

Our past struggle: Lest we forget the true Merdeka spirit
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COMMENT Fifty-three years, a new nation was born and although we still remain one nation and the different races still share similar values, my outrage is that a small minority is trying to hijack the true meaning of Merdeka and corrupt its ideals.

I also believe that the current younger generation knows little about the people who lived five decades ago.

They will not know of the struggles of being a freedom-fighter.

They will not know about living through the horrors of the communist threat.

They will not know of the trials of building a nation after colonial rule, like bringing electricity to the kampungs and new villages. Or of road-building to connect communities. Or of building schools to educate our people. Or of new clinics and hospitals to treat the sick and elderly. Or that piped water and a treated sewage system was a luxury.

This younger generation could not appreciate the triumphs of having successfully proved to the whole world that Malaysians were just as capable and hard-working as their former colonial masters.

They will not have savoured the simple ties of friendship that were forged by the various races.

They will probably never know that opportunities to contribute to nation-building were plentiful.

Our freedom-fighters fought successfully for Merdeka because the Malaysians were united. Their diversity and the characteristics of each community were harnessed for unity. We now take for granted many of the things that those in 1957 fought very hard to protect, so that future generations could enjoy without a second thought.

However, today some people are accentuating their own racial, religious and cultural differences to proclaim superiority. They threaten our unity, and their actions go against the Merdeka spirit.

Strange, too, are the people who define patriotism by how many Malaysian flags are flown from their premises. One mayor even warned businesses that failure to fly a flag, could result in a fine or being blacklisted.

Fortunately this mayor's foolhardy moment was shortlived and he rescinded his daft ruling. Authorities refuse to learn that using force only builds resentment and prompts ridicule.

Some fools even think that the more flags attached to their cars, means greater patriotism. They don't consider the dangers they pose to themselves and other road users.

Little do they realise, that being patriotic is not about displaying outward symbols. All it proves is that they are shallow-minded.

If Malaysia was built from the blood, sweat and toil of all the races, then the recent, racist

comments of two school-heads, and of the extremist groups who support them, are an insult to the memory of those who fought for Merdeka.

My definition of showing the true spirit of Merdeka is not measured in flag waving or of equity in companies or if I have greater rights over others.

Mine is getting to know better, that person of the other race, whom I was reluctant to approach. He could have been my friend, work-mate, neighbour.

Who knows? We might share more in common than I thought was ever possible. The new friendship might open the door to a greater circle of friends and interests.

Sadly, the dwindling group of Merdeka veterans, have possibly one last struggle – the struggle against “forgetting”. They remember how they fought for independence, so that we can enjoy our freedom today.

Will successive generations forget their struggle? With increased polarization and the threat of racists like Perkasa, these old-timers have all the right to ask us, what are we going to do about them?

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