

A giant step for Malaysia towards Vision 2020

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Article

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Hari Raya Aidilfitri has always been a special occasion for all Malaysians.

This year is even more the case in view of the 50th anniversary of independence, epitomised by the launching of the first Malaysian into space.

The word "victory" would most appropriately describe these major events.

Hari Raya Aidilfitri, for instance, is a big "victory" for those who have completed a month-long fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

They rightly deserve to celebrate Hari Raya as a reward for their victorious struggle against worldly wants and demands.

More significant is the mastering of the ego and desires through the disciplined spiritual practices advocated during the fast.

It is without doubt that achieving Merdeka is also a victory. There can be no more important victory for any nation than freeing itself from the shackles of the colonial yoke.

Many lives were laid down to accomplish such a mission, going to show just how prized such victory is. And to be able to sustain it the last 50 years, makes it even more invaluable.

In short, Malaysians of all walks of life have every reason to celebrate this highly symbolic event.

Putting Malaysia's first angkasawan in space this year makes it even more symbolic.



[Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor Sheikh Mustapha has made Malaysia proud](#)

It may be more appropriate to call him "angkasa-naut", much like the Chinese taikonaut, Russian cosmonaut, Russian cosmonaut and the US astronaut.

It is plain to see how the space mission is a definite victory, not just to one person but to an entire nation that has just celebrated 50 years of nationhood. Like the other two victories, this one will also have many ramifications.

Closely intertwined with the notion of victory is yet another word: "freedom". For instance, the Hari Raya celebration is marked by "freedom from the constraints observed during the Ramadan fast.

Since in practical terms there is no such thing as "absolute freedom", the preferred expression of such freedom is in the path of moderation. This is akin to an independent nation that is more in the context of today's interdependent world.

For the angkasanaut, too, the freedom encountered — although of a different kind — is not total. This in part explains why those in space need to be restrained despite being free from the forces of gravity.

The more recent "victory" was when a Malaysian teenager was successfully given a "new" heart, "freeing" her from the heart machine that had sustained her for so long.

She is reportedly getting "stronger" with no indication of tissue rejection — an assuring sign that her road to

"freedom" is now within reach, God willing.

Thus far, this one victory has already generated tremendous multiplier effects, be it in terms of Malaysian kindness and generosity and the outstanding medical skills shown by the team at the Institut Jantung Negara.

It was a major victory for race relations when the first donor and recipient were from two different ethnic groups.

To quote a leader of a political party: "This act of kindness should be an example for all Malaysians. This is what the true spirit of Malaysia is all about."

There's one lesson in all this: perhaps linking "victory" and "freedom" is a matter of the heart.

This is where kindness, sincerity and courage to act seem to originate in making each victory and freedom feasible.

After all, in all these victorious moments, many a heart was touched. Along with it comes "freedom" in the true Malaysian spirit.

Yet, of late, it is this true spirit that has been called into question. Though "victory" and "freedom" are often desirable, they are not without adverse consequences, unless handled properly.

For example, "victory" is not a licence to practise "freedom" according to one's whims and fancies. Similarly, "freedom" cannot be the "absolute" demand of anyone in pursuit of "victory".

Some recent events have raised concerns that there are quarters who might have gone overboard either way, putting the future of the nation at risk.

We, therefore, must be more vigilant and responsible.

Otherwise, it would not be possible to stand as a nation in recognising a momentous victory today as we proudly welcome our angkasanaut back to Mother Earth.

He has ably represented the country in fulfilling the challenge made by second prime minister Tun Razak Hussein during his National Day address in 1971.

More than that, the space adventure has not only united us in our hearts as Malaysia, but most definitely "freed" our minds to go where Malaysians have not dared to go before. The next destination must be to attain victory and freedom under Wawasan 2020.

Bon voyage, Malaysia.

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