

# Ensuring lights were off at 12

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KUALA LUMPUR: Chan Kim Kee's duty at midnight on Aug 30, 1957, may seem insignificant in the larger context of What was to happen at the Sultan Abdul Samad building that night.

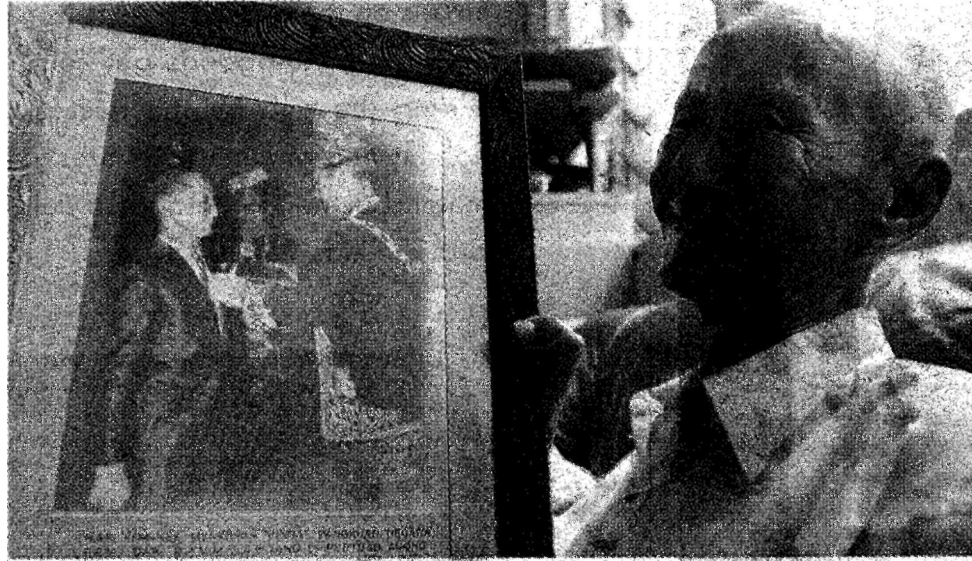
But the police constable's cameo role in the drama unfolding on the adjacent Selangor Padang ensured that a crucial part of the programme proceeded like clockwork.

The 22-year-old and another policeman known only as Osman were positioned on the field to monitor the clock on the building as it signalled midnight so that the lights could be switched off.

When the clock struck twelve, he used a cable telephone to call the light panel controller. As history has it everything went smoothly and darkness descended.

And when the lights came back on, an independent nation had been born.

"The idea was to switch off the lights and turn them on again soon after to signify the



Chan Kim Kee with a photograph of himself receiving the Pingat Pangkuan Negara from the King in 1971. — NST picture by Fathil Asri.

end of an era and the beginning of a new one," the 71-year-old said.

As the lights came on the Union Jack was lowered and the Malayan flag raised as the *Negara-ku* was sung.

Chan remembers a surge of pride as the huge crowd broke

out in applause,

"There were people of all races there. You could see the pride and joy on their faces."

The end of the simple ceremony did not mean the end of Chan's duties that day.

After a two-hour nap, he was posted to the Jalan Loke

Yew-Sungai Besi junction to control traffic.

"Of course, back then there were not many vehicles on the road, even during rush hour. In fact, there were 100 traffic policemen in Kuala Lumpur and only 30 BSA motor cycles.

"It rained heavily that

morning and I remember being soaked to my skin,"

At 7am, he reported to Merdeka Stadium for further duties, that ended at 2pm.

"It's an experience I will never forget," he said,

Chan joined the police in 1952, on his father's advice, which was inspired by then MCA president Tun Tan Cheng Lock's call for young Chinese to join the force.

"I was only 17 then but the British were desperate and they figured I, would be 18 by the time I completed the eight-month training."

Chan was posted to the Kuala Lumpur traffic headquarters, where he remained until he retired as a sergeant in 1990.

Chan was awarded two Malayan General Service medals for meritorious service.

"These medals were presented to me by the British. They have my police serial number on the side."

And even 16 years after retirement, Chan easily remembers his serial number — 25078.