

A time to be thankful

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IT'S time to get patriotic.

With national day celebrations just two-and-a-half months away, we should both individually and collectively start building up the momentum towards marking a significant moment in our country's history.

Since this is going to be the golden anniversary of our independence - a once-in-a-lifetime event for the peninsula at least (because Sabah and Sarawak only became part of Malaysia in 1963) - Malaysians should begin reflecting on all the things we can be thankful for.

And here's something to help some of us keep focused on the good things we should not take for granted about our country.

The official logo of the 50th Merdeka celebrations, with the official theme of *Malaysiaku Gemilang* (My Glorious

Malaysia), is as good a reminder as any, not just to be patriotic, but of what makes us a country we can be proud of.

According to the Press Secretariat of the 50th Merdeka celebrations (see www.mediasecretariatmerdeka50.com.my), the rationale for the logo is as follows:

- » the logo is inspired by our much-prided Jalur Gemilang (national flag) fluttering in the sky - a symbol of Malaysians' love for their country;
- » the red and white stripes have been redesigned into the figure "5" while the crescent moon and the star have been made into the figure "0" to symbolise 50 years; making it the focal point of the logo and our national celebrations;
- » the tail end of the figure "5" is appended to the stigma of the *bunga raya* - our national bloom;

» at the end of the stigma are five dots to symbolise the five principles of our Rukun Negara, which is practised by all Malaysians;

» the over-arching round shape of the logo is italicised and slanted to the right to represent how dynamic our country has been in achieving progress since independence;

» the round shape also denotes how united multi-racial Malaysia is as we experience prosperity and development over the past 50 years;

» the red and white signify all Malaysians; the blue, unity that has been forged by the people; and the yellow symbolises the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and also represents what a glorious nation we've become since

Shape of a Pocket

by Jacqueline Ann Surin

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independence.

Indeed, there is much to be proud about.

But just in case there are still naysayers out there, here's something else to remind us to be thankful for what we have.

The "Cemerlang, Gemilang, Terbilang" national song that has been jingle-ing away on our airwaves and at official functions.

The song's lyrics, as our Prime Minister pointed out on Monday, were reminders on patriotism and striving for excellence, and because the song is in an upbeat tone, it makes it easier for people to memorise the wordings.

"The lyrics are meaningful and should be understood by all. We should not regard it as something that does not bring any benefit. This is poetry at its finest which has been turned into a national song," he told the

monthly assembly for staff of the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya.

Bernama reports Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as saying that achieving the standard of pride as outlined in the song wasn't about displaying arrogance, but was a noble thing to do.

He has a point. National songs can help us feel patriotic and

every effort should be made by Malaysians who love this country to learn these songs and to sing along.

No wonder the premier was disappointed at the assembly that some civil servants have yet to memorise the song and kept silent while it was being sung, and felt it necessary to rap them.

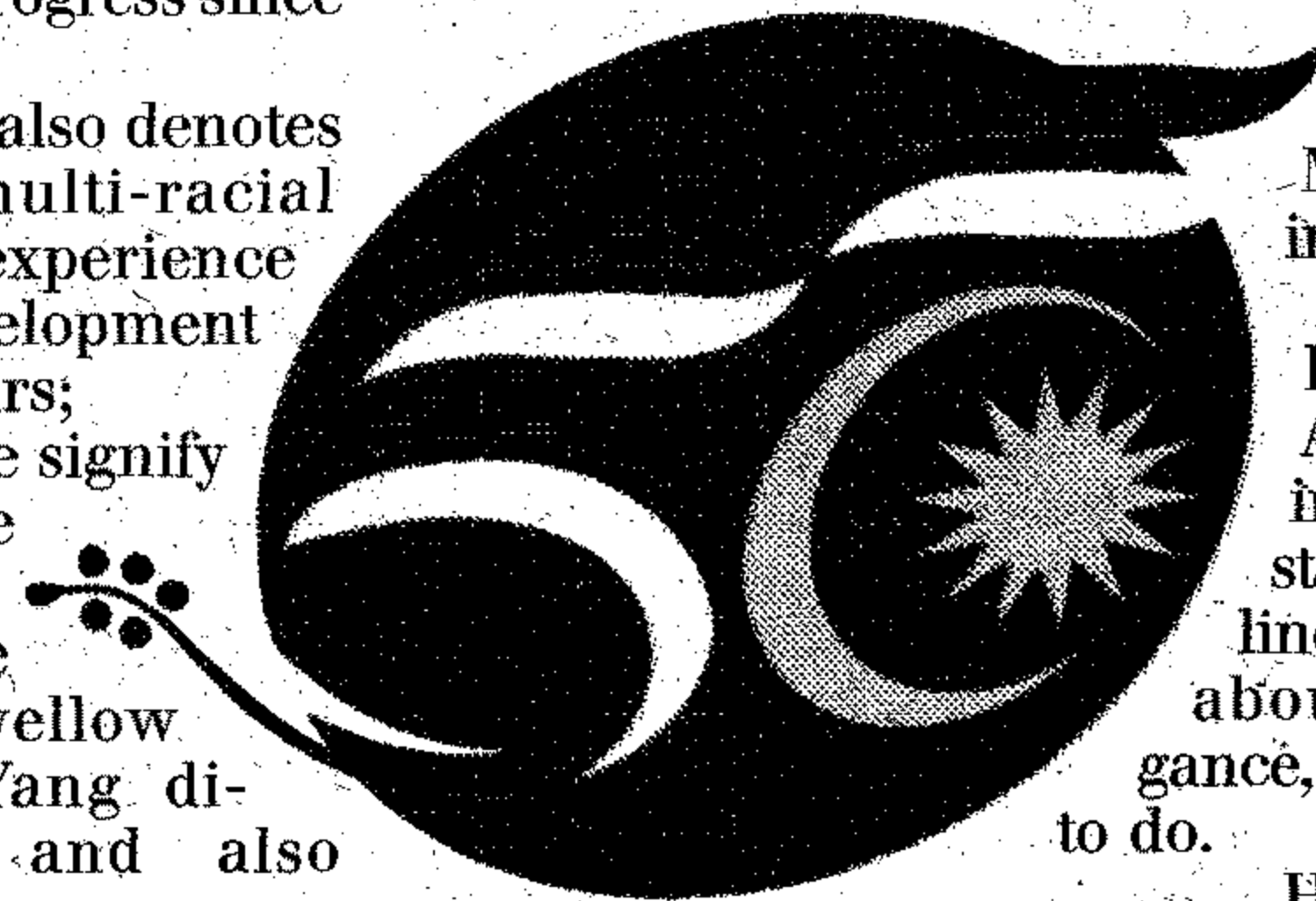
Of course, national celebration logos, national flags and songs are not the only ways we can start feeling patriotic in the run-up to the national day celebrations. But they are useful and important tools that can unite us as a nation.

I'll confess that I don't yet have a national flag on my car or hanging outside my balcony. And I don't yet know how to sing, period. So I'm not certain learning the lyrics of any national song will help rev up the patriotic spirit in my corner of Malaysia.

But I do like the *Malaysiaku Gemilang* theme and have been peppering my conversations with it just to remind myself and others about the things we can be proud about and thankful for.

In the meantime, I think I'll go look for a flag to add to the festivities.

Jacqueline Ann Surin has only one country to be patriotic about, and she's proud that it's Malaysia. She is assistant news editor at the Sun. Comment: feedback@thesundaily.com



Malaysiaku Gemilang