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Patriotism must be reflected in our actions

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LAST week, Malaysia celebrated its 40th year of independence. Despite the haze alert, thousands of Malaysians joined in the National Day celebrations.

This year's celebration took place amid a rather gloomy atmosphere in the face of the weakening ringgit and low stock prices.

Despite these conditions, the Merdeka mood was unaffected.

Commemorating the nation's independence is the pride of all Malaysians - a time to show one's patriotism and to remember the sacrifices of our past leaders who fought for independence.

As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad pointed out in his National Day Message, only greater patriotism and hard work could protect Malaysia from direct or indirect colonialism in the era of Information Technology and a borderless world.

Malaysians by now will have realised how important it is to be patriotic.

For example, flying the national flag to symbolise patriotism should have been ingrained in everyone.

Naming the flag, Jalur Gemilang, which means a 'glorious range of values', was another proud moment for Malaysians.

This year's National Day theme, "Virtuous behaviour towards a successful society" was most appropriate as Malaysians are being mobilised to cope with a wide range of social and moral issues, corruption and moral decay.

This is also the time for us to conduct a review of our nation-building efforts, identify our strengths and weaknesses after years of continuous growth.

The question that needs to be asked is whether Malaysians are prepared to take a hard look at themselves, correct negative habits and adopt positive approaches befitting Malaysia's aspiration to become a fully developed nation.

What I am referring to in particular is the lack of a sense of civic-consciousness among certain Malaysians. I share the view of a recent news article which stated that "while we enter the Info Age, another age is rapidly on the rise and that is garb-age".

Some Malaysians seem to have bypassed civic-mindedness in their quest for progress.

They seem to have neglected their responsibilities towards the environment. As a result the litterbug culture has emerged.

It is meaningless to pretend to be patriotic when our actions speak otherwise. To face up to the challenge of preparing for the new millennium, Malaysians must be ready to be at their best and in setting the right examples as far as civic responsibilities are concerned.

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