kuala Lumpur were turned into a stage for a joyous and dazzling "Colours of Malaysia" parade tonight.

The parade marked the start of the Colours of Malaysia 2002, a month-long cultural extravaganza which was launched by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail at Dataran Merdeka.

Tens of thousands of people had converged on the square, the focal point of the parade, since late afternoon to witness the pulsating procession which was also watched by millions throughout the country as it was carried live by RTM.

About 5,200 artistes representing 18 cultural troupes danced and twirled in vibrant and intricate costumes and headdresses to the beat of traditional music in the procession themed "Origins of the States".

Also present were the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Cabinet ministers and members of the diplomatic corps.

The parade is one of the official events to celebrate the birthday of Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, who was installed as the country's 12th constitutional monarch last April 25.

Their Majesties arrived at Dataran Merdeka in a special horse-drawn carriage bedecked with flowers and were welcomed at the VVIP stage by Dr Mahathir.

Just after Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin launched the event, fireworks painted the city skies in a riot of colours accompanied by a thunderous performance of the "gendang" and "kompang".

Popular singer Siti Nurhaliza started the ball rolling with a medley of traditional songs as dancers showed their delicate moves on the street fronting the brightly lit Sultan Abdul Samad building which served as the backdrop to the performances.

From Dataran Merdeka, the procession gradually moved to Jalan Raja Laut and Jalan Isfahan before ending at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, covering a distance of 1.5km.

Ten video screens were placed at strategic locations along the route so that the crowds could better follow the goings-on.

Colours of Malaysia, a celebration of Malaysia's rich cultures and traditions, is aimed at promoting the country to both local and foreign tourists.

Until June 25, local and foreign visitors will be able to delight in 56 major events, centring on the cultures and arts of the people, to be held throughout the country.

Among the highlights will be a variety of cultural activities, handicraft exhibitions, musical performances, traditional games, sumptuous cuisines and resplendent costumes.

The fourth edition of the Colours of Malaysia -- it first started in 1999 -- is slated to receive the biggest coverage ever as 77 television stations from all over the world involving 263 crew members are in town to record the various events.

They join nearly 2,500 specially invited foreigners and 224 international journalists and travel writers.

In his speech, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul

Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said: "Believe me, you are visiting a unique and special country, one of the most colourful in the world.

"We have themed our country to be Truly Asia. The parade tonight will show you just that -- we are the soul and essence of Asia, the all-in-one Asian destination."

He said Malaysians of all racial and ethnic groups were determined to preserve their unity.

"It is our commitment and contribution to the world -- to prove a point -- as to how with a bit of give and take, spirit of compromise and sincere goodwill, even a country like Malaysia with such diversities, emotions and sensitivities can still remain happy, united and prosperous," he said.

Abdul Kadir said the parade was an opportunity to show the greatness of the Malaysian Race to the world.

He also pledged that all those involved in the tourism industry would take care of visitors to the country as they would take care of guests to their own homes.

-- BERNAMA
MAM NM YBY