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Emphasise Malaysia Day also, says Tsu Koon

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KUALA LUMPUR: Gerakan yesterday called for more recognition to be given to Malaysia Day on Sept 16 to celebrate the founding of the federation of Malaysia.

Its acting president, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, said that currently, not enough is being done to celebrate this important milestone in the nation's history.

"I urge the government and other quarters not to forget this date," he said after opening the *Kita Anak Malaysia* Merdeka Exhibition

at Berjaya Times Square.

Koh, who is also the Penang chief minister, noted that while there has always been emphasis on celebrating Merdeka Day on Aug 31, the celebration of nationhood should also cover Malaysia Day.

He said the government should take the lead in commemorating this historical day.

The federation of Malaysia was formed on Sept 16, 1963, comprising Sarawak, British North Borneo (which was renamed Sabah), Malaya and Singapore.

Singapore separated from Malaysia on Aug 9, 1965.

The formation of the federation was initially planned to take place on June 1, 1963 but was postponed to Aug 31, 1963 to coincide with Merdeka Day. Indonesian and the Filipino objection to the formation of Malaysia delayed the declaration to Sept 16 of the same year.

Earlier in his speech, Koh said national symbols such as the Jalur Gemilang, Rukun Negara and national anthem *NegaraKu* should be respected. He said while there was no denying that the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious make-up had its challenges, this diversity was also its strength.

Malaysians should be proud and happy that despite their differences, they have continued to be tolerant.

"Yes, there are cases of extreme views. However, I believe the extremists are in the minority. The majority are 'Anak Malaysia'."

"I am confident of the next 50 years. The positive qualities will outshine the inherent difficulties associated with the country's multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural make-up."

Koh said Malaysia could also use its language diversity as an advantage in an increasingly globalised world.