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Equal partners in all aspects

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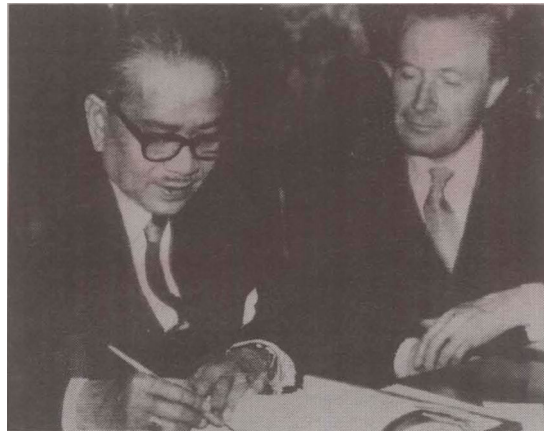
At last, the fears of indigenous peoples and Malays were allayed as the memorandum promised to safeguard Bumiputra rights.

But Brunei opted out, having realised their sultan would not have any privilege above other sultans in Malaya. It was also around this time that anti-federation sentiments kicked off in the Philippines and Indonesia.

Overnight, the Philippines severed diplomatic ties and laid claim to Sabah. Startlingly, Indonesia adopted a policy of confrontation against Malaya. The Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation would go on until 1966.

While anti-federation sentiments grew externally, the union was warmly received by Britain. It was in 1962 that a joint Anglo-Malayan Commission of Inquiry was formed.

The former governor of the Bank of England, Lord Cameron Cobbold, would head the five-man commission, including Penang chief minister Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee, permanent secretary to the Foreign Affairs Ministry Tun Muhammad Ghazali Shafie, former chief secretary to Malaya Sir David Watherston and former governor of Sarawak Sir An-



Tunku Abdul Rahman signing the Malaysia Agreement in London.

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The commission travelled extensively to Sabah and Sarawak to gather information and opinions from locals about the formation of Malaysia. After six months of researching, Cobbold released the findings in August 1962.

It concluded that the formation of Malaysia should be carried out with one-third of the population from each state in favour of the federation. But Cobbold said all parties must enter the federation as equal partners.



The Malaysian Solidarity Consultative Committee produced a memorandum that protected the right of indigenous people and Malays.

"About one-third of the population of each territory strongly favours early realisation of Malaysia without too much concern about terms and conditions.

"Another third, many of them favourable to the Malaysia project, ask, with varying degrees of emphasis, for conditions and safeguards varying in nature and extent: the warmth of support among this category would be markedly influenced by a firm expression of opinion by governments that the detailed ar-

rangements eventually agreed upon are in the best interests of the territories."

This was great news except the Philippines and Indonesia rejected the commission's findings. Following a meeting in Manila between Tunku, Indonesian president Sukarno and his Philippines counterpart Diosdado Macapagal, the two countries agreed to petition the United Nations to send another commission of enquiry to Sabah and Sarawak.

It was also during the Manila Ac-

cord that the Philippines and Indonesia agreed to halt any objections to the federation should the UN commission findings were favourable to the union.

Again, the findings reported a "firm conviction that the majority of the Borneo people have already indicated their desire for independence through Malaysia".

On a blustery morning on Sept 16, 1963, a new flag bearing 14 stripes and a 14-pointed star was raised at Stadium Merdeka. A nation was born.

Tunku said that day: "Today brings to an end British colonialism and rule in the three territories of Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah.

"For us in Malaya, we have had a good fortune because we have enjoyed independence for more than six years, so we welcome our brothers with full feelings of sincerity and goodwill.

"Let us pledge today and at this auspicious moment in the name of God that we will defend the flag of our nation and state with all our strength, even, if necessary, our lives."

But two years later, Singapore ceased to become a member of the federation and gained its independence to become a republic.