

Tracing back May 13
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It all started when the election results of May 10, 1969 were announced the following day.

NONEThe Alliance for the first time since independence, was denied two thirds majority in Parliament and lost the states of Kelantan and Penang.

The Perak and Selangor state legislatures were suspended because no party had majority.

However, in Selangor, the Alliance later gained control as the sole independent candidate entered its fold.

To celebrate its outstanding performance, the opposition held a victory procession on May 12, with permission from the police.

NONEChinese and Indian supporters of then opposition Gerakan and DAP, jubilantly joined in the procession which was led by Gerakan icon Dr Tan Chee Khoo from his clinic and political office, Tan Dispensary, located on Jalan Batu (now known as Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman).

In the memoirs 'May 13 Before and After' of then Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, he said the licensed procession for a 1,000 party members turned into a march of hooligans.

"The madness of victory was at its peak and the crowd was no longer in control. The communists took advantage and incited emotions," vented Tunku in his book.

NONEThe march had shifted course to Jalan Campbell (now Jalan Dang Wangi) and Jalan Hale (left) (now Jalan Raja Abdullah (below) towards the Malay dominated Kampung Baru and passed by the then Menteri Besar Harun Idris' house.

"They marched carrying brooms, trying to say that the Malay race will be swept off. They carried brooms to sweep Datuk Harun out of the house," said an eyewitness who was 18 at the time.

NONEIn their exuberance to show who was in power, they shouted insulting epithets at the Malays in the area and displayed rude gestures. That was when the Malays rose in anger, he said.

The demonstration later subsided, but it did not end there. Sore and seething, the Malays then planned to hold their own rally the next day.

The Menteri Besar's house (right) which is now a construction site for a high rise condominium, acted as the base operations for the rally.

Machetes and rods

NONEAccording to the eyewitness, Malays from several strongholds in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor had gathered at Harun's house where weapons such as wooden rods and machetes were already at hand.

The news had reported that the Chinese had attacked two Malays in Setapak. The bloodbath began around 6pm.

At the junctions of Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman and Jalan Raja Muda Aziz, the clash began between a Malay mob and Indian and Chinese youths.

The bustling businesses along Jalan Batu, including prominent shopping complexes such as Batu Road Supermarket and textile merchant Globe Silk Store had closed down on sight of the clash.

The mob had gradually moved past the old Umno headquarters where Bank Muamalat is now located and proceeded to the Odeon theatre, where a Malay couple were believed to have been butchered.

NONEThat evening, the capital city was engulfed in racial riots. The main business areas in Gombak, Setapak and Kampung Pandan were also affected.

In the wee hours of May 13, Tunku's voice was heard on the radio, declaring a state of emergency.

Curfew was imposed in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

According to official reports on May 14, 196 people were killed but unofficial figures were estimated at nearly 1,000.

On May 16, the National Operations Council (NOC) was formed and headed by the Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein to govern the country in place of a suspended Parliament, and Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman was appointed Internal Security Minister.

NONETwo years later, NOC was dissolved and Parliament was restored under the leadership of Premier Abdul Razak Hussein. He succeeded Tunku, who was forced to resign.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was established in 1971 to address the issues of unequal distribution of wealth among the races.

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