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A man called Mohd Malaysia

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PENANG, Thurs. - To be named after great personalities or well-known places is normal. But to be named after a country before its "birth"?

Well, meet a Singaporean whose late father named him Mohamad Malaysia Kassim before Malaysia was "born".

Mohamad was born in 1962, a year before Malaysia officially came into being.

Mohamad, an engineer with Tractors Singapore, said his father, Kassim Meerasahib, fully supported the formation of Malaysia.

In the early 1960s, he said, the name 'Malaysia' was among the popular choices for a new nation after Malaya gained independence in 1957.

"I suppose my father seriously wanted the new nation to be named Malaysia.

"He named me Malaysia and true enough, a new nation, bearing the name was formed in 1963," he said adding that his father lived through the new nation's formation.

And for his high respect for Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Mohamad Malaysia named his second son, Mahathir.

Mohamad Malaysia and Mahathir, four, are regular visitors to Penang since they have relatives here.

"I named my son after Dr Mahathir because I strongly believe he is the best Prime Minister Malaysia has ever had," he said.