

**Tunku - the true believer of 1Malaysia**  
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53th MERDEKA The free intermingling of Malays, Chinese and Indians working together in harmony was the main reason Malaya achieved independence in 1957 without shedding a drop of blood.

"The greatest source of our pride has been the manner in which it has been achieved. It has been won by the spontaneous support of all communities in this country – Malays, Chinese, Indians and others who regard Malaya as their home," said the nation's founder and first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

malaysia indepenence merdeka tunku abdul rahman declare 290806Tunku made this remark six months before Independence Day, Aug 31, 1957.

We talk about 1Malaysia now as if it is something new, but it used to be taken for granted when there was no divide among the races as there is now, when there was hardly any talk of which race we belonged to.

What happened along the way? Was it the education system that molded us into thinking ourselves as different from the other? Why are school principals, who are supposed to emulate the concept of 1Malaysia. using racial slurs to divide the nation?

Fifty-three years ago, Tunku was convinced that this nation could survive only when the races were united. From this foundation of national unity in work, in play, in life, Malaya got its independence. I was eight years old then. There was no need for a campaign for 1Malaysia because we were all seen as one nation, one race - Malaysians.

In schools, we all played as though we were of one race without noticing what creed, culture or religion we belonged to. I studied, ate and played with all races, and I did not have any mental block as to how a Malay or Chinese child was different from me. My parents would take me, my brothers and sisters to visit all the different places of worship during the various religious festivals.

'Not a drop of blood'

On Feb 9, 1957, Tunku as then-chief minister of Malaya, in a speech broadcast over Radio Malaya, said: "Throughout our campaign, not one outbreak of violence occurred and, true to the pledge I gave, not one drop of blood was spilt in our constitutional struggle for Independence.

NONE"The Independence of Malaya has, therefore, been won by the measure of goodwill which exists among the various peoples of this country as much as by their united efforts and patriotism and love for this land. Finally, the good understanding between Great Britain and Malaya has enabled Great Britain to appreciate fully our national aspirations."

The speech was part of a nationwide campaign for contributions to fund the inaugural Merdeka celebrations.

Can you guess what the amount was for the celebrations? It was just a meager one million dollars (then).

"A certain portion of this sum will be required by government itself for the entertainment of foreign guests who will be invited to our celebrations," said Tunku.

In speaking of Independence Day, he emphasised that "we have become a free nation solely through the efforts and support of the public themselves."

"You will recall that the Alliance took the political field on the paramount issue of independence, and in the national election, the fact that Alliance candidates swept the board with a majority hitherto unknown in any country in the world indicates that the public decided in no uncertain terms that they want Independence."

"When the delegation (of Malayan ministers and political leaders) went to England in 1956, we made known to the British government the wishes of the people. The British government accepted these wishes with good grace. They agreed to the date proposed by us for the granting of independence.

NONE" But while the achievement of our independence is a matter of which we can be justly proud, all of us should remember our Independence Day with a feeling of thankfulness and gratitude.

"We must thank God for our achievement, and at the same time I would like to thank all of you for your support. The occasion we are to celebrate is the birth of a new nation. Let us make this event unforgettable."

A disturbed, distracted world

The public would no doubt have its own ideas on how to celebrate the event, and he allowed them a free hand in organising shows and public entertainment.

Tunku was seen as a leader who listened and was liberal in the way he wanted citizens to play a more dominant role. There was a consensus that the money should be spent wisely, and the leaders listened to the people.

tunku abdul rahman Given the racial unity among Malaysians, Tunku would not have tolerated allusions to some citizens being penumpang (free-riders) and pendatang (immigrants). He would have nipped it in the bud instead of waiting and delaying action against government servants who use such words to humiliate the other races.

Neither would the Tunku have tolerated corruption reaching such heights of indecency as it is now.

Imagine, only one million dollars was allocated for the celebrations. If we had gotten back the billions that have gone to corruption over the past 53 years, we could celebrate in streets paved in gold.

Tunku words in his speech on Independence Day reverberated throughout the Merdeka Stadium where it was delivered, just as they reverberate to this day:

"But while we think of the past, we look forward in faith and hope to the future: from henceforth, we are masters our destiny, and the welfare of this beloved land is our own responsibility. Let no one think we have reached the end of the road: independence is indeed a milestone, but it is only the threshold to high endeavour—the creation of a new and sovereign state.

“At this solemn moment, therefore, I call upon to dedicate yourselves to the service of the new Malaya: to work and strive with hand and brain to create a new nation, inspired by the ideals of justice and liberty – a beacon of light in a disturbed and distracted world.”

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