

# Surviving the crises

*The Star 20/6/07*

Writing on Sept 1, 1986, in conjunction with the 29th anniversary of Merdeka, Tunku Abdul Rahman reminded Malaysians to remember those who gave their loyalty and service to the cause of independence.

**T**HE 29th anniversary of Merdeka was celebrated yesterday. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since we first proclaimed our independence and one must accept changes, though some have not been too good for Malaysia.

In those early days, the financial position of this country was healthy and we had no problems except for the state of Emergency brought about by the Communist insurrection, which had been going on for 10 years.

The former Malayan government had to fight the Communists and was not able to crush them until after Merdeka.

Chin Peng had frankly stated his stand when I met him in Baling in 1955. According to him, the Communists would not surrender and would not co-exist with my party, the Alliance. They would continue the fight until the battle was won and they could set up a Communist state in Malaya. The people took our side and we were able to get the better of them, and they were soon on the run.

On Aug 26, 1956, Yuong Kuo who was considered the most dangerous and cunning Communist leader was shot dead. With his death, Chin Peng was left to fight the battle alone.

On Aug 31, 1957, independence was proclaimed and the Emergency situation in Malaya greatly improved. People were able to travel to most parts of the country without restriction.

We had to fight the enemy ourselves but the British, Australian and New Zealand forces stood by, ready to help under the Defence Agreement when called upon.

President Soekarno of Indonesia had uttered threats if the other territories of Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei were to join Malaya.

This, I thought, was a cock-eyed attitude to take because he himself had claimed all the territories ruled by the Dutch as part of



Indonesia, including faraway Dutch New Guinea, inhabited by people of an entirely different race and culture from the Indonesians.

What objection then could he have against Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei joining us for we were all administered by the British government in Malaya?

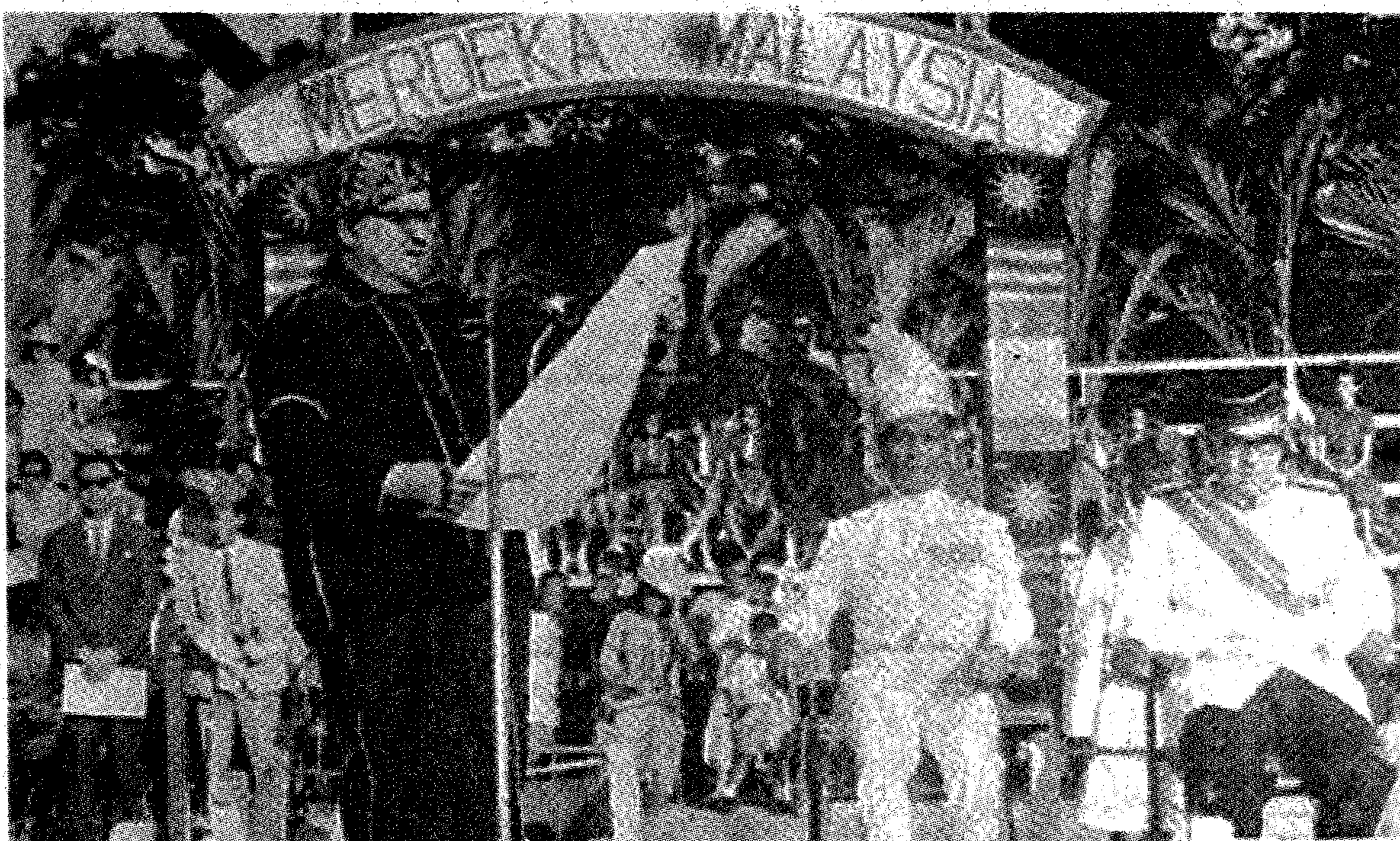
On May 27, 1961, I attended a luncheon given in Singapore by the foreign correspondents of South-East Asia at the Adelphi Hotel.

It was there that I mentioned the possible merger of the states of Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak with Malaya, and that maddened Soekarno.

How this unity could be brought about would be divulged later, because in truth I didn't know. I had not consulted the British government yet. These territories could be brought closer together in political and economic co-operation, I said, so let Soekarno do what he liked.

The atmosphere was electrifying and everybody suddenly took a great interest in this plan. After lunch, they started crowding around me and wanted to know more. The reaction was a general approval by the people of these territories, and by the British government.

When I returned to Kuala Lumpur, the first person to greet me was the former Sultan of Brunei, Sir Muda Omar Ali Saifuddin. He was already waiting at my house and came out with outstretched arms to meet me, exclaiming how happy it would be



**Another milestone:** Tun Fuad Stephens, the first Chief Minister of Sabah, reading the proclamation of independence of the state. Tunku Abdul Rahman first mentioned the possible merger of the states of Singapore, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak with Malaya at a luncheon in Singapore on May 27, 1961.

for Brunei to join the new Malaysia.

Then Soekarno came out with a "Crush Malaysia" battle cry. No sooner had he uttered this than the Philippines came out with their claim on Sabah. According to them, the state was part of the Sultanate of Sulu and by right it belonged to them.

In actual fact, it was the other way round. It was the Sultan of Brunei who owned that part of the Philippines. In fact, Brunei owned Sabah, Sarawak and even the southern tip of Indonesia. So the claim of the Philippines over Sabah was baseless.

Soekarno started to send his men into Borneo, Sarawak and West Malaysia and we had to deal with all these infiltrations. Our allies were tied down by the Geneva Convention and were unable to help us unless there was an open declaration of war or a direct open attack on Malaysia.

By the help of Allah, we had the better of them. Our security and armed forces put up a wonderful fight and kept Soekarno's men out or took them prisoners.

We started our independence in a hard way, first fighting against the Communists and next against Soekarno. It could be said Malaysia was born under very severe crises, but by the help of Allah, the loyalty of our people, the courage of our armed forces and the support received from our allies, we survived.

In fact, it was the first time that

any country faced with Communist insurrection had won a convincing victory against them.

That was 29 years ago. The first decade of independence was the golden age for Malaysia. The economic situation gave everyone in this country a good life. Our business was booming and our rural development productive.

Despite this, some were not contented with what they were getting, and so it was that we were forced to part company with Singapore in 1965.

## Violence

As a result of the separation, I became somewhat unpopular with the "Young Turks" who wanted me to take action against Lee Kuan Yew.

One thing led to another. May 13, 1969, saw the outbreak of violence between the races not experienced before. This had been the work of our enemies, the Malayan Communist Party, who exploited the prevailing situation.

The caretaker government had allowed the Communists to hold a funeral procession of a dead comrade shot by the police in Kepong. But they provoked the security forces and others by the violence of their demonstration.

Then the May 13 incident broke out, though I am happy to say that it had been confined to the federal capital of Kuala Lumpur. That was a big lesson to all, and since then there has been no further violence, and pray God it will not happen again.

I left the service in September 1970. The economic situation then

was good and I was able to buy my house in Penang cheaply, but within five months there was a price hike. The houses had increased five-fold in value. I was lucky to buy one or two houses with the balance of the money I received as gratuity from the government.

After that, I was asked by His Majesty the late King Feisal to organise Muslim unity and I left this country to take up residence in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where I helped form the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Later I set up the Islamic Development Bank.

While celebrating this 29th anniversary of Merdeka, we must give our thoughts to those who gave their loyalty and service to the cause of Malayan independence. There was no knowing then what would happen to them.

If we had failed, then our cause would have been lost, and the independence handed to us by the colonial masters would have been on the terms laid down by them.

What those terms would have been we could not have imagined, but we could not have subscribed to them, and there would have been trouble.

Our independence has also brought independence to other countries. Independence was given to others in the hope that Britain would win them back as friends, as was the case with Malaya.

We will always remain a member of the Commonwealth, I hope, and subscribe to the principle of human rights.

May Allah bless Malaysia and our people.

