

THE STAR

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Foreign visitors awed by unity and celebrations

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KUALA LUMPUR: This may be her third time at a Merdeka parade, but Christelle Douillard from France is still in awe over the unity of Malaysians.

"It is incredible to see the Malays, Chinese and Indians coming together as one.

"This is what Merdeka is about. To see everyone united together in one country," said Douillard, who is attached to the Malaysian French Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The 27-year-old was very impressed with the performances, which she described as "very colourful and joyful to watch despite the heat."

Also present were foreign naval officers and crewmen from the United States, Japan, France and New Zealand who docked at Port Klang recently to attend the Merdeka celebrations.

Among them was Capt Shuji Ochi from Japan, who came with a group

of navy officers all decked in crisp white uniforms.

"We have enjoyed ourselves very much. It is very exciting and you can see that everyone is enjoying themselves," he added.

J. Jacob from Denmark came with his family but was disappointed to find out that the parade had just ended.

However, they soaked up the atmosphere anyway and walked around to have a closer look at

things, including the huge drums used during the parade.

In Johor Baru, Japanese teacher Chiaki Sakashita said her first Merdeka celebration here would always remain special.

Although she has been working in the country for almost a year, Chiaki did not get a chance to see last year's celebration.

"I am so impressed by the colourful celebration and the parade. Malaysians really know how to cele-

brate their independence day," she said.

Her fellow teacher Rie Aoki admitted that the parade was another Malaysian experience to remember.

For six-year-old Mohd Shahril Mophd Roslan, wearing a full army suit was the perfect way to celebrate Merdeka.

"This is my first Merdeka celebration and I want to do it properly. The army suit is my way of showing my patriotism," said the boy.