

# 'Tunku was a moderate Malaysian'

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## GEORGE TOWN:

The late Bapa Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman was a moderate Malaysian of his time, according to his former aide-de-camp Owen Chung.

He said Tunku was also a strong believer of meritocracy and was not concerned about colour or creed.

"People did not expect any favours from him, even if they were his close friends or family members. He disliked cronyism and nepotism.

"He believed in success through merit. It's different nowadays with people making monetary gains through connections.

"Malaysia won't be what Malaysia is today if not for the late Tunku.

"He was the leader who brought all the races together," he said when interviewed at his house in Tanjung Tokong here.

Chung, 83, who paused between words to emphasise his points, said it was a different scenario if Tunku knew about those who were down with illnesses and required financial help.

"He would go all out to help them, even if it meant having to leverage his influence.

"He also always had a heart for the poor," said Chung, who was with Tunku from 1972 until his death in 1990.

The former jungle squad commando said he believed Tunku had a hand in his promotion from Chief Inspector to Assistant Superintendent (ASP) in order to become an aide-de-camp.

"I was in the jungle squad fighting the communists and one day, I was given the orders to protect Tunku after intelligence had it that somebody was trying to get rid of him.

"When I was given the tough task, a senior political leader disputed my appointment, saying that a senior inspector was not qualified enough to become an aide-de-



**Good old days:** Chung (left) and his colleagues posing for a photograph with the late Tunku Abdul Rahman. (Inset): Chung as he is today.

camp.

"But three weeks later, the then state police chief gave me a call and said that I had been promoted to the rank of Asst Supt. I am grateful to him," he said, adding that Tunku's favourite line was: "Never take anything from anybody unless God gives it to you."

Chung said among the valuable things which he inherited from Tunku was an autographed first-day cover of the Independence of Federation of Malaya in 1957.

He said he refused to sell it to a tycoon who had wanted to buy it.

"I have held on to it till now but I feel it

is time for me to part with the first-day cover.

"I will sell it to whoever wishes to own it. Half of the proceeds will go to a family member of Tunku who is staying in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

Reminiscing the good old days, Chung said Tunku would have been 112 years old if he were still around.

"In his later years, Tunku's birthday celebrations were small parties, involving his close friends and family members.

"It was never a big bash attended by VIPs. He was always a simple man with a simple lifestyle, and would eat anything prepared by his cook," he said.