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Veterans for Merdeka parade

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IPOH: Armed forces veterans from several Commonwealth countries will be participating for the first time ever in the country's national day parade on Aug 31.

About 400 ex-servicemen from the army, air force and navy branches of Britain, Australia and New Zealand have been invited to take part in the 50th anniversary parade, said

Veteran Affairs Department assistant director (management) Major Zainal Abidin Awang.

"The invite is to honour their services during the Emergency (1948-1960) and Confrontation (1963-1966) periods," he said.

He said the largest group would be coming from Britain and the veterans would be parading in their regimental uniforms and decorations.

Zainal Abidin said 41 Com-

monwealth veterans would also be awarded the Pingat Jasa Malaysia for their gallantry during the struggles.

He said the awards would be presented by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is also the Defence Minister, in a special ceremony on Aug 30.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth veterans are equally excited about making their debut at the Merdeka parade.

National Malaya and Bor-

neo Veterans Association of Australia (NMBVAA) president Brian Selby said the veterans were eager to participate in the national day parade in Kuala Lumpur.

"We are looking forward to the 50th independence celebrations in Malaysia. Most of them are old and some are ill but they are in high spirits and looking forward to this once-in-a-lifetime celebration," he told the *New Straits Times* during a recent visit to

Malaysia.

Selby, a veteran who served in Malaysia during the Confrontation, said the veterans had always been proud of their services and had a close affinity with Malaysians.

"This will be an opportunity for everyone watching the parade, to learn about the contribution of the Commonwealth armed forces in the early years following Malaya's independence and the formation of Malaysia."