

M'sia Day on Sept 16 an accident of history
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It has been said so many times that there is a misconception "that Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaya which was then re-named Malaysia."

There is no misconception.

Go back to the early 60s. Britain was effete, weakened by the war and not prepared to hang on to colonies. Distant possessions like North Borneo and Sarawak of little or no economic or strategic value had to be "disposed of" somehow. Parking them with the newly-independent and quite stable Federation of Malaya seemed the logical choice, and so Tunku was arm-twisted to take in North Borneo and Sarawak to, inter alia, protect them from Sukarno's Indonesia.

Singapore had its own reasons for "merger". Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party, after two critical by-election losses in Hong Lim and Anson and faced with a breakaway faction called the Barisan Socialis with powerful and influential former comrades like Lim Chin Siong and Lee Siew Choh, had no choice but to seek refuge behind Tunku's sarong or else face political defeat and oblivion.

The form of the formation of Malaysia may seem like a joining of four "equal" partners but only a blind man would see it that way. The substance was for the other three to become three more additional members of the 11-member Federation... hence the additional three points in the star and three stripes on the national flag.

The constitution of Malaysia was just an amended constitution of the Federation of Malaya. The paramount ruler became Agong of Malaysia instead of Malaya. In federal-State relationship, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak were treated the same like Johor, Malacca or Kelantan.

Once again, I must remind political leaders to read up on their history when talking about Sept 16, 1963. The planned date for Malaysia day was Aug 31, 1963 and all the records of the enabling legislations and enactments in the British Parliament, the Malayan Parliament, the Legislative Assemblies of Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak made Aug 31, 1963 as the day for dissolution and reformation.

The postponement to Sept 16, 1963 was to enable the United Nations fact-finding team (formed in a vain attempt to appease Indonesia's Sukarno that Malaysia was not "neo-colonialism") to complete its research and to report to Secretary-General U Thant. The 16th of September was never meant to be 'Malaysia Day', just an accident of history.

But the cheekiest part of presenting Malaysia as a group of four equal partners must be that ... The Federation of Malaya was an independent country and a member of the United Nations Organisation whereas Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak were British colonies, with the last two barely wet behind the ears when it came to self-rule and administration.

Britain used its clout as the main defence partner (the other being Australia and New Zealand) to force Tunku to pander to all the demands made by North Borneo and Sarawak (Singapore needed Malaysia more than Malaysia needed it so was less demanding); hence

the 20-point agreement which was meant as a transitional protection against carpet-baggers from the more advanced Federation and Singapore. Today, to the shame of Sabah and Sarawak, some of the safeguards have been and are still being blatantly misused to deny entry to opposition politicians.

Sabah and Sarawak may well be justifiably peeved at their mistreatment by the national administration for the last 50 years or so but misrepresenting history like what is done almost ritually and annually around the beginning of September each year is not the solution.

I hope Cigma chairperson Jeffrey Kitingan will send me an invitation to be a speaker at the seminar, 'Malaysia 1963 - The Promised Revisited'. My email address is yfyap88@gmail.com.

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