

THE STAR

DATE: 09/08/2007

Long trek for Merdeka

Mohd Said cycled for two hours then took 10-hour bus trip

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BATU PAHAT: It's not every day that anyone would cycle for two hours on unpaved roads then take a 10-hour ride on a rickety bus.

But then Aug 30, 1957 was no ordinary day. And Mohd Said Jamhari, then 24, was caught up with the excitement of independence.

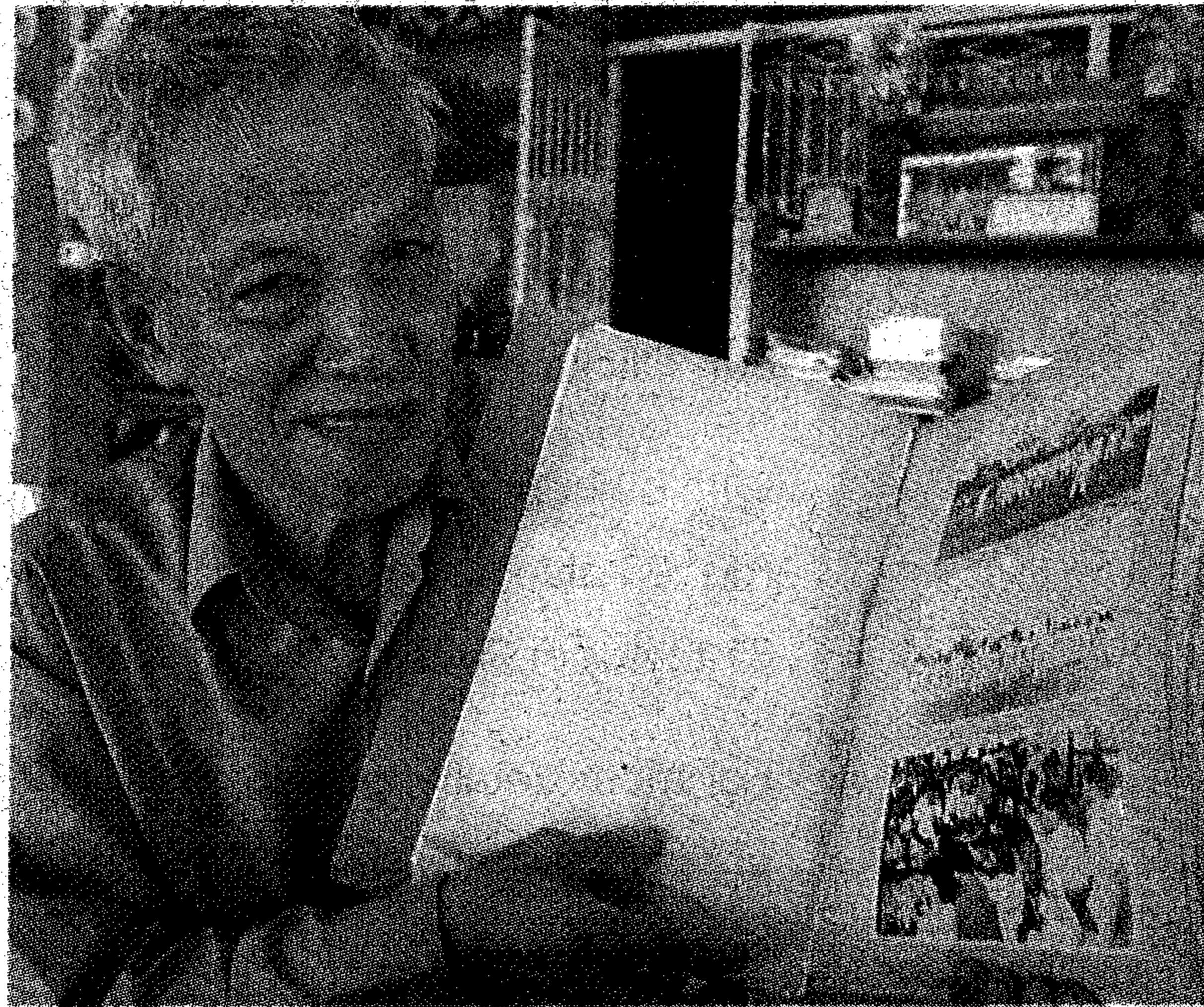
"To me, it was just a short ride," the 74-year-old retired teacher said of the journey from his house in Kampung Parit Kassim when he cycled to Batu Pahat town before taking the bus to Merdeka Stadium.

"For all the trouble, my friends and I got to witness the most important event in the country's history," he said.

Mohd Said told *The Star* that patriotism and nationalism was very high then, as everyone was excited about gaining independence after years of British and Japanese rule.

"I remember Tunku's (Tunku Abdul Rahman) shouts of 'Merdeka'. I was overjoyed to hear those simple words. They meant so much to me, to the nation," he recalled.

As a child, Mohd Said witnessed a lot of events leading up to indepen-



Glory days: Mohd Said showing reporters an album of old photos. He led the National Day celebrations as Tongkang Pechah branch Umno Youth chief after independence.

dence as his parents were actively involved in politics.

"I would follow my folks in marches around Batu Pahat town protesting against the Malayan Union," he said.

Mohd Said said the people even sold their valuables to help pay for Tunku Abdul Rahman's flight to England for talks on the country's independence.

Robani Abdul Shukor, 70, also



remembered the events in Kampung Parit Mahang.

Since he was 14, Robani has been travelling round the state to spread information on the fight for independence under the banner of *Pergerakan Melayu Semenanjung* (the precursor to Umno).

"We would sit in the back of a lorry, about 28 of us, and travel to Mersing, Muar, Johor Baru and other places.

"As the roads were unpaved and mostly laterite, our white T-shirts turned red from the dust by the end of the day," he said.

In all humbleness, Mohd Said and Robani said their contribution had been "small" and urged the young generation to propel the nation further.