

An experience to treasure for life

Yahaya was a protocol officer for the historic event

The Star - 6/7/2007
guest car.

By **CHRISTINA LOW**
christinalow@thestar.com.my

Flashback 1957

NOT many of us had the chance to witness our nation's first Merdeka celebration 50 years ago, what more to work alongside Tunku Abdul Rahman, but for those who were more fortunate like Tan Sri Yahaya Ibrahim, it was an experience that he remembers clearly till today.

Yahaya was assigned with other young Malayan civil servants as protocol officers caring for the Japanese delegation that was in the country for the celebration then.

"When I was selected be a protocol officer from Malacca, I was just as excited as everyone else as we all knew that we were going to celebrate our first Independence Day," said Yahaya, who was teaching at the Malacca High School when he was informed of the selection.

He then came to Kuala Lumpur to learn all that was necessary for the big day.

"We were taught everything from

road maps, language and also trained to sing the National anthem," said Yahaya, who was also sent to Singapore to learn Japanese.

However, he remembers that it was a good refresher class to learn the language after some basic lessons during his primary school days but something else caught him by surprise.

"When the 12-member delegation came, all except their leader knew how to speak English," said Yahaya who then had no problem conversing with the country's guests.

He remembers how tough it was to take charge of the Japanese delegation as anti-Japanese sentiment was still strong back then. He also had to travel with the delegation's leader in an open roof government

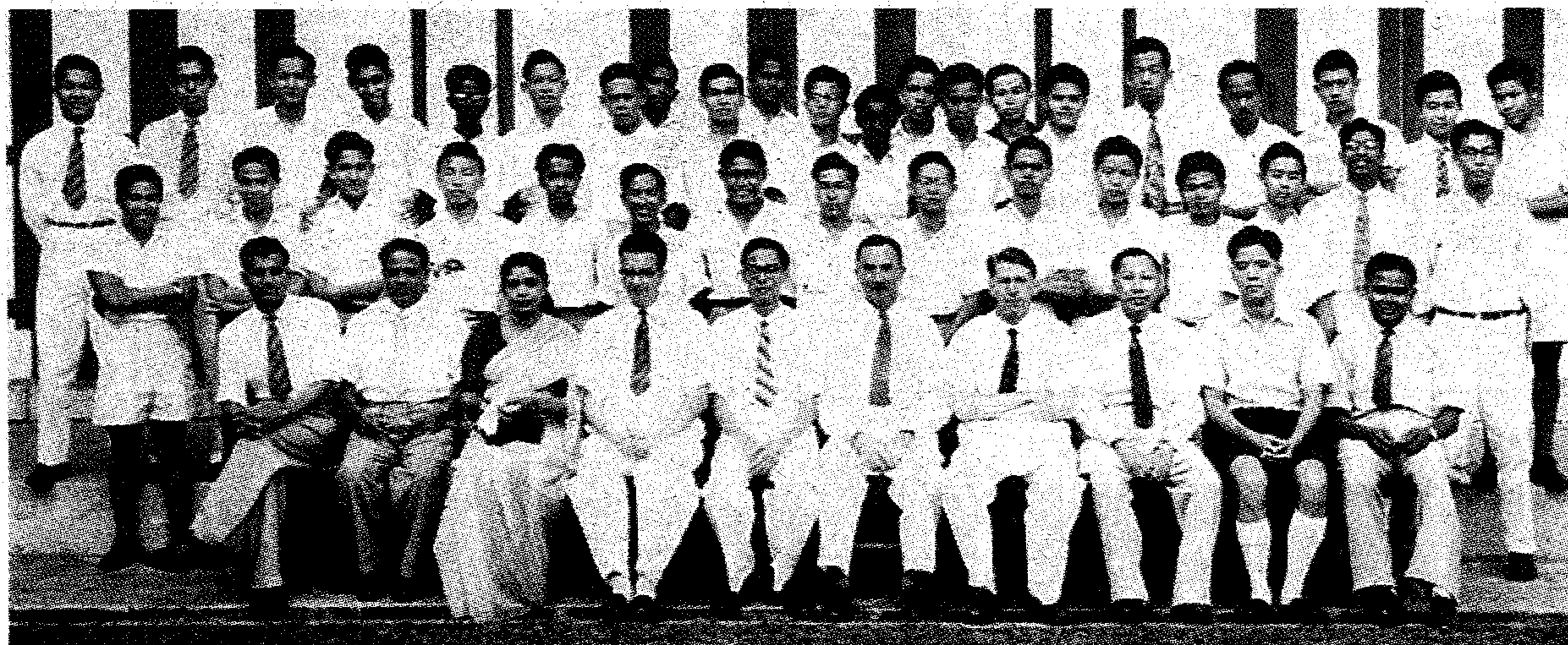
"The delegation made official trips between the Federal Hotel, Stadium Merdeka and visited the Japanese community in the country," said Yahaya.

Besides that, Yahaya who speaks fluent Hokkien, also remembers that during the two-week service, it was also the year where he was presented with a camera from the Japanese.

After the delegation left Kuala Lumpur, he went back to continue teaching Art, English and Bahasa Malaysia in Malacca.

He was later promoted to Federal Inspector of Schools before he retired in 1984. He is now the pro-chancellor of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), a member of the board of governors of Olympia College, director/governor of KBU International College (KBU) as well as the chairman of Krista Education Sdn Bhd.

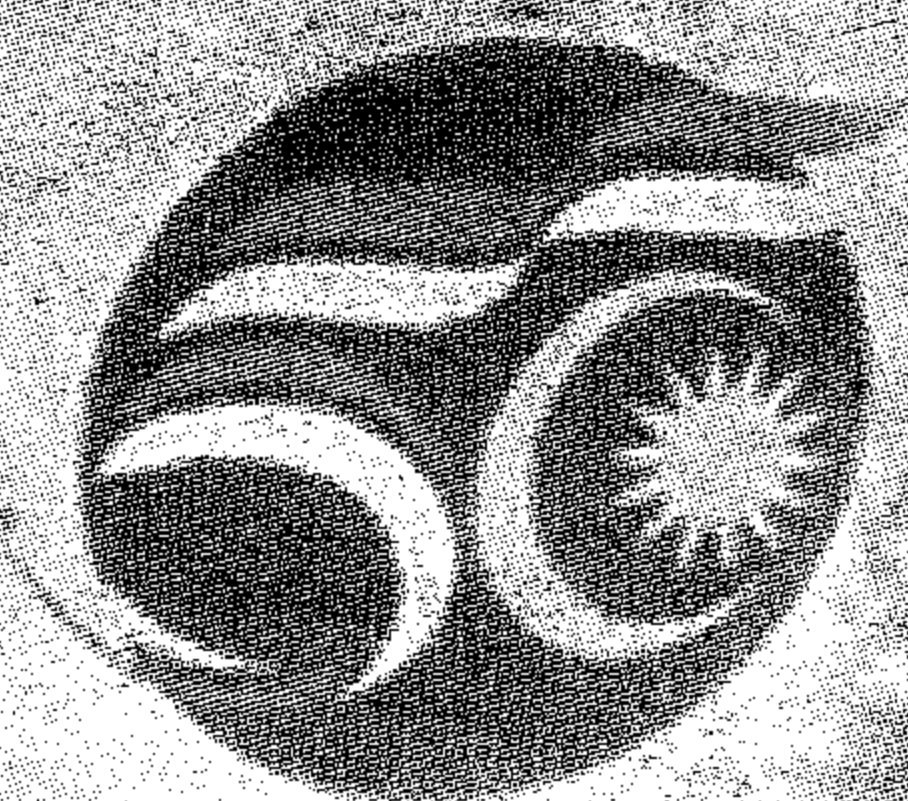
Besides spending time at the private institutions, the 78-year-old who grew up in Bayan Lepas, Penang, goes for morning walks daily to stay fit.



The past: Yahaya (sitting first from right) with teachers and students of Malacca High School in 1957.



For remembrance: Yahaya placing his photographs in the album.



Star Metro, together with Federal Hotel Kuala Lumpur, is organising a contest to commemorate Malaysia's 50th year as an independent nation. Readers can take part by sending in old photographs that they or their families and friends have taken in 1957. It could be of anything and everything that happened in that historic year. These pictures will then be compiled into an album for public viewing at the hotel. Five of the most interesting photos and captions sent in by contributors will earn them attractive prizes.

How to participate:
Readers can send in the photos to starmerdeka@gmail.com

Where can they see their pictures:
On www.flickr.com/photos/thel957album

Prizes:
Include one night's stay at Merdeka Heritage room and dine on favourite dishes of Tunku.

Last day for entries:
Aug 24, 2007

