

'We worked long hours and prayed together'

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THE situation was chaotic and tense outside. There were soldiers and policemen patrolling the streets with helicopters overhead.

But within the walls of Assunta Hospital in Petaling Jaya, a different scenario was unfolding.

Nurse Anna Lim arrived at work as normal on the evening of May 13, 1969.

As soon as she walked in, she was told by the nuns in charge that a curfew had been imposed and no one would be allowed to leave until further notice.

"When we looked out of the window, the streets were empty, except for patrolling soldiers and policemen.

"The next thing we knew, sirens were blaring and the situation turned chaotic.

"People, some bleeding profusely were being rushed into the hospital in wheelbarrows, and stretchers, while others were carried in. We attended to them as best as we could.

"I will never forget one man who was brought in without any limbs. There was blood every-

where and he was screaming."

Lim said the hospital was filled with patients of all races and despite the clashes outside, there were no signs of hostility inside.

"The situation inside the hospital was totally different from what was happening outside," said Lim, who is now 66 and works in a nursing home.

"In the hospital, everyone was treated the same. There were no walls of race, colour or creed. There were times when we even prayed together."

She said they worked stretches of 24 hours with short rests in between.

"There was not much food, so we ate what was there and slept on the floor.

"I was worried about my mother in Klang but there was no way I could contact her."

Lim said the situation continued for nine days before calm returned on the 10th day.

"I was allowed to leave the hospital and, with the help of the nuns, managed to get home to Klang to see my mother.

"Words cannot express how we felt when we saw each other. We hugged and thanked God that we were alive."