

When two lorries provided the stage

It was not the frills that mattered but the occasion and how the people responded to the announcement on Merdeka. An Umno veteran relates to P. SELVARANI the events of that historic day



THERE was little money around to make elaborate preparations for that important announcement but the special Malacca committee rose to the occasion.

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj was scheduled to announce the date of Malaya's independence at the Banda Hilir Padang along the Malacca seafront and a crowd of 100,000 was expected.

The organising committee, made up of members from the Alliance (now Barisan Nasional) coalition, had to think on its feet. Tunku and his delegation had to



Datuk Borhan Md Yaman was involved in many pre-Merdeka events

be seen as well as heard loud and clear.

Datuk Borhan Md Yaman, 78, vividly recollects the day Malaysians learnt they would become a free people, 51 years ago: "We



Tunku Abdul Rahman (left) and Borhan Md Yaman during a Malacca Umno meeting at the Meng Seng Charitable Association Hall in 1966. — Pictures courtesy of Datuk Borhan Md Yaman

borrowed two lorries from a Chinese towkay, pulled the side and back wooden panels down, put the vehicles back to back and we had a stage."

It was Feb 20, 1956 and Borhan was a 27-year-old teacher and secretary of the Malacca Umno division.

"It was a great honour for us to

host such a historic event."

The idea to get Tunku to announce the date of independence in Malacca was mooted by the Kuala Kangsar Umno branch on the grounds that Malaya should rise from the very place the Malacca empire fell.

And there was no better venue than the Banda Hilir padang at

the foot of the ruins of the once mighty Portuguese fortress, the A Famosa.

Borhan remembers that morning as a refreshing day following a pre-dawn shower.

As dawn broke, it became bright and sunny, welcoming the swelling crowd at the padang, some of whom had camped overnight to make sure they heard the historic proclamation.

(Tun) Ghafar Baba, the Malacca Umno division chief, was chairman of the organising committee, while Borhan took charge of the welcoming sub-committee.

"We did not have the kind of money parties now have for such major events.

"We had to make do with whatever we had and had to dig into our own pockets," Borhan relates during a recent interview at his home in Klebang Besar, Malacca.

Tunku and his delegation arrived at the Batu Berendam airport in Malacca from London via Singapore that morning and a motorcade took them to Banda Hilir.

The Malacca Umno Youth members, who were mostly teachers, were on motorcycles and they led Tunku's motorcade from the airport to Banda Hilir.

"I was at the padang awaiting the arrival of the motorcade



The eager crowd awaiting Tunku's arrival at the Banda Hilir Padang. In the background is the old Malacca Club building, which now houses the Independence Proclamation Memorial.