



Tunku Abdul Rahman leads an Alliance procession to publicise amnesties for communists at the end of the Emergency.



Unravelling the history behind 'Malaysia'

KUALA LUMPUR: The formation of Malaysia had a lot to do with Britain and communism, says Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Kim.

After World War II, he said, the rivalry between Russia and the United States began.

The United States then put pressure on Britain, resulting in the independence of India in 1947, and Burma (Myanmar) in 1948.

To set an example, the US granted the Philippines independence in 1946.

At the end of World War II in 1945, the British decided that Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and Brunei should form a British dominion.

"This was the original plan until they were pressured by the United States to free their colonies.

"They also found it wiser not to push the Malay kingdoms into a state of being colonised."

There were no British colonies before World War II, said Khoo, as the British had signed agreements

As Malaysia Day approaches tomorrow, eminent historian Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Kim and former chief secretary to the government Tan Sri Abdullah Ayub talk to SONIA RAMACHANDRAN about the events leading up to the formation of Malaysia. And the belly dancer who delayed the signing

with the Malay rulers to run the country on their behalf.

"They signed treaties to protect the Malays. This is very important as this contributed to the shape and direction of the Federation of Malaya," he said.

The Straits Settlements comprising Penang, Malacca, Singapore and Dinding in Perak were the only states under the control of the British, said Khoo.

"Dinding was returned to Perak in 1936. The British representative to the Straits Settlements was called a governor, whereas the British representative to the Malay states was called a High Commissioner," he said.

The formula for making what

was called "Malaya" into a nation state was very complicated, said Khoo.

"The Malays strongly felt that this must remain a Malay country and that they, as subjects of the rulers, should be a privileged people.

"This was a problem, but the three leaders of the major race-based parties in the country agreed to compromise and become a nation state first and then solve these problems.

"The agreement between the leaders is now known as a social contract."

In the original plan, Singapore was not included as the population balance would have been

"disturbed", said Khoo.

"But in 1960, Lee Kuan Yew (the first Singapore prime minister) had trouble dealing with the leftist parties in the country, so he needed the support of the Federation of Malaya. This idea of Malaysia, with Singapore and Malaya, then began.

"But the Malays would not have been happy with just this merger, so Sabah and Sarawak had to come in to even out the numbers.

"That was how the term 'Bumiputera' was coined," said Khoo.

"Strictly speaking, the term Bumiputera refers to the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak who are not Muslims.

"According to the law then,

there would be no Bumiputeras in the peninsula," he said.

"Britain then came in and we had the Cobbold Commission to investigate and prove that Sabah and Sarawak wanted to join Malaya.

"Recent findings, however, show that Sabah and Sarawak were told by the British to accept the Malaysia proposal," he said.

How did the name Malaysia come about? According to Khoo, the name "Malaysia" was used long before 1963.

One example of this was a book in the 1930s, written by a western author about the country called *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* which referred to

Oath stone a reminder of pledges, terms for joining Federation

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KENINGAU: To first time visitors, the huge stone in front of the District Office here could be nothing more than a part of the landscape.

But those who care to take a closer look at the stone would find that it has historical significance.

Weighing more than two tonnes, it is actually an oath stone, displaying the terms under which the interior natives of Sabah agreed to the formation of Malaysia.

The terms, inscribed on a plaque made by the Thornycraft Shipyard in Singapore, are:

- Freedom of religion in Sabah;
- The state government of Sabah holds complete authority over land in the state; and,
- Native customs and traditions must be respected and preserved by the government.

According to the elders here, the idea of the oath stone was to resolve the reservation natives in the interior of Sabah had about joining the Federation of Malaysia.

"Religion, land and their customs and traditions were something very close to their hearts and they wanted some form of assurance on the matter, hence the oath stone," said teacher Francis Andin.

The laying of oath stones is a custom practised by the natives of Sabah since time immemorial to demonstrate their commitment and pledge to important matters that need protecting.

As an example, villagers will put up an oath stone by a river they want



Pupils of SK St Francis Xavier in Keningau taking a closer look at the oath stone. — NST picture by Francis Andin

to protect from those who fish indiscriminately.

Spelt out on the oath stone would be the list of prohibitions and the form of punishment meted out against those who went against it.

There are numerous oath stones in Sabah but nothing is probably as significant as this one in front of the Keningau district office.

To the interior natives of Sabah, made up mainly of Dusun and Murut, the oath stone is a reminder of their acceptance and pledge of loyalty to the Malaysian federation.

The oath stone was laid down on

Aug 31, 1964, a year after Sabah gained independence from the British.

Although Sabah gained its independence on Aug 31, 1963, it only joined the Federation of Malaysia 16 days later, on Sept 16, 1963.

The slight delay was to allow for a survey by the United Nations to determine if the Sabah people wanted to join the federation after Indonesia and the Philippines had protested against the idea.

The man instrumental in laying down the historical oath stone was former state secretary Tan Sri

Richard Lind, who was the then Keningau district officer.

The stone was specially selected from the Pegalan river, near Kampung Senagang here.

Due to the size and weight of the stone, it took considerable time and effort to winch it onto a lorry to be transported to the site in the middle of town chosen by the local native chiefs.

After it was placed there, a ritual called the "moningolig" was performed by native priests or "bobolian".

The oath stone was unveiled by then federal labour minister Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam on behalf of then prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Among those present were Sabah's first chief minister Tun Fuad Stephens, prominent opposition leader Datuk G.S. Sundang and local community leaders.

District officer Zulkifli Nasir said people still held dearly to the oath as evidenced by the annual "moningolig" ritual every Aug 30.

"Its like an annual renewal of the promise.

"Tradition here remains an important part of people's lives and it is the essence of Keningau's progress because they feel duty bound to keep their end of the bargain when the stone was placed."

As for the deal promised by the government, Zulkifli said the progress achieved since Malaysia was formed was testimony to this.



Eminent historian Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Khoo Kay Kim says Malaysia was formed primarily to check the spread of communism

this country as "Malaysia".

"The Malays never accepted the word 'Malaya'. They associated that name with the non-Malays before World War II.

"They wanted the word 'Melayu', so 'Malaysia' was a compromise," said Khoo.

Former chief secretary to the government Tan Sri Abdullah Ayub said the government started developing the economy after Merdeka.

This was when the Red Book System was introduced, said Abdullah, who was then with the Treasury as the deputy director of the Budget.

"This system planned the development of each district. It dealt with roads, water supply, electricity and irrigation.

"The government spent a lot of money to develop the rural areas," he said.

Then came the First Malaya Plan — for a period of five years.

In July 1963, Abdullah was part of the delegation that went to discuss the Malaysia Agreement with the British.

“When it came to Singapore, the discussions took a long time. There were problems with taxation and there were also concerns about all the industries moving to Singapore which was practising free trade then,” he said.

When the problems were ironed out, the agreement was supposed to be signed on July 9, 1963 at night, said Abdullah but the Malaysian delegation, including the representatives from Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore went to a restaurant called Omar Khayyam.

“It dragged on because there was a belly dancer there. We were supposed to meet the British at 9pm but we got delayed by one hour and didn't turn up till past 10pm.

“The British were worried and thought we had had another disagreement. They were quite relieved when we turned up.

“The report came in September and Malaysia Day had to be declared on Sept 16, 1963,” Abdullah said.

Exhibition tells of nation's growth and achievements

KUALA LUMPUR: On Malaysia Day tomorrow, take a journey through the country's achievements in the last 50 years.

An exhibition called “We are the children of Malaysia” will be held at the lower ground level of Berjaya Times Square here.

“It is a journey through history, dating from the Malacca empire, to the rise of nationalism, independence and post-independence,” the exhibition's organiser, Stephen Doss, said.

Fourteen exhibition panels in red and white, which feature the country's story, connect to the largest indoor Malaysian flag measuring 50 feet by 50 feet which hangs from the ceiling.

“There are not enough programmes or emphasis on Malaysia Day, although it is a day to recognise everybody.

“We can see from the exhibition that

people of different races and religions were involved in achieving independence.”

Doss, who is the head of Gerakan's non-governmental organisation and youth bureau, said the exhibition showed the party's commitment to a multi-racial Malaysia.

The exhibition, which ends on Sept 30, was organised by the bureau and the National Youth Association of Malaysia, of which Doss is president.

Acting Gerakan president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who is also Penang chief minister, will launch the exhibition on Sunday at 3pm.

In conjunction with the event, 150 college students from around the country will attend a workshop to discuss the country's direction in the next 50 years, after which they will present the roadmap to Koh.



Stephen Doss pointing at the largest indoor Malaysian flag, which measures 50ft by 50ft.