

Celebrating the Malaysian Story

T Sun pg 12 12.7.07

GOLDEN anniversaries are special moments, not least because they happen only once in a lifetime.

Our Merdeka anniversary this year is no different.

Fifty years of peaceful and prosperous nationhood – a result of visionary leaders, thoughtful citizenship and abundant resources – is something we can all be proud of.

As *theSun* kicks off its 50-day countdown to this year's 50th Merdeka celebrations, we use this moment as an opportunity to reflect on our nation's history, to be mindful of our current situation, and to express hopes for our future.

Conceptualised by *theSun* editors – Zainon Ahmad, Chong Cheng Hai, Lee Boon Siew, Rash Behari, Cindy Tham and I, with support from Nexnews group editor-in-chief Ho Kay Tat and deputy group editor-in-chief Dorothy Teoh, and *theSun* and *The Edge*'s editorial teams, this Merdeka series also benefited from the input of our consultant historian Dr Cheah Boon Kheng.

We are indebted to the numerous Malaysians, among them personalities, thinkers and essayists, who contributed their ideas and stories.

We begin with the history of our nation's struggle for independence. From Penghulu Dol Said of Naning who in the 19th century resisted British control to the communists who waged a guerilla war to the Alliance leaders who negotiated our independence to past and current community leaders, we hope these stories will remind all of us about the sacrifices involved in securing our sovereignty and maintaining our democracy.

We pay special attention to the Reid Commission's formulation of our Federal Constitution as the supreme law of the land which underlined the social contract between the different ethnic groups as the country was about to be born.

The countdown will also note the nation's trials and tribulations over the past 50 years that we may avoid repeating past errors of judgment and injustices. We hope readers will especially be encouraged by Malaysian stories of kindness arising from the May 13 racial clashes.

Just as importantly, we highlight our achievements as a nation – in economics, social development, sports, politics, and global leadership – and our multiculturalism as a people originating from rich, diverse cultures from both the East and the West.

We will end our countdown with a vision for the future by notable Malaysians with the hope that benchmarks can be set for the years to come.

We hope that *theSun*'s Merdeka series of stories will remind those who've lived since before 1957 and those born after it what sacrifices and contributions were involved in gaining nationhood.

Nations are political constructs. Malaysia, as our history shows us, is proof of how nation states are not naturally-occurring. They are defined and held together by political, economic and social considerations.

What keeps us going then as a nation since our history also shows us that political, economic and social factors can shift, hence changing the need to belong to a particular political entity?

We hazard that it's a sense of belonging to this nation.

If we are all Malaysians first, and treat others, and are ourselves, treated as such, Malaysia will continue to be peaceful and prosperous.

We have already proven that it can be done. *Malaysiakini Gemilang* – this year's Merdeka slogan – is not mere fiction.

But fact can be fictionalised. The trick to keeping us a glorious nation is to remember where we came from and to understand where we are heading.

We hope this Merdeka countdown does just that.

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theSun Merdeka coordinator