

# NATIONALISM

# THE KEY

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● WE must make certain that colonial life does not make a comeback. We must now recognise that colonialism no longer involves absolute subjugation. In a shrinking world, the threat of neo-colonialism has emerged. And fresh colonisation could be applied through economic power, political ideology or cultural hegemony. ●

OUR nation has been free from colonial rule for precisely 28 years and it is 28 years since the shout of freedom echoed in the Merdeka Stadium. National Day is full of meaning for those who value that freedom — the freedom to govern our country ourselves and the freedom to chart the course of our religion, our people and nation.

Two out of three among us belong to the young generation. It is estimated that almost 68 per cent of our population of 15 million is under 30 years of age. This means that two-thirds of our people did not bear witness to the freedom struggle.

In Sabah and Sarawak, which won their freedom through Malaysia six years later, the generation aged 25 or under in the two States arrived after the independence campaign. Those with the experience of colonial life in the past are getting fewer in number; year after year more of them are leaving us forever. Their absence is grieved, not only because they are no longer with us but also because we are no longer able to recognise and share in their experience of what it is like to be free from the shackles of colonialism.

Let us commemorate and ponder deeply the way our people rejoiced the advent of independence. Tens of thousands in Malacca awaited the delegation of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj return from London to announce the date for independence; tens of thousands saw the colonial flag fall and our own rise in its place at the Selangor Club Padang; and tens of thousands more were at the Merdeka Stadium to hear the resounding hail of "Merdeka."

They arrived in great force. Many, without cars, came by the busloads. Many came on foot. The jubilation was spontaneous, without planning. All this because they had lived through the bitterness of colonial life, repressed, gagged, the pride of the individual, group and community demeaned.

For them the promulgation of freedom became the greatest moment. The more so when that freedom was won out of struggle and the spirit that invaded their hearts — the spirit of na-

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tionalism. This was the nationalism that bore independence — nationalism without aloofness. On the contrary, a nationalism that upholds the pride and honour of our people.

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Is nationalism so important for an independent country like Malaysia? Is it so important for us to remind ourselves of the history of independence, particularly to the young generation? There are several ways of looking at this.

Firstly, we must make certain that colonial life does not make a comeback. We must now recognise that colonialism no longer involves absolute subjugation. In a shrinking world, the threat of neo-colonialism has emerged. And fresh colonisation could be applied through economic power, political ideology or cultural hegemony.

New forces have appeared for the neo-colonialist and they do not depend on the strength of the countries of origin. Through culture, for instance, colonialism can be realised without military force or money.

Colonialism, in whatever form, will always attempt to curb our freedom. However, we cannot afford to isolate ourselves from the outside world. Traces of neo-colonialism have been felt, although many are still unaware of this. The freedom we fought so hard for shall be in vain if we

allow new colonisation to take place.

The best counter against the new domination is to acquire knowledge in all fields, including religion, and equip ourselves with thorough expertise. At the same time we can direct our nationalism towards the attainment of knowledge and all the skills required

to protect our freedom, and along with it, the pride and religious pre-eminence of our people and nation.

We admit we have progressed and developed speedily. Educational standards, for example, have risen fast. But we are still far behind the developed countries. It could be that our people, one day, will search the seas ourselves for petroleum; build our own capital equipment and discover the beauty of Allah's creation in the heavens and on earth. So it is up to the young to preserve and foster national independence through the control of knowledge.

Nationalism has its own positive side. This includes unity. The people united in resistance to the Malayan Union and the methods of British rule, not only in the peninsula but also in Sabah and Sarawak. They came together to battle communism until the end of emergency in 1960.

With this in mind, this



year's National Day is themed "Nationalism forges Unity."

This will reinforce the will to fight disunity, conflict and other negative elements. We will avoid anything that could cause disunity. Noble beliefs and teachings, the call to benefit ourselves and good example surely will not lead to differences. However, we must go through, twice, three times even, every exhortation, propaganda or expressed sentiment for any implication that another race is repugnant,

wrong or weak; in whatever we do we must watch out for any act that may lead to conflict. History has proven that disunity brings destruction and retrogression. No society can succeed without unity.

This is the lesson of history. Let us learn from our own history as well as that of all civilisation. When there is greed, selfishness overcomes the interests of the majority and a cunning to blame others develops, any society will weaken and eventually be destroyed

or re-colonialised. This has occurred throughout the history of man. It should teach us unity in the hope that we will not destroy what we have gained but instead aspire to greater heights.

The main event of independence day was the hoisting of our national flag the night before at the Selangor Club Padang and the declaration of independence at Stadium Merdeka. Since then, for 27 years, national celebrations were held in Kuala Lumpur.

We have not forgotten the historic announcement of the date for Merdeka at Bandar Hilir, Ma-

lacca. It is in memory of this occasion that we hold this year's celebrations in Malacca. Malacca also represents the primary centre of empire in the history of our country. We hope that this episode in Malacca will heighten the spirit of independence and of protecting the nation's dignity.

In conclusion, let us take to heart the call of this year's National Day theme. Let us be thankful for what we have achieved thus far, and the peace and harmony of this auspicious occasion. I wish everyone a happy 28th National Day.