

Joyous countdown to 55th Merdeka Day
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KUALA LUMPUR: The countdown to the 55th Merdeka Day was held in a joyous atmosphere with fireworks and flying of the "Jalur Gemilang" Malaysian flag throughout the country.

Various programmes were held to mark the occasion, including poetry declamations, "tahlil" and "doa selamat" prayers, as well as discussions on independence warriors such as Mat Kilau.

Several companies, such as KLCC Property Holdings Sdn Bhd (KLCCCH) and Resorts World, held their own programmes with fireworks displays at the KLCC Park and Genting Highlands, respectively.

Although the official "Merdeka Eve" countdown was not held at Merdeka Square as in previous years, an estimated 6,000 people were present at the square in the heart of the city, including participants of the "Himpunan Janji Bersih" organised by several non-governmental organisations.

Dang Wangi District Police chief ACP Zainuddin Ahmad, who toured Merdeka Square, said the situation had remained under control throughout.

The presence of 205 police officers and men from the Dang Wangi police station and Bukit Aman ensured that there was no provocation during the "Himpunan Janji Bersih" gathering, which did not have the approval of the police or Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

"The situation was under control. Many of the people had come to watch the anticipated Merdeka Eve performance and fireworks display which did not take place (this year)," he said, adding that no arrests were made.

Zainuddin said the people began to disperse from Merdeka Square gradually in batches after midnight.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, the countdown was marked by prayers at mosques in the state.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said attended the prayers at the Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque, with about 500 people.

In SHAH ALAM, the countdown was held at Independence Square, and was attended by Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim who read out a poem.

The menteri besar was joined by the state executive councillors at the event.

In MELAKA, the countdown was held at Dataran Pahlawan where Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam was one of 15 people to render poems.

The highlight of the event was a fireworks display besides mass cycling over a distance of 20 kilometres from Dataran Pahlawan to the Melaka International

Trade Centre (MITC) led by Mohd Ali.

In BERA, Pahang, some 5,600 Orang Asli folk in the district hoisted the "Jalur Gemilang" Malaysian flag at their homes.

In SEREMBAN, 57 students of the special education class of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Pendeta Za'ba, Paroi, decorated their school in conjunction with Merdeka Day.

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