

Five reasons to be thankful this Merdeka

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COMMENT Growing up, we were never the family that put up flags.

In contrast, I was the child who would be the first to volunteer for Pertandingan Nyanyian Lagu Patriotik and would secretly wish my mother was the type to make us cake with icing the colour of the Malaysian flag for Aug 31.

Many moons later, still ever patriotic, I have taken it upon myself to remind you that as Malaysians, we should be thankful that we are free people.

And what better way to do this than to revisit events in the past few weeks. We are free people because:

NONE1) We can choose what movies we want to watch, and decide for ourselves what is true or what is fiction...and what is sneakily in between.

Our government trusts us enough not to take it upon themselves to 'advise' cinema-operators not to screen this film or the other.

Cinemas here also can screen or not screen what they like without being reminded that their licences are on the line.

We get to hear both supporters and detractors of films claiming to be historically accurate argue their points on equal footing, on all media platforms, if we choose to.

2) We get the benefit of regional artists coming to Malaysia to stage their work, which has enjoyed successful runs overseas.

We don't have anyone presumptuous enough to say that something we haven't even watched will "touch our sensitivities".

Indeed, we are free enough to put up our own fight if someone is belittling us, especially if they're from that little red dot in the south who think we live in Gangsta's Paradise. How dare they?

NONE3) We can exhibit our artwork without anyone taking insult, or worse still lodging a police report claiming some sort of criminal offence.

We can plant as many flags on the ground, or hang them from a ceiling, as a homage to our nation without anyone claiming we are hurting their sensibilities.

4) We don't have to endure state propaganda everywhere we go, and especially not in our private time of leisure be it at home or, God forbid, in the cinema.

No patriotic reels to whip up our spirits (hang on, are we at war? Oh yes, the Sulu still want Sabah) nor anyone to guilt trip us into raising the flag, because goodness gracious, we are mature enough, but more importantly, free enough to decide how we want to express our love for our country.

5) We can practice our religion as we deem fit, as long as we do not hurt or maim anyone.

And if we adopt a view different than the majority, we need not suffer being labeled an unbeliever. Malaysians know better than to pretend to be God, and God knows us better than any of these mortals. God knows we believe.

Thank God we are Malaysians. May we always be free.

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