

M'sian flags more prominent in rural areas
Malaysiakini.com
September 7, 2010

The Merdeka spirit of flying the national flag in urban areas seems to be on the slide while such awareness is rising in the rural areas and suburban areas, claims a worried social worker who has been promoting patriotism through flying the national flag for the past 18 years.

pakatan rakyat sept 16 gathering crowd waving flag Larut Matang District Rukun Tetangga chief C Shanmugam told Malaysiakini yesterday that in his estimate, hoisting the national flag in urban areas this year has decreased by about 20 percent while the rural areas and housing estates have seen an increase of 10 percent when compared to last year's celebration of Merdeka.

He attributes this to materialism having taken precedence over patriotism in urban areas.

However, enthusiasm for such activity among the rural people is a colourful feast for the eyes as the flags are flown on trees, houses and public areas.

It's an annual ritual for Shanmugam to lead a convoy of motorcyclists, motorists and lorries to the various parts of Perak to promote the Malaysian spirit of flying the national flag.

This year on Aug 8, he led a convoy of about 1,500 supporters from Taiping to Lenggong via Kuala Kangsar and was pleased with the public spirit among rural Malaysians.

He fears the lack of such enthusiasm amongst urban dwellers will send the wrong message, that Malaysians are unpatriotic, to foreigners who tend to visit these areas.

'Compulsion will backfire'

When asked whether the raising of sensitive issues by certain quarters was a damper to the Malaysian spirit in the country, he said it is possible, but was quick to add that personal differences of all Malaysians must be put on the back burner when it comes to the celebration of our independence as a united nation.

damansara school open 030107 rising flag He also ticked off Malaysians who spend money on unnecessary items but are reluctant to fork out roughly RM3.50 for a flag.

He said in 1993 this same flag cost RM18 each but Malaysians at that time were eager to buy them as the Merdeka spirit was then very high.

He also took an issue with Malaysian businessmen who flew old and tattered flags that were more of an eyesore.

He however believes compelling the flying of flags will backfire on the government.

Instead, he recommends educating children from kindergarten onwards on the history and importance of flying the Malaysian flag.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/142132>

