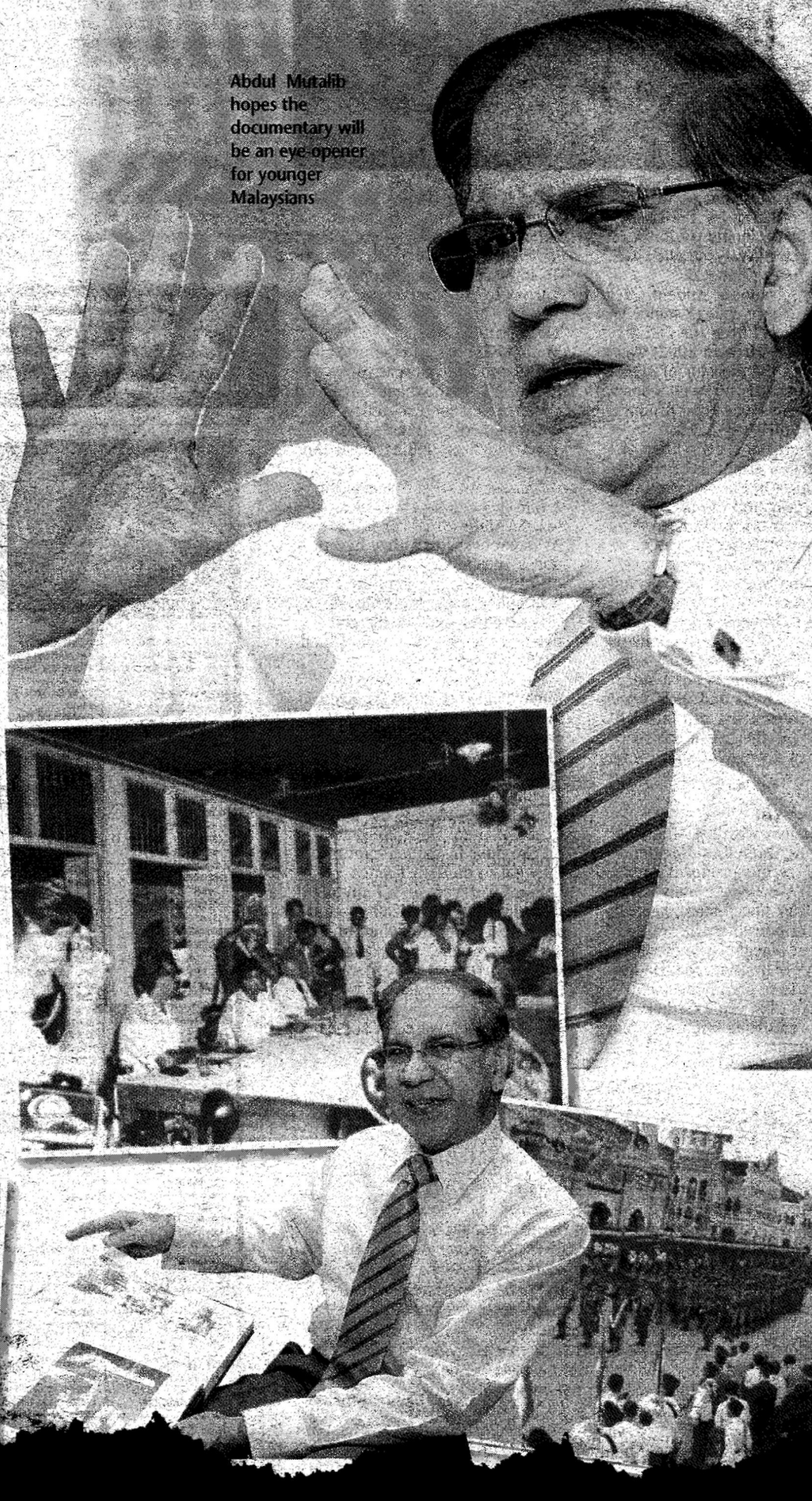


■ By P. SELVARANI

The EMERGENCY experience

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Abdul Mutalib hopes the documentary will be an eye-opener for younger Malaysians



IT'S easy to take peace and stability for granted when one has known nothing else.

But those who have been through or witnessed turbulent events in our nation's history know that there's nothing quite as precious as peace.

It is for this reason that Media Prima chairman Datuk Abdul Mutalib Datuk Seri Mohamed Razak hopes that TV3's Merdeka-inspired documentary *Jungle Green Khaki Brown — Malaya's Fight Against Terrorism*, will open the eyes of the younger generation to the importance of peace, stability and unity.

To be aired every Monday beginning tomorrow, the documentary chronicles the 12-year jungle war fought by British and Malay forces against the army of the Communist Party of Malaya.

The idea for the documentary — eight 30 minute episodes — was borne out of the book *Malayan Emergency — 1948 to 1960 (Revisited)* written by Lt Col (R) Mohd Azzam Mohd Hanif Ghows. Abdul Mutalib helped edit the book and wrote a couple of chapters.

The book was launched in May by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The book stemmed from Abdul Mutalib's deep interest in military history.

"I've visited defence museums all over the world and found that there was a lot of material on other events such as the Burma campaign and even the Gulf War. But there was nothing on the Malayan campaign. Sure, there were some books on it but there was nothing pictorial on the Emergency," he says.

And Abdul Mutalib knows that there is no better impact than a pictorial to spark the interest of the young.

"You can write reams and reams about the Emergency and the communist terrorists but to me it's an exercise in futility because people, especially the young, don't read anymore. But a picture paints a thousand words."

The completed book soon led to the idea for a documentary.

"I came up with a synopsis and went to meet (Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister) Datuk Seri Rais Yatim. He said it was a good idea especially since it coincided with the Merdeka celebrations.

"The ministry gave us some funds for the project through FINAS. We also secured additional sponsorship from TM Net."

With that, Abdul Mutalib and a TV3 crew headed by producer Abdul Aziz Hassan spent the next eight months sourcing footage on the Emergency and interviewing Malaysians from Sultans to the *mata-mata* (policeman) on their experiences.

Abdul Mutalib personally interviewed

prominent personalities including the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan Tuanku Jaafar, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and former IGP Tun Haniff Omar on their experiences.

"Not many are aware that Tuanku Jaafar's father, the first Yang di-Pertuan Agong and two of his children, were almost killed when the terrorists bombed a train they were travelling in, at the height of the Emergency. Tuanku Jaafar told me he was aware of it, although he was studying in England at that time," says Abdul Mutalib.

Research also took the crew to England, Scotland and Fiji where they interviewed retired planters and former police and armed forces personnel from the British Commonwealth who were involved in the Emergency.

"Everyone we approached was willing to come forward and talk about their experiences. We even went to South Thailand in the hope of speaking to some of the former terrorists but they did not want to say much although they allowed us to take still pictures.

"We hope the documentary gives a rounded view of events."

The team also visited sites where some of the main events took place. Among them was the Enfield Estate in Sungai Siput where the communists murdered three British planters on June 16, 1948, leading the British to declare a state of emergency in Malaya as they fought the insurgents.

By the time the conflict ended, 2,478 civilians, 1,346 members of the Malay forces and 519 British military personnel had been killed. Some 810 civilians were recorded missing.

The documentary which cost more than half a million ringgit to produce does not re-enact scenes of the Emergency.

"What we did was to intertwine the interviews with the footage found in the archives of the Malaysian and British authorities and television stations to give an accurate picture of what transpired," says Abdul Mutalib.

He hopes the documentary, which will feature popular playwright Joe Hasham narrating the events, will strike a chord among Malaysians, especially the younger ones.

"The idea is to instil a sense of patriotism among them.

"Yes, we are living in good times but we should not forget that history can be repeated if we are not careful. We should not be too complacent about the peace and stability which we enjoy because terror is everywhere.

"It appears in many forms and anything that instils fear is terror. But as long as we are aware of this, we can learn from the lessons of our past," he says.