

Be Patriotic, Fly The Jalur Gemilang

BERNAMA

28/08/2018

By Sakini Mohd Said

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- I was driving to work on the Ampang-Kuala Lumpur Elevated Highway (AKLEH) last week when I saw an old man riding a grey scooter.

He looked like he was in his 70s and was dressed in a Jalur Gemilang shirt and a songkok. As I exited AKLEH and merged into the slower traffic along the PKNS Flat in Jalan Tun Razak, I could see that there were sketches of maps, flags and the names of Malaysian colonialists and freedom fighters on his shirt.

The shirt told a story, I thought, and perhaps I could write the story for National Day. So I trailed him in the slow traffic in the hopes of catching up with him and scoring an interview.

However, I lost him in the congestion in front of the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital. Being on a scooter, he easily weaved in and out of traffic and soon left me far behind.

NATIONAL DAY SPIRIT

Dismayed as I was for losing the opportunity to interview the old man, the incident made me reflect on how some people were more eager than others when it comes to celebrating the National Day.

There are many others who do not mind donning such outfits but they usually only do so during the celebration on Aug 31, in commemoration of the date our country freed itself from the shackles of colonialism.

The old man, however, did not care to wait until this Friday to display his "heart on his sleeve". He was proud of Malaysia's independence and wanted everyone to know it.

Sadly, many of us do not share the same sentiments and fail to even fly the Jalur Gemilang in celebration of the national month of August as well as the upcoming Malaysia Day in September. Despite it being days away to the end of August, many public building and housing areas have yet to take the initiative to hang up or fly the Jalur Gemilang outside their premises.

The number of Jalur Gemilang seen around the city is few and far in between. It is as if nothing significant to the country is taking place this month.

Perhaps the only thing they are looking forward to is the three-day holiday, as Aug 31 falls on a Friday.

AWARENESS

Social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye told Bernama that Malaysia would be celebrating its 61st year of independence, yet many seemed to still lack awareness on the significance of celebrating the National Day.

"To be honest, it is rather sad to see how few Jalur Gemilang are being flown at premises and on cars. This is such a contrast to the fiery spirit displayed during the election campaigns, where numerous party flags were flown and posters hung.

"It is a reflection of the lack of patriotism among the public," he said.

It is a different case in the neighbouring Thailand and Indonesia, where the national flag is considered a sacred symbol.

Citizens of all ages would voluntarily display pictures of flags and their leaders on the walls throughout the year and more so during their national day celebrations.

It is, sadly, a different case in Malaysia. Even after 61 years of independence, citizens still have to be reminded of the importance and significance of flying the national flag as the National Day draws near.

This is despite the numerous events held to raise awareness such as Merdeka convoys, screenings of patriotic films and social media campaigns using short video clips such as *Harapan Merdeka*.

HARAPAN MERDEKA

The one-minute-40-second video features a message by the Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who urged the people to fly the Jalur Gemilang to celebrate and commemorate the National Day.

The video shows Dr Mahathir in a conversation with a boy and a girl. One of the children asked him the reason why the Jalur Gemilang was so rarely flown these days.

"Times have changed and people's lives have gotten easier, so they take Merdeka for granted," Dr Mahathir had responded in the video.

The video that was uploaded to the Information Department's official Facebook page has had 105,000 views and been shared 1,700 times as of Aug 15.

Some might question the significance of the mere act of flying the Jalur Gemilang when there are so many other ways to display the love for the country. That is true, but flying the national flag is by far the easiest way to do so. Furthermore, it does not cost much to buy a flag.

"Perhaps some people, especially youths, are more comfortable taking to social media to express their patriotic spirit and that should be encouraged.

"However, we have to accept that we do not live in the virtual world. We need to manifest that spirit in the real world as well.

"The Jalur Gemilang displayed on social media only flies in the virtual world. The impact would be bigger if we were to also do so outside our premises and on our vehicles," said Lee.

FLY THE FLAG

The idea that flying the flag is merely a symbolic act needs to be changed. The flag is not just a piece of cloth but is also a symbol of the country's identity and sovereignty.

Thus, the act of flying the flag is a reflection of patriotism and this is an important aspect of the National Day celebration. Think of how empty the celebration would be without the Jalur Gemilang being flown far and wide.

"Imagine the feeling of walking or driving down an area where we can see our national flag flown everywhere. It would make us feel proud and reflect on how lucky we are to live in this peaceful nation.

"That is why I never fail to fly the national flag outside my home in Taman Maluri every year. That feeling of looking outside your window and seeing the national flag flying in the wind is indescribable," said Lee.

There is still time for the rest of us to join him in his effort. Let us not take for granted the freedom our country has achieved and commemorate it by proudly displaying and flying the Jalur Gemilang!

Edited and translated by Sakina Mohamed

-- BERNAMA

© 2018 BERNAMA. All Rights Reserved. [Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Security Policy](#)

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=1636690>