

**NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS**

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# Sharing the Merdeka spirit

> Malaysians flock to Dataran Merdeka in a joyous show of national pride and unity

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The early morning downpour in the capital city did not deter thousands of Malaysians from making their way to Dataran Merdeka to celebrate National Day yesterday.

Citizens from all walks of life were seen coming in as early as 6.30am to occupy seats as well as get vantage points for the parade. Colours of the Jalur Gemilang were everywhere as spectators waved the national flag and carried flag-themed balloons.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor arrived at about 7.50am, followed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah at 8am.

Among others present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and his wife Datin Seri Hamidah Khamis, Cabinet ministers and foreign diplomats.

In keeping with tradition, Tuanku Abdul Halim took the salute and inspected the guard-of-honour mounted by four officers and 103 men from the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment.

The crowd witnessed the hoisting of the national flag by officers from the Royal Malaysian Navy, followed by the singing of *Negaraku* and a 14-gun salute representing the states in the country.

This was followed by the oath-taking ceremony, which ended with the crowd being led to shouts of "Merdeka".

The parade and procession then proceeded with 10 performance segments, namely patriotism, public services, economy, animation, self-esteem, sports, public order, national security, air show and national unity.

A crowd-puller were the assets showcased by the police, army, air force and navy.

The Olympic contingent led

by national shuttler Datuk Lee Chong Wei took the audience by surprise when they made their appearance on top of a parade bus.

The crowd was also treated to an airshow by the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

The ceremony ended to the tune of *Negaraku* and final cheers of "Merdeka" as the king and queen left Dataran.

Some 15,000 participants from both the public and private sectors took part in the colourful parade and celebration which retained last year's theme of "Sehati, Sejiwa" (One heart, One soul).

Similar celebrations were also held throughout the country. In PENANG, thousands thronged the Esplanade for the celebration.

The parade, attended by members of government, started with the arrival of Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas and his consort Toh Puan Majimor Shariff around 9.15am.

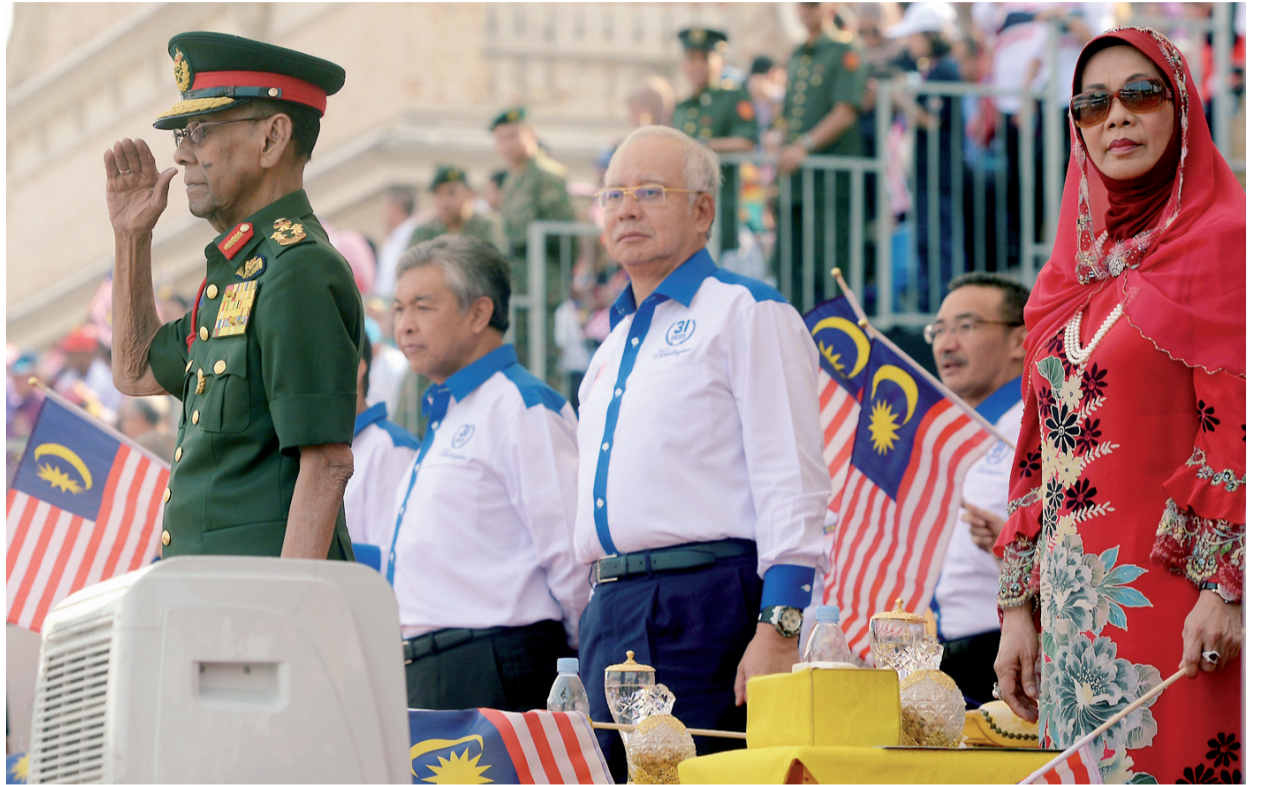
In PERAK, some 6,000 participants from 116 contingents took part in the celebrations, attended by Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Zara Salim, and members of government.

In JOHOR, the people gathered as early as 6am in Tangkak to witness the procession from 111 contingents involving 3,663 participants.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin released 59 sparrows to symbolise the years Malaysia has been free from colonialism.

Meanwhile, the over-5,000 students from national schools in Selangor and here who took part in the parade and field performance at Dataran Merdeka have been given a holiday today (Sept 1).

More pictures in [thesundaily.my](http://thesundaily.my)



**ROYAL SALUTE** ... Tuanku Abdul Halim takes the salute as the contingents march past the main stage at Dataran Merdeka. Also present is Tuanku Hajah Haminah as well as Najib and Ahmad Zahid.



**READY TO PERFORM** ... Helicopters flying over the Dataran as performers get ready for their event.



**SPORTS THAT BIND** ... Malaysia's Rio Olympics participants led by badminton silver medallist Datuk Lee Chong Wei wave to the crowd.



**POWER SHOW** ... The tanks come a-marching in.

AMIRUL SYAFIQ MOHD DIN / THE SUN

ADIB RAWI YAHYA / THE SUN

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