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# Golden Merdeka bash, but no sign of flags

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** It is less than a month to the big day on Aug 31, but the Jalur Gemilang is conspicuously missing from many of the city's buildings.

According to the Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, the big bash begins Aug 17 with the launch of the Merdeka celebration and fly the Jalur Gemilang campaign at the Dataran Pahlawan in Malacca. The celebration will continue right up until Sept 10.

A recent check in the city revealed that the celebration of the country's 50th anniversary, which began with a marked impetus early in the year, had strangely "mellowed".

Out of the many skyscrapers in the city, the national flags only appear on the Kuala Lumpur City Hall headquarters at Jalan Raja Laut. The Jalur Gemilang can be seen flying from every floor of this 32-storey building.

Unfortunately, the "Merdeka fever" has yet to spread to the majestic hotels, ultra-modern shopping complexes and both of the country's tallest landmarks — Petronas Twin Towers and KL Tower.

This has led Rais to make a statement, "fly the Jalur Gemilang or the owners face the risk of being depicted by the media as unpatriotic".

To encourage more people to fly the national flag, the government is considering to give a tax rebate to companies or individuals who contribute more than RM5,000 to buy the Jalur Gemilang in conjunction with the 50th Merdeka cele-

bration.

The move is to encourage all Malaysians, who have been living in this peaceful and prosperous nation to join the golden jubilee celebration of the country's independence. Ironically, the excitement in celebrating the event is only felt at the ministry and government department level.

The Information Ministry, via its agencies, has drawn out over 500 programmes for the merdeka anniversary.

As of March, 101 of these programmes had been implemented.

Among them are the special report on Merdeka in all television and radio news bulletins, the exhibition on 50 years of Merdeka held at Bukit Jalil here, the documentary *Tunku — Father of Independence* and the national quiz.

As for the RM7.1 million government allocation for 219 parliamentary constituencies nationwide for the Merdeka celebration, it could be still short if measured against the significance of the 50 years of the country's independence. At the very least, the money could still be used to make the Jalur Gemilang as well as banners depicting the Merdeka logos and slogans which could line the main roads.

After 50 years of achieving independence, now is the time for us to move forward to the era of giving sovereignty to the word "Merdeka".

Like what appears in one of the Petronas' Merdeka television commercials *Jalan mesti ke depan* (We must move forward). — Bernama