

**Tunku risked his life for nation's freedom**  
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Many may not know about the bravery of the country's first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman who risked his life while on the trail to campaign for the country's freedom.

According to Tunku Abdul Rahman's only son, Tunku Ahmad Nerang Putra, most of the British colonialists despised the senior Tunku due to his vocal demands for freedom of the nation.

Tunku Ahmad Nerang said the late former prime minister had revealed a secret on an incident that happened in 1954 that brought concerns about his safety.

At that time, the colonial government had appointed Tunku Abdul Rahman a member of the Federal Legislative Council and entrusted with the Transport portfolio.

In an official duty, Tunku Abdul Rahman boarded a British aircraft from the Kuala Lumpur Flying Club airstrip.

Tunku Ahmad Nerang said his father then suspected that something was amiss when he saw only a single parachute available on the Beaver aircraft even though there were two people on board, Tunku Abdul Rahman and the British pilot.

According to Tunku Ahmad Nerang, during the flight the pilot had asked his father all sorts of questions about the position of the British in Malaya after independence and demanded an assurance from Tunku Abdul Rahman that he would not expel the British nationals from Malaya.

"Tunku (Abdul Rahman) had calmly answered that Malaya still needed the British soldiers even though after independence particularly in fighting the communists and this assurance had pacified the British pilot," said Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

He said after the plane had landed safely, his late father had confided that the pilot could have bailed out from the plane and left Tunku Abdul Rahman alone if the first prime minister had not given the assurance that the British man wanted.

**No security escort**

Tunku Ahmad Nerang who is now 76, and resides in Kuala Lumpur, related another incident when he acted as the driver for his father when the latter visited 'hot spots' in Tanjung Malim in Perak, Kuala Kubu Bharu in Selangor and Raub in Pahang in 1954.

He said his father had sat in front next to him while behind them were Khir Johari and Tan Sri Syed Jaafar Albar.

"The road then was very narrow and several armoured cars had joined us to provide security and I had to drive close behind one armoured vehicle."

Upon reaching a rest house in Raub, a police officer approached Tunku Ahmad Nerang and told him that it was dangerous to follow an armoured car very close from behind.

He said Tunku Abdul Rahman had retorted: "I don't need the escort, those people behind me (Khir Johari and Jaafar Albar) are good enough."

After resuming the trip, Tunku Abdul Rahman had told those in the car that he had received a letter from Chin Peng (Communist Party of Malaya leader) that gave the assurance on the former's safety and supported his struggle for independence.

Tunku Abdul Rahman had even asked the police and British army not to escort him during his visits to black areas in Johor as he feared the presence of the security forces would endanger his life.

Tunku Ahmad Nerang said in reciprocation, his father had assured the safety of Chin Peng during the Baling Peace Talk 1956.

### **Dangerous train ride**

During the pre-Merdeka days, taking a train ride was considered risky but this had never scared the late Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Tunku Ahmad Nerang recalled an incident when his father boarded a train from Kuala Lumpur bound for Butterworth.

"The train that we were on had to stop at Tapah station as the rail tracks at Tanjong Malim were sabotaged by the communists, forcing us to spend the night on the train".

They only knew the next day that the train was carrying many British soldiers and had come under the communists' threat.

Tunku Abdul Rahman later received a letter from Chin Peng (*left*) who apologised over the incident as he did not know that Tunku Abdul Rahman was on board the train.

Due to his tight work schedule, Tunku Abdul Rahman suffered a bout of pneumonia attack and sought treatment at Bangsar Hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

"An incident in front of my very own eyes happened when an Eurasian nurse gave an injection to Tunku but hurriedly left without removing the needle from his buttocks.

"However Tunku removed the needle himself and we left the hospital. That was how unpopular the late Tunku with British people in his vocal quest for the country's independence," said Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

However the doctor that treated Tunku Abdul Rahman was a Malay by the name of Dr Latiff and a road at Kuala Lumpur Hospital was named Persiaran Dr Latiff.

### **Stranded in floodwaters**

Tunku Ahmad Nerang said his father worked hard to campaign for the country's independence, disregarding rain or shine.

One day in 1954, Tunku Abdul Rahman's car was stranded and trapped in a pool of mud during floods in Johor Baharu.

"There were Malay boys willing to push the car for a fee. Tunku offered them one ringgit but

upon realising that Tunku was in the car, they declined the money," said Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

However two other cars, each carrying Syed Esa Almashoor and Syed Abdullah Alsagoff respectively were also stuck in mud and the boys were given 20 sen each to push the vehicles clear from the muddy puddle.

Another incident was in Kangar the same year.

"When we were about to leave our house in Alor Star, the rain came down heavily and when the rain subsided, I drove the car a bit too fast as Tunku did not like to keep people waiting.

"Our car skidded and crashed into a ditch in front of the Malay Regiment Camp in Kepala Batas.

The army officer recognised Tunku and told his men to help pull out our car and we later continued the journey in a badly damaged car," said Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

One day in 1955, Tunku Ahmad Nerang accompanied his father during the latter's campaigning. The trip was all day long as Tunku Abdul Rahman moved from Johor Baharu to Muar and later Batu Pahat meeting the villagers.

They later returned to Johor Baharu late in the night and were too exhausted, as they had not eaten.

"Both of us were too tired and hungry as we had not eaten and there was no food at home. I found an egg in the fridge and I boiled it.

"I later knocked my father's room and asked him whether he wanted the boiled egg. Tunku touched my head and with tears in his eyes, asked me to eat it," said Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

Tunku Ahmad Nerang said several days later, he left for Bombay, India to study at the Indian Military College.

"After arriving in Bombay, I read in the *Indian Times* about the news that Alliance Party in Malaya had won (the election) and Tunku was appointed the Chief Minister of Malaya," added Tunku Ahmad Nerang. - *Bernama*