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# Highly regarded by foreign leaders

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Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru nurtured a great deal of affection and respect for Tunku, as did Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi. Even Queen Elizabeth held Tunku in high regard and had wished to seat him at her right hand at a banquet.

By ABDUL RAHMAN JALAL

IN 1962 Tunku was returning from London to Kuala Lumpur via Calcutta, where I, as the acting High Commissioner in Delhi, was to receive him.

That morning of Nov 22 was a very sad day for India, as just a few hours earlier, during the night, China had unexpectedly invaded the country following a longstanding border dispute.

Tunku knew nothing of the attack as he had been in the air, and probably dozing. Upon alighting and being garlanded, someone asked him: "Why has China invaded us? What wrong did we do?"

Tunku's answer was spontaneous, inspired and reassuring. He lifted a majestic hand to the sky and said: "The sky is now white with clouds, very soon it will turn blue. India will be at peace again when the white clouds move away, and the blue skies return."

At a banquet hosted by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during Tunku's state visit some months later, Tunku condemned communism as a godless creed.

Tunku's support for India won him the love and adulation of Indians throughout the sub-continent, especially when other countries, including Britain and the United States, at first said not a word about the aggression, although I believe that later, and secretly, President Kennedy advised China, in the strongest terms, to withdraw.

Meanwhile, a friend at the British High Commission in Delhi teased me over the support that a small country like Malaya was expressing when none of the major powers were talking. My retort was: "Your country has remained strangely silent, so a small country like Malaya has to say something."



Malaysiaku Gemilang

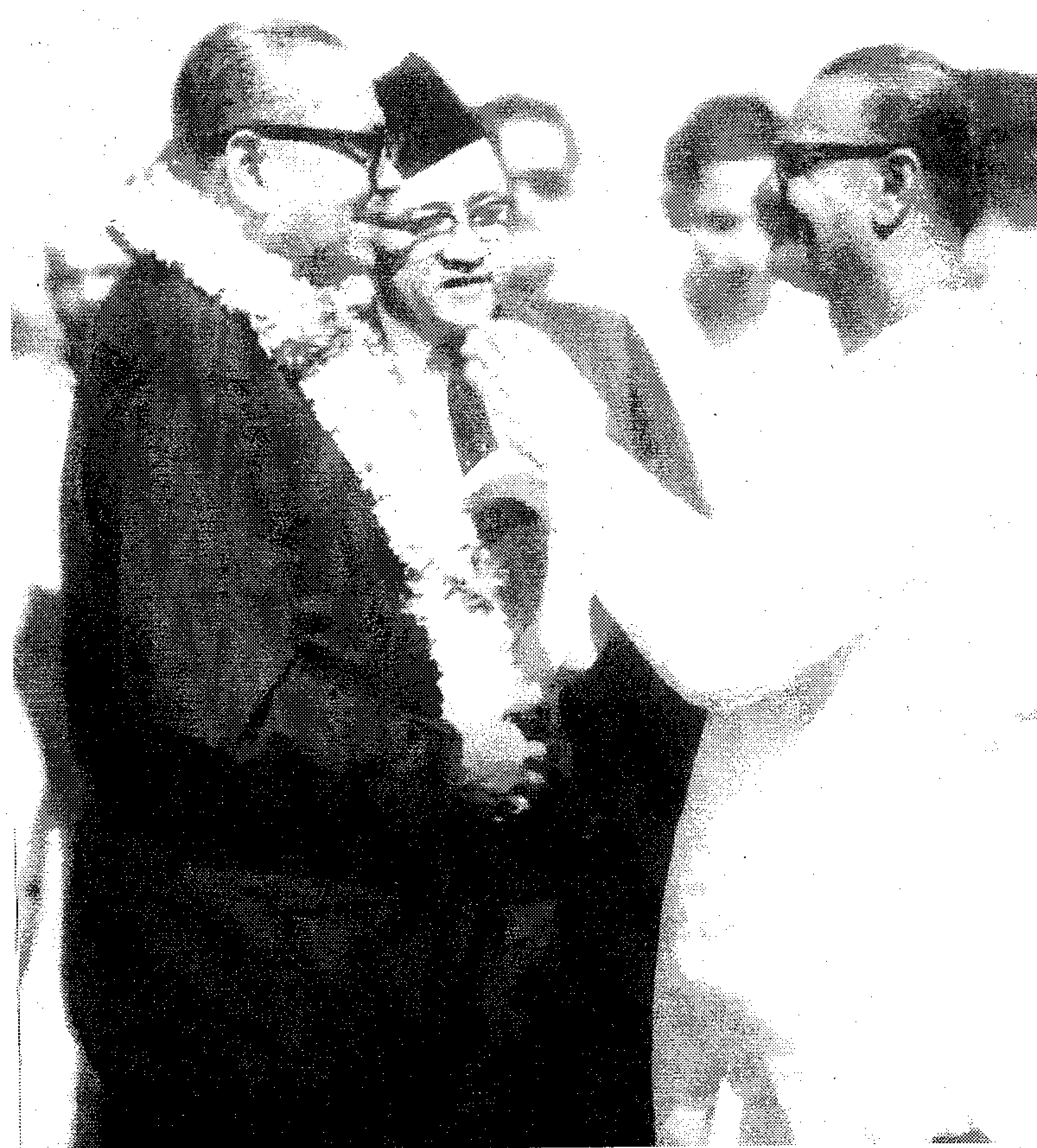
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Upon Tunku's return, he managed to raise some four million Malayan dollars for India - just a small sum that Malaya could afford at that time, though nonetheless sincerely given. Nehru nurtured a great deal of affection and respect for him, as did his daughter Indira Gandhi, who used to address Tunku as "Uncle".

Admiration for Tunku stretched even to a very remote village near Khajuraho, where a frail cowherd in loin-cloth was crossing the road with his cattle. He asked me: "Where are you from?" I answered: "Malaya." He became highly excited and repeatedly exclaimed: "Tunku Abdul Rahman!"

I even used to see banners hoisted in Delhi with the words "India-Malaya Bhai Bhai", which meant that India and Malaya were brothers. This friendship was strengthened further when Malaysia later supported India against Muslim Pakistan on one thorny issue over Kashmir, brought before the United Nations Security Council, on which Malaysia felt that India was in the right. Of course, Tunku also knew that there were millions of Muslim citizens in India.

Queen Elizabeth held Tunku in high regard. He was to attend a



**Symbol of friendship:** Tunku being garlanded by a representative of the Governor of West Bengal, India, while on transit from London to Kuala Lumpur on Nov 26, 1962. With them is Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Jalal, who was Malaya's then acting High Commissioner to India. - NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in London in 1968 but decided at almost the last minute that he would have to miss it because his brother-in-law, the Governor of Penang, was seriously ill.

The Queen instructed the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Sir Michael Walker, to do everything possible to ensure Tunku's attendance: she wished to seat him at her right hand at the

banquet planned for the Prime Ministers in Buckingham Palace. Sir Michael told me that he could arrange with Boac (British Overseas Airways Corporation) for a flight from Singapore to London to make a special stop at Subang to pick up Tunku if he was willing.

I went to see Tunku with this invitation: a decision was needed as soon as possible. He listened to me but - as was sometimes his princely habit - said not a word. I waited ...

and waited, and finally asked leave to withdraw. Early the next morning my telephone rang. To my surprise, it was Tunku himself accepting the Queen's invitation as his brother-in-law was out of danger and recovering.

Tunku's thoughtfulness extended to details: a special seven-foot long bed for US President Johnson's comfort when he visited Malaysia in October 1968, and his preferred foods and drink.

Tunku did not want to die overseas. His elder brother, Tunku Yusof, an officer in the Thai Armed Forces, had died and was buried on Sept 1, 1915, in the Mahanak Mosque cemetery in Bangkok. Tunku's intense family feeling could only be satisfied by bringing his brother's remains back to Kedah.

When the new Thai civilian government with Prince Seni Pramoj as Prime Minister in 1975 approved his request, Tunku flew to Bangkok to personally witness the exhumation of Tunku Yusof's remains, on May 7, 1976. I was then Ambassador to Thailand and accompanied him back to Alor Star.

When the remains of Tunku Yusof were lowered into the final resting place at the Royal Mausoleum, Makam di-Raja Langgar, and the final rites and *talkin* conducted by the Mufti of Kedah were over, the evening sun was already setting behind the distant hills. Tunku turned to me and said: "Now that this is done, my duty is over. I don't mind now leaving the world anytime."

Born in 1926 in Rembau, Negri Sembilan, Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Jalal joined the Malayan Civil Service in 1954 and following independence he opted for the country's newly established Foreign and Diplomatic Service. He retired as ambassador in 1985.