

Citrawarna launched in style

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KUALA LUMPUR: Colours and Flavours of Malaysia. That is the theme of Citrawarna Malaysia 2006, depicting the multi-cultural lifestyle of Malaysians.

The ceremony was launched with much splendour at Dataran Merdeka last night, as a glittering display of fireworks lit the sky.

The yearly carnival that displays the magnificent diverse Malaysian culture was officially launched by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin.

The ceremony was witnessed by thousands of spectators and some 400 foreigners from 31 countries, that were flown in for the event.

Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, the Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, and Tourism Minister Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and other dignitaries arrived in a royal float.

Some 4,500 participants took part in colourful and en-

ergetic performances, which were telecast live over RTM.

The highlight of the launch was a 1.5km song and dance street parade by some 4,000 dancers representing the various states.

First mooted in 1999, the carnival is one of the 194 annual programmes of Tourism Malaysia.

Najib in his speech said the diversity in race, religion and culture was an asset. "It is our strength that no other country enjoys. The diversity is not an element that brings friction among the different races."

Malaysia, he said, should also focus on its infrastructure, promotional campaigns, and products to promote the local tourism industry and achieve the target of wooing more than 16 million tourists that was achieved last year.

Meanwhile, Tourism Minister Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor in his speech said that Citrawarna would be made a permanent event and turned into an international-level cultural carnival like "Pasadena" in California and the "Rio Carnival" in Brazil.



Fireworks light up the sky during the launch last night.