

He was the happiest PM, says Tunku's girl

NST-23/8/2007

■ **By Jason Gerald John**
jasong@nst.com.my

MALACCA: Tunku Khadijah, the country's first prime minister's daughter was a special guest at a photography exhibition here.

The second daughter of Tunku Abdul Rahman was excited to get a glimpse of the proclamation of independence and photographs taken in 1956 for the first time.

"I have never seen these photographs before.

"I was not in Malacca when my father came and made the announcement about the country's independence as I was in Butterworth," she said.

The exhibition was held in Dataran Pahlawan Malacca Megamall.

"He was the happiest prime minister as he was able to bring all three major races in the country together.

"I hope this co-operation will continue forever.

"The current generation should learn from Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Tun V.T. Sambanthan on how to live in peace and harmony for the sake of the nation and its people," she said.

Although happy to walk down memory lane in the exhibition by the Malacca state government, Tunku Khadijah was saddened that the *padang*, where the birth

of a sovereign nation was announced, had been destroyed by development.

"I am very happy to be here, but the field where my father stood and proclaimed the nation's independence is no longer here.

"The place should have been preserved as it is an important part in the history of the country," she said.

Tunku Khadijah had last visited Malacca five years ago and the field was there.

Tunku Khadijah was accompanied by her husband Datuk Syed Hussein Bakar and Michael Wong Swee Lin, the Department of Information photographer who had in 1956 captured the return of Tunku from London.

Recalling the moment, Wong, who was 29 years old at that time, said he had no clue that Tunku was going to announce the independence of Malaya.

"We knew Tunku was returning and I was assigned to cover the event.

"I came down with my Speed-graphic camera, and followed Tunku from the Batu Berendam airport to the field in Banda Hilir.

"I was shocked to see the sea of people at the field.

"I still remember the moment," said the 81-year-old veteran, whose photograph has been published in the media, books, magazines and stamps.