

How our independence came two years early

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KUALA LUMPUR: If not for the rain which fell one night in 1955, Malaysians would only be celebrating the 50th anniversary of independence in 2009.

Shortly after becoming the chief minister in 1955, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was given a house previously occupied by the Selangor Menteri Besar to stay in.

The house was spacious and nice, but one night, the nation's soon-to-be first prime minister was soaked in the leaky house.

"What happened was, after we (the Alliance) had won the 1955 elections, I had set a time-frame of four years for us to gain independence. But after getting soaked that night, I swore there and then

to cut that time frame by half.

"So, instead of gaining independence in 1959, we gained it two years earlier. I went to the British and told them we wanted independence in 1957 and the date was set for Aug 31, 1957. Of course, I did not tell them about being soaked during the rainstorm."

This was revealed during a never-before-seen interview with the Father of Independence aired over RTM1's *Galeri Perdana* last night. The interview was conducted in 1985, five years before his death.

On the 1955 elections, Tunku said the Alliance had threatened to pull out of the race due to what was perceived as interference by the British. "In the Kuala Lumpur elections in 1952, the Alliance (then comprising only Umno and MCA) won nine of 12 seats. Then in

Johor and Kedah, we won all the seats.

"When the 1955 elections were going to be held, our opponents and the British were worried. The British decided that apart from the 52 seats, they would appoint seven other seats. So, even if we had won all the seats, it would not be a 100 per cent victory. We threatened to pull out," he said.

On the Baling talks, the Tunku said he was contacted by a close associate of Chin Peng and agreed to meet with the Communist Party of Malaya secretary-general.

"I was opposed by the High Commissioner and his generals and admirals when I told them about it. I had brought along (Singapore's Chief Minister) David Marshall for support, but even he sided with them and I was left all alone."



Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was soaked in the leaky house