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# Let's celebrate Neighbours Day

**A** PROPOSAL to recognise a day as "Neighbours Day" is certainly an idea that should be given due consideration by our leaders.

Almost every day of the year marks a special observance, recognised by the United Nations and observed internationally. They include International Women's Day on March 8 and World AIDS Day on Dec 1. Additionally, there are weeks, years and decades assigned and recognised for specific purposes, such as 2010, the International Year of Youth.

Without being nostalgic, I am sure many of us could say with confidence that in the past there was a great deal of good neighbourliness. We talked, studied, played, enjoyed and interacted much more closely than what neighbours do today.

Neighbourhoods and communities were so well knit through common values and pursuits that they relished the spirit of sharing and caring for one another.

Changing life patterns, work and study demands, modern technology, different approaches to pastimes and social contacts, and perhaps house and residential area designs, among others,

have indeed distanced us from our neighbours. Many do not even know or have had any contact with their neighbours and, sadly, do not even feel the necessity to do so.

It is a pity that sometimes it has to be an emergency or tragedy that brings neighbours together. At times, we even find out too late that our neighbours could have been of vital help to us had we only known them.

There is a need for us to recognise and reassert in a tangible way the strength of neighbourhoods and communities as coherent, helpful entities where everyone feels his or her responsibility to each other and no one needs to be left alone or uncared for.

Being good neighbours holds the key not only to mutually more satisfying and rewarding lives, but also on a wider basis to fraternal peace and communal harmony among our fellow Malaysians of different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds and even among neighbouring nations.

"Neighbours Day" in many European communities this year was held on May 28. An initiative of the European Federation of Local Solidarity (EFLS), a non-

profit organisation based in Paris, this observance over the past 10 years has proven to be such a success that it has spread to Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and the US though in some countries there has been a longer history of "Neighbours Day" which is marked on a different date. EFLS today claims a network of about 1,100 cities and communities in nearly 40 countries.

"Neighbours Day" should be a means of bringing neighbours and communities together to have fun, learn about each other, share experiences, exchange neighbourhood best practices and thereby help foster a more cohesive society.

Being good neighbours should be an important part of our national fabric and can certainly help us to be more caring and responsible towards our neighbours and fellow Malaysians. Therefore, it seems only fitting that one day a year be set apart to honour neighbours and develop a real sense of mutual community and social well-being and togetherness.

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