

# Merdeka joy attracts 400,000

> Popular animation characters light up event

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Some 400,000 people flocked to Dataran Merdeka and its surrounding areas yesterday to join the country's 57th Independence Day celebration, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek said.

He said this was made possible with the introduction of Malaysia's favourite animation characters, Upin and Ipin, as the co-emcees for the event this year.

"The Merdeka celebration is not about parents taking their children along to Dataran Merdeka anymore, (but) I was made to understand that this year, it was the children who brought their parents along," he told reporters after attending the event.

On the event, which was celebrated on a moderate scale following the tragedies that had befallen Malaysia Airlines flights this year, Ahmad Shabery said that the people's patriotism must remain high and strong in facing life's big challenges.

"It is moderation in the celebration, but not in the (patriotic) spirit. The spirit must remain high and strong. We did not go to the extreme in doing this, but this moderate-scale celebration is the most meaningful.

"This is where love begins, including our love for those who lost everything in the (MH370 and MH17) tragedies," he said.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said although the country was still saddened by the tragedies, the people's patriotic spirit remained strong to face life's challenges.

"This was interpreted by their presence at the Dataran Merdeka," he said.

Meanwhile, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said despite being celebrated on a moderate scale, it was enough to boost the people's spirit and defence to face future challenges.

"We need this to build up our internal strength to fight outside threats and enemies who try to cause disharmony in our country," he said.

Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hasan Malek, on the other hand, said this year's Merdeka celebration was a big success, thanks to the cooperation from people from all walks of life. — Bernama



NORMAN HIU/  
THESUN.

Tuanku Abdul Halim (in uniform), Tuanku Haminah, Najib, Muhyiddin and Rosmah waving the Jalur Gemilang at Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.



Participants carrying the Jalur Gemilang during the parade at Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

## A minute's silence for MAS victims

► FROM FRONT PAGE

honour comprising 107 officers and personnel from the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment from the Sungai Besi Camp, led by Major Ameiza Mohd Ashhari.

It was followed by a reading of a pledge by 57 participants comprising schoolchildren, undergraduates and civil servants. The pledge was read led by a student from Sekolah Sultan Alam Shah in Putrajaya, Ahmad Amsyar Ahmad Afendi, who then led the crowd in shouting "Merdeka" seven times.

Throughout the ceremony, a Zeppelin bearing the image of the Father of Independence Tunku Abdul Rahman, hovered in the air along with four drones.

A high-tech camera installed on the Zeppelin, provided a bird's-eye view of the event broadcast onto a giant screen at Dataran Merdeka where 2,280 choir members and 2,240 other participants were involved in the field performances, with various unique formations of words and logos.

The choir and field performers also sang "Warisan" and "Di Sini Lahirnya Sebuah Cinta", on which this year's national day theme, "Malaysia: Here, Where A Love Was Born" is based.

Earlier, a minute's silence was observed in respect of the victims of the two MAS air tragedies, and in remembrance of those warriors who had sacrificed their lives for the country.

There was also a flypast by five helicopters from the Royal Malaysia Air Force carrying the national flag. A total of 14,248 participants from 9,359 contingents took part in the parade. The crowd cheered as the parade started, with marching bands, field performances staged by the cavalry ceremonial squadron and a flypast by Sukhoi 30MKM, MIG 29 and FA 18/D Hornet jets.

In PENANG, the Merdeka celebration and parade were held at the Penang Esplanade in George Town.

About 5,000 spectators watched the parade which was graced by Penang Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas and his wife Toh Puan Majimor Shariff.

Also present were Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and state exco members.

## Witnessing the spirit of 'Merdeka57'

**PETALING JAYA:** Merdeka starts with the struggles of the royalties, leaders and the people of Malaysia, tweeted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak.

"Dataran Merdeka becomes the witness of the spirit 'Merdeka57'," he said after the Merdeka celebration in Dataran Merdeka.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi blogged by calling for a more united nation.

"Happy 57th Merdeka Day to all Malaysians. Hopefully there would be better unity among Malaysians to

strengthen Malaysia as a stable and peaceful country. Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka!" he wrote.

The impressive parade by the armed forces did not go unnoticed by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein who tweeted his pride in the procession where the armed forces personnel, numbering more than 200, formed the largest contingent participating in the ceremony.

"I'm proud. Congratulations," he tweeted alongside a photo of the march.

Hishammuddin also posted photos of some of the country's assets for defence, and other shots with ministers.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin posted his photo with the sticker of Malaysian flag.

"Merdeka! Have you gotten the kibarmalaysia #KibarMY sticker? Available at Mesra Petronas until Sept 30 #disinilahirnyasebuahcinta" he tweeted, calling all Malaysians to display their patriotic spirit in conjunction with the country's most celebrated day.