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## United in celebrating National Day amidst diversity



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BY NUROALBY MOHD REDA

**O**VER the course of more than six decades, our nation has faced its share of challenges and ups and downs in the administration of its political, economic and social affairs as well as in its efforts to unite its plural society under one umbrella – Malaysia.

Regardless of their race, religion, culture or political leanings, Malaysians always make it a point to come together to celebrate National Day on Aug 31 every year.

In celebrating the nation's most significant day and remembering the sacrifices of its leaders and freedom fighters who secured the nation's independence 66 years ago, it is of utmost importance that the current leaders are on the same page on all aspects of the celebrations including the use of a common logo and theme.

Following the unveiling of this year's National Day and Malaysia Day theme – Malaysia Madani: Determination in Unity, Fulfilling Hope – and logo earlier this month, Perikatan Nasional (PN) Youth chief Ahmad Fadhli Shaari suggested that the four states administered by PN, namely Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis, use a different theme and logo for their state-level celebrations.

Commenting on this, dean of the Centre for General and Co-curricular Studies at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia Dr Lutfan Jaes said considering Malaysia is a federation, it is very important that the entire nation uses the same unity tools such as slogans and logos to celebrate National Day, with this year's theme aimed at strengthening the chain of unity in Malaysia's plural society.

He as well as other experts interviewed by Bernama said the proposal to use a theme and logo different from that of the federal government is highly inappropriate.

"The proposal sounds ridiculous and is something that's difficult to accept because we live

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in a country that's governed based on the federal concept. If they (PN-run states) go ahead and do it, their action will indirectly have a debilitating effect on the elements of unification and togetherness," he said.

### Contradict original objective

Lutfan said such a move will also hamper the federal government's efforts to foster the spirit of unity and well-being among the people, more so now after the recent state elections and last year's general election.

He added that the National Day theme or slogan alone is not enough to appreciate the meaning of independence, pointing out that the logo too plays an important part in conveying a message to the community in a form that is easy to understand.

Although Malaysia practices democracy and allows freedom of speech, certain limitations have

been put in place to safeguard the nation's harmony.

Penang Malay Historical and Civilisation Association president Datuk Abdul Kader Md Ali said the limitations are important to prevent certain quarters from playing up sensitive issues that can cause disputes and confusion among the people to the point of disrupting the nation's harmony.

"Before issuing a certain statement or making a proposal, we must first find out if we have the right to do so ... at the state level, the menteri besar or chief minister is responsible for the implementation of matters related to the state's development.

"But the supreme head of each state is the Sultan, Raja, Yang di-Pertuan Besar or Yang di-Pertua Negeri... hence, any proposal (for a state to have its own National Day theme and logo) must get the proper approval because the supreme head of state will also join

in the National Day celebrations," he said.

He said the use of different National Day themes and logos by the federal government and states ruled by the opposition indicates the existence of disputes which, he added, is something that must be avoided to ensure that harmony prevails and the celebrations go on smoothly.

### Strengthen unity agenda

Meanwhile, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris lecturer Dr Siti Nor Amalina Ahmad Tajuddin said the government's unity strengthening agenda must be consolidated comprehensively to ensure the nation remains stable and peaceful in the face of increasingly challenging situations including global economic uncertainty.

Pointing to social media's efficacy in forging unity and togetherness among the people,

she said the government can strengthen unity by conducting campaigns or airing short advertisements on various social media platforms that reflect the harmony enjoyed by the nation's multiracial society.

"The impact can be very significant as it can influence the people... in fact, it can be more impactful if influencers are used to run such campaigns," she added.

Youths too can use social media to do their part to strengthen national unity, she said, adding that the technology at their fingertips allows for positive movements that will stand the nation in good stead.

"Our society is unique in terms of its cultures, customs and languages. This is what is special about Malaysia and needs to be promoted through the new media, and influencers consisting of youths must campaign together to rekindle the patriotic and National Day spirit," she added. – BERNAMA

SHOWING the theme and logo of the National Day celebration





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### SUMMARIES

OVER the course of more than six decades, our nation has faced its share of challenges and ups and downs in the administration of its political, economic and social affairs as well as in its efforts to unite its plural. society under one umbrella - Malaysia. Regardless of their race, religion, culture or political leanings, Malaysians always make it a point to come together to celebrate National Day on Aug 31 every year.