

HORO SCOPE

Aug 23 - Sept 22
Virgo
IT'S not that you're stubborn but, rather, when making plans, you'll already have examined your own priorities and, equally, double-checked the facts.

Sept 23 - Oct 22
Libra
THE last thing you want is to stand up to those who are difficult right from the start. Yet if you don't draw the line in a particular matter now, they will assume you've no objection to things as they are.

Oct 23 - Nov 21
Scorpio
INITIALLY, when you sidestepped mentioning worrying issues, it was because you hoped you could keep them under wraps.

Nov 22 - Dec 20
Sagittarius
THIS isn't just a period of discovery, it's a time during which events are forcing you to broaden your horizons.

Dec 21 - Jan 19
Capricorn
FACTS may be facts. But the minor issues you're quibbling over are distracting you from bigger, more important, matters.

Jan 20 - Feb 17
Aquarius
ORDINARILY, you don't just enjoy hearing what others are up to and about the new ideas they're exploring, but you also benefit from what you learn.

Feb 18 - March 19
Pisces
THE key to dealing with certain persistent, and in some cases, increasingly tricky situations is to do and say the minimum.

March 20 - April 19
Aries
THERE'S a fine line between a constructive but passionate debate and a heated argument. Usually, this is of little importance, but now it is.

April 20 - May 20
Taurus
SOMETIMES differences with others are best ignored. At the moment, however, the more swiftly you address any such issues, the easier they'll be to deal with and put to rest, often at the same time.

May 21 - June 20
Gemini
ALTHOUGH your ruler Mercury is no longer retrograde, it remains in the same portion of your chart, which accents on communication.

June 21 - July 21
Cancer
ONLY days ago, you were excited with existing plans and looking forward with eager anticipation to what's next.

July 22 - Aug 22
Leo
NOBODY is more generous than a Leo who cares about a person, plan or vision for the future.

A show of national pride

> Maybe it's time Dataran Merdeka features a daily flag raising and lowering ceremony together with a marching band performance



AUGUST and September are always special months for Malaysia. It was on Aug 31, 1957, when Malaya gained independence from the British, and it was on Sept 16, 1963, when Malaysia was formed.

Dataran Merdeka in downtown Kuala Lumpur is often the venue for the annual Merdeka march past and other celebrations, but this year's Merdeka celebrations will be held in Putrajaya.

I'm also glad that Kota Kinabalu will host this year's Malaysia Day celebrations, reflecting the inclusive approach of our national leaders.

As in every celebration, there'll always be a march past by marching bands. We should give greater prominence to our talented marching bands. Going by what I have seen at many national and state-level march pasts, I dare say that we have more than 100 marching bands in the country.

We should expose the talents of our bands since so much money had gone into buying expensive musical instruments.

Bands from the Royal Malaysian Police, Royal Malay Regiment and Royal Malaysian Navy have always impressed me. As for school bands, those from Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur, Keat Hwa Secondary School in Alor Star, and St Xavier's Institution in George Town have always caught my eye.

They should be given opportunities to show their capability to the public, not just at annual band competitions or march pasts commemorating Merdeka or Malaysia Day or on special days observed at the state level.

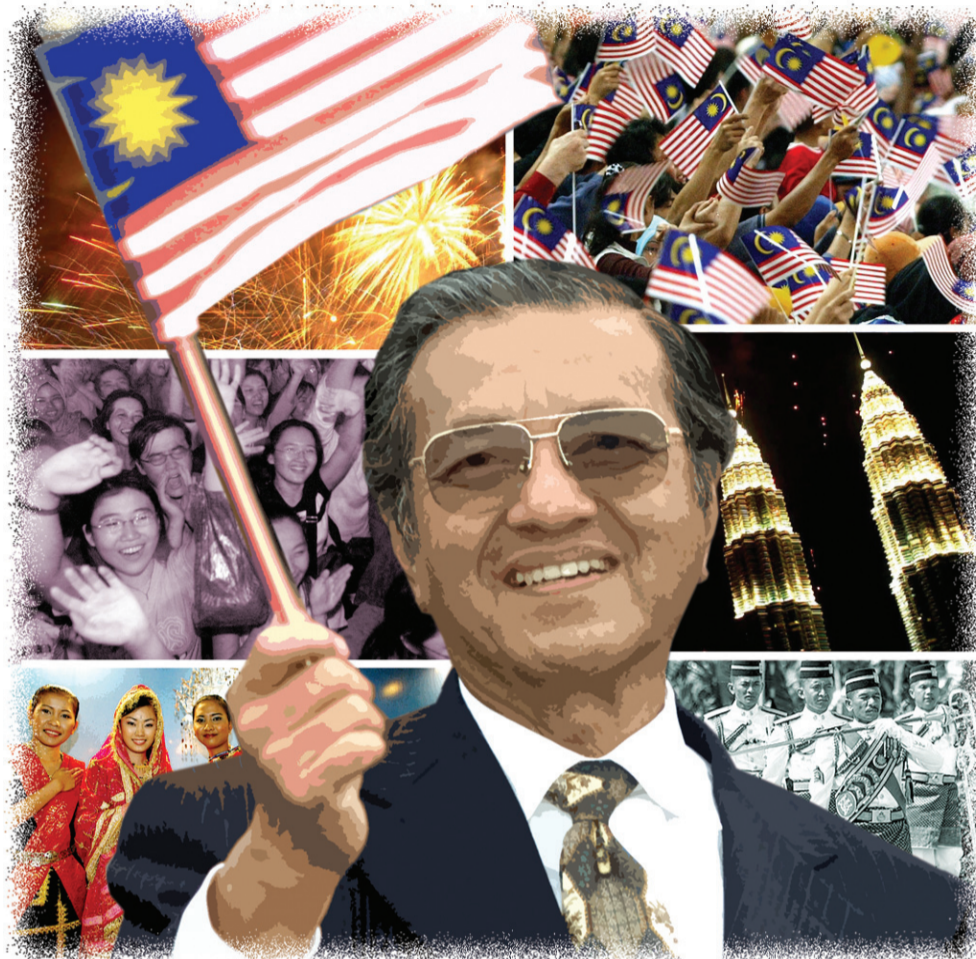
Dataran Merdeka is the ideal place for holding special daily marching band performances for a number of strong reasons.

It would be poignantly patriotic when people can join in to sing the Negaraku during special flag raising and flag lowering ceremonies held in the morning and evening respectively.

A flag pole can be erected at the St Mary's Church end of Dataran Merdeka for this special purpose. The flag ceremonies can be held at 9am and 6pm respectively.

After the flag ceremonies, the bands can play other tunes in their repertoire, say, for about half an hour.

That should certainly add to the colour and attraction of Dataran Merdeka. This way, visitors both foreign and local alike



would have something to look forward to other than take selfies or wefies amidst the picturesque heritage buildings.

To ensure that the ceremonies are done properly, the many uniformed services in the country can be engaged for the task. Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) may perhaps take the initiative to coordinate the participation of these uniformed services and bands by drawing up a monthly or quarterly schedule.

In the event of a sudden non-show because of a scheduling mix-up, DBKL's own marching band can stand in at short notice.

The inspiration for my proposal comes from the daily ceremonies at the jam-packed Tiananmen Square in Beijing, which draw in thousands of visitors every day.

At sunrise, the flag raising ceremony is performed by uniformed troops and lasts for about three minutes. It's estimated that it takes about two minutes and seven seconds

for the entire sun to rise above the horizon. Thus, the flag is raised very slowly in accordance with this duration. Visitors wake up at the crack of dawn to witness this. The flag lowering ceremony is much shorter and lasts for about seven to 10 seconds.

If my humble suggestion is taken up, not only can our level of patriotism be heightened somewhat, the special ceremonies and band performances can also make Dataran Merdeka more attractive to visitors.

And we don't need millions to start this new tourism product.

Jeff Yong, after making his mark in the twisty maze of mainstream journalism, has finally decided to enjoy what he does best - observing the unusual and recounting the gleeful. He can be contacted at lifestyle.borak@gmail.com.

Green hajj slowly taking root in Mecca

THOUSANDS of cleaners in bright green vests are busy separating plastic from other rubbish as more than two million Muslims wrap up a pilgrimage to Mecca that presents a huge environmental challenge for Saudi Arabia.

The Mamuniya camp in Mina near the holy city is dotted with colour-coded barrels - black for organic waste and blue for cans and plastics for recycling.

It's all part of an initiative to reduce the environmental footprint of the haj, one of the world's largest annual gatherings.

More than 42,000 tonnes of waste are produced during the pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites, according to Mohammed al-Saati, head of sanitation for the Mecca municipality.

"We're facing some real challenges, primarily the sheer volume of waste produced ... along with the number of pilgrims, the limited space around the holy



sites, different nationalities and the weather," Saati told AFP.

"Islam as a religion does not encourage excess. Pilgrims can be friends of the environment. It starts by raising awareness back home."

The haj, from Aug 19 to 24,

drew nearly 2.4 million Muslims from around the world this year, according to official Saudi figures.

More than 13,000 sanitation workers and supervisors were hired during the pilgrimage season, which saw temperatures rise to

44°C this week.

A handful of camps in the town of Mina, the site of the symbolic stoning of the devil ritual, have begun to implement plans to turn 'green', cutting back on waste and encouraging pilgrims to do their part.

Banners hanging near the Kaaba, a black structure inside Mecca's Grand Mosque towards which Muslims around the world pray, also featured the recycle logo this year.

Authorities aim to cut waste volumes by two-thirds by 2030, Saati said, with a plan that speaks to both environmental ethics and religious belief.

Sorted waste collected from the pilgrimage sites will be sold to companies that handle recycling.

All proceeds will be given to charity in standing with the Muslim belief in 'sadaqah', or voluntary donations. - AFP-Relaxnews