

**Do Not Ignore Merdeka Day Over Political Differences – Rais
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Opposition political parties have been advised not to turn their backs on the Merdeka Day celebration purely on the grounds of political differences with the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, who gave the advice, said they should respect Merdeka Day which was observed annually on Aug 31 and celebrate the occasion with the government.

He was commenting on the proposal by opposition parties, which did not agree with the "Janji Ditepati" (Promises Fulfilled) theme of this year's Merdeka Day, to initiate their own theme of "Sebangsa, Senegara, Sejiwa" (One Nation, One Country, One Soul) and hold a separate Merdeka Day celebration.

"Anyone can give their views, including saying that they do not agree with 'Janji Ditepati' ... also criticise the logo ... but I ask that they do not deviate from respecting Merdeka Day.

"For anyone who is in the opposition in the country, the opposition will not be valid if he or she ignores Merdeka Day," he told reporters after chairing a post-Cabinet meeting of the ministry at the Sultan Abdul Samad building, here.

Rais said that if the opposition insisted on going ahead with a separate Merdeka Day celebration, it would be the first time that the opposition had resorted to doing so since independence.

"There is no necessity to replace (the theme). The government has decided to use 'Janji Ditepati' this year and if there are no drawbacks, we can consider the (opposition's) theme for use with other programmes later.

"I am not upset over whether they accept (the theme) or not. Do what is appropriate as an opposition but I ask that we be together on that day and give emphasis to our love for Malaysia," he said.

Rais also said that eight more graphics in conjunction with Merdeka Day will be published in the media every week up to Aug 31 as a boost for the 55th Merdeka Day celebration this year.

Commenting on allegations by certain quarters that the 'Janji Ditepati' theme was copied from an Indonesian song, he asked these people to come forward with the proof.

Meanwhile, Rais said the telecommunications and multimedia industry in the country generated encouraging investments and income last year, up to RM47 billion compared to RM45 billion in 2010.

"The sector has undergone intensive growth and, as such, not less than 5,000 jobs will be available by 2020.

"We are studying the effectiveness of the Creative Industry Fund and will determine whether to continue with or otherwise based on the effectiveness.

"Through the 'Get Malaysian Business Online' initiative, 20 small and medium enterprises have been able to establish links abroad. We hope to raise this to 37 companies soon," he said.

Rais said the broadband penetration in the country was 64 per cent and would reach 65 per cent soon.

"This is more than the original target of 50 per cent. With the 37 million mobile telephone users and 13.5 million Facebook and Twitter users, Malaysia is at the forefront in driving the broadband initiative," he said.

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