

Their contribution to nation not forgotten

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KUALA TERENGGANU: Larger than life in his heyday, and now confined to a wheelchair, Tun Muhammad Ghazali Shafie still cuts a commanding figure.

The 85-year-old "King Ghaz" was one of the pivotal figures in the formation of Malaysia. He was a member of the Cobbold Commission, the first commission that looked at public opinion in Sabah and Sarawak towards joining Malaysia.

He later led the Malaysian delegation that discussed with the Philippines its claim on Sabah. He was one of several people involved in the Cobbold Commission who received the Unity Award yesterday from Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin.

Born in Kuala Lipis, Ghazali attended the University College of Wales before he came home to get involved in politics and social welfare, sport and cultural activities. During World War Two, he joined the Malayan Volunteer Force and later Force 136 — a British-led underground resistance group that fought the Japanese occupiers of Malaya.

Speaking through his grand daughter Farah Eusof Nizam

Husaini, Ghazali said he was touched by the government's recognition.

"Unity in this country is still strong. The only difference now is that more people are educated and are exposed to many things. And therein lies the challenge to bridge the understanding among races, which is a continuous effort."

Another member of the Cobbold Commission, Sabah's second Chief Minister Tan Sri Peter Lo Su Yin, and Datuk Seri Tra Zehnder — the Sarawak Dayak National Union representative at a meeting with the Cobbold Commission in 1962 — also received the award. It included RM3,000 and a certificate.

Lo, served as chief minister from 1965 to 1967. He helped draft the "20 Points", the memorandum under which Sabah agreed to join Malaya, Sarawak and Singapore in the Federation of Malaysia, formally established in 1963. Singapore left the Federation in 1965.

"Unity now is no different from then. It is always there. The only difference is the opinion on how to strengthen it further," he said, adding that he was honoured to re-



(From left) Tun Muhammad Ghazali Shafie, Tan Sri Peter Lo Su Yin and Datuk Seri Tra Zehnder.

ceive the award from the king.

Tra Zehnder @ Philomena Tra Jemat, 81, the former Sarawak Dayak National Union deputy president, said she was surprised when she received a call from the state government, telling her of the award.

Born in Miri, Tra was active in many social organisations and helped develop the Bumiputra of Sarawak, fighting for Dayak participation in the government administration.

She was the first woman to be elected Temenggong Iban, the highest honour for an

Iban, for the Kuching division, and the first woman chief of the Council of Dayak Customs and Traditions from 1996 to 2002.

"When it comes to promoting better unity, the formula is simple: Listen and consult among ourselves," she said.