

Reliving historic day that heralded freedom

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MALACCA, Mon. — Flag-waving children, veteran politicians and tourists gathered at the 50th anniversary celebration of the day Malaysians were told they would achieve independence.

Held at the foot of St Paul's Hill in Dataran Pahlawan — the site of the former Padang Pahlawan (Warriors' Field) — the ceremony was the first celebration organised since Feb 20, 1956, when the country's first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, announced to a crowd of 150,000 that the nation would achieve Independence on Aug 31, 1957.

Today's celebrations began with a parade from the Batu Berendam Airport to Dataran Pahlawan to mark the historic journey taken by Tunku upon his return from England, where he had successfully negotiated the country's independence from the British.

Leading the entourage this afternoon were political veterans including Umno stalwarts Datuk Wira Borhan Mohd Yaman and Tan Sri Aziz Tapa who were accompanied by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam.

The crowd of 1,000 guests, in-



EMOTION-PACKED: Mohd Ali and political veterans and leaders shouting "Merdeka" seven times.

cluding National Service trainees and government servants, were treated to a parade of classic and vintage cars, motorcycles as well as brass band and choir performances and poetry recitations.

The highlight of the celebrations was an emotional recounting of the struggles of Umno and the Alliance prior to Independence by Borhan, 79, once Malacca Umno Youth head, as well as a reading of

Tunku's historic speech by Aziz, a sprightly 82.

Organised by the Malacca Museums Corporation (Perzim), the celebrations ended with cheers of "Merdeka!" by Mohd Ali.