

# Driving into historic moment

## Tunku's driver recalls trip to stadium



**Precious memories:** Kalimuthoo looking at an old photograph of him and Tunku in Langgar, Alor Star, in the late 80s.

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**KULIM:** It was just a five-minute drive 50 years ago but R. Kalimuthoo will cherish the moment forever.

Kalimuthoo, 82, was the man behind the steering wheel of the Cadillac that carried Tunku Abdul Rahman from his residence in Bukit Tunku to Merdeka Stadium on Aug 31, 1957.

Shortly after arriving at the stadium, the country's first Prime Minister's voice rang out loud and clear as he proclaimed "Merdeka" seven times.

"I drove Tunku to the stadium where thousands of people were waiting for him," Kalimuthoo said with pride as he recalled the momentous event during an interview at his home at Taman KTC here yesterday.

"There were four of us in the open-air Cadillac - Tunku, his wife (Sharifah Rodziah), his aide-de-camp and myself. We were surrounded by police escorts throughout the drive."

Kalimuthoo, who served Tunku as his driver from 1957 to 1982, said that he felt honoured to share that historical moment.

"The Tunku was a true Malaysian leader who treated the Malays, Chinese and Indians equally. I felt sad and devastated when he



*Malaysiaku Gemilang*

passed away in 1990. It is hard to come by such a leader again," he added.

After Tunku's retirement as Prime Minister on Sept 22, 1970, Kalimuthoo continued to serve him at his Air Rajah Road residence in Penang.

Kalimuthoo said that Tunku had an uncanny gift of "saying something which would eventually turn out to be true". The Malays call this special gift having *mulut masin*.

Kalimuthoo has 16 children and 27 grandchildren and spends his time planting vegetables and ladies' fingers on the tiny plot in his garden nowadays.

He does not believe in selling the vegetables but would share them with his neighbours and children when they visited him.

"Among the things that Tunku taught me was to lead a simple life and to be generous and kind, even when you only have a little."