

THE Merdeka anniversary today is an unusual and difficult one. While it had been an occasion to celebrate for the last 56 years, the mood is rather sombre this time around.

Although the fallen ones are always remembered and honoured as national heroes during Merdeka, it is quite different this year as the nation has just held a day of mourning for its citizens who died on-board Malaysia Airlines flight MH(My Heroes)17.

When we received their remains flown in from the Netherlands on Aug 22, the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan (@mpkotabelud) posted: "You murdered them in most barbaric, savage & heinous way... Today we buried them with dignity, honour & grace."

The ceremony to receive the remains was executed with such care and sensitivity that the demised were no less heroes in their own way, sacrificing their lives in service to the nation. The story, however, is far from over — not until the findings from the black box are made public and



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those responsible are bought to justice.

So, too, the case of the "missing" Malaysia Airlines plane on flight MH370 which remains unprecedented in commercial aviation history. While there are assurances that the search will go on, the reality is that one gets more anxious as the days go by. The question that invariably comes to mind is: How much longer will it take? As the Malay saying, *hilang tidak berkubur*, implies, it can often be more painful, especially for those who are counting the days. Almost five months have passed without any news to pin one's hope on.

With all these happenings seen in the context of the Merdeka anniversary, one cannot help but cast one's mind back to the particular Merdeka when our warriors had just been killed in as barbaric, savage and heinous ways. The 57th Merdeka

Merdeka, on a poignant note



Raise the Jalur Gemilang and sing Negaraku in full spirit.

anniversary takes on greater depth and meaning. We must not forget or take for granted that lives were

sacrificed to protect the sovereignty of the nation. Flying the Jalur Gemilang and singing *Negaraku* in

full spirit are perhaps the least that can be expected of us.

The state of the country's affairs today is most challenging, particularly the search for a national identity as we approach the year 2020. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was quoted as saying that the tragedy (or tragedies?) has made us stronger given the outpouring of grief by Malaysians. "All this has also steeled our resolve to face whatever challenges lie ahead," he said.

While this is true, we should not display these traits only when we are hit by unprecedented ill-fated chaos. It will be even better if we show these characteristics as a matter of habit.

Meanwhile let us continue to cherish those who have passed away so that we can live harmoniously. The heroes of MH17 and MH370 have brought the nation together like never before — and not only for Merdeka day, but also all the days to come. May they rest in peace and they will never be forgotten by not only their loved ones but also by every Malaysian who feels their loss and pain.