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National Day pride in the heart of KL

About 100,000 turn out for first celebration at Dataran Merdeka in four years

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KUALA LUMPUR: The people started arriving even before the new day was ushered in at midnight. By 7am, the crowd swelled to some 100,000 people.

And when the King and Queen arrived in a grand horse-drawn carriage, waving and gesturing the love sign, the crowd erupted in cheers.

The National Day celebrations made a resounding comeback at Dataran Merdeka after four years.

The last two years saw an enforced break caused by the Covid-19 pandemic while in 2018 and 2019, the celebrations were held in Putrajaya.

Malaysians showed that the patriotic spirit was very much alive as many had checked into hotels in the area a day earlier, while the roads and train stations were full of people as early as 5am yesterday.

They came for a show of colour, splendour and excitement, and they were not disappointed.

The celebrations were a real crowd-pleaser from start to finish, beginning with the arrival of the royal couple at 8am.

As soon as Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tunku Hajah Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah took their places in the royal box, five helicopters did a fly-past accompanied by the national anthem.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, members of the



Cabinet, diplomats and foreign representatives and dignitaries also attended the celebration.

Every inch of the place saw people packed shoulder to shoulder, watching the parade and march-past by nearly 20,000 participants from various contingents.

A glance in any direction showed a sea of Jalur Gemilang being waved as Malaysians watched the adrenaline-pumping performances and parade, which involved a total

of 369 land assets and 68 air assets, as well as 76 animals in service.

As this was the 65th National Day, the number 65 was a recurring theme. The proceedings kicked off with the Rukun Negara being read by 65 participants led by national sprinter Muhammad Azeem Mohd Fahmi, who recently broke the national 100m record.

This was followed by seven shouts of "Merdeka" which reverberated throughout Dataran Mer-

deka.

The *Keluarga Malaysia Teguh Bersama* (Malaysian Family is Strong Together) song, which is synonymous with the National Day theme, was sung by Alif Satar & The Locos, together with the *Keluarga Malaysia* choir. They were accompanied by the 65-member RTM Orchestra.

The air show, which displayed the prowess of the military, police, Fire and Rescue Department and

Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, was the last performance and the highlight of the day.

The parade was capped off at 10.30am with fighter jets and other aircraft, including helicopters, roaring over the Kuala Lumpur airspace.

The King and Queen departed the event at 10.45am, followed by Ismail Sabri and his wife Datin Seri Muhaini Zainal Abidin at 10.50am, who waved to the cheering crowd.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa said the overwhelming response far surpassed the initial expectations.

"It has been two years since this event was held. The feel-good factor and the Malaysian Family-themed celebration received an overwhelming response from the people.

"I think there were more than 100,000 visitors. There was no empty space at all.

"Everything ran smoothly despite a little congestion due to an unexpected crowd," Annuar told reporters later.

He said the King and the Queen also conveyed their appreciation and were in awe of the performances put on by the participants.

The Prime Minister and his wife also conveyed the same message, added Annuar.

It was indeed an awesome spectacle.

Royal entrance:

Sultan Abdullah and Tunku Azizah showing the love sign to the crowd on their arrival at the National Day celebration at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

