

# 49 years on, still in tears over the loss of his friends

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GERIK: It has been 49 years since his friends were killed by communists, but Mohamad Sarif Long still sheds tears whenever he thinks of them.

In August 1974, Mohamad Sarif and his friends were working on the Public Works Department's East-West Highway when they were ambushed by communists.

"It was just a regular day at work for the six of us when suddenly, we heard a gunshot and our driver was shot in the head.

"The driver was killed instantly and the lorry came to a halt. As we tried to crawl out, my two friends Ali and Hussin were shot dead," the 76-year-old said after attending the Works Ministry's MyJalan campaign at Jetty Pulau Banding yesterday.

After waiting for some time under the lorry, Mohamad Sarif tried to run somewhere safe but was stopped by soldiers.

"They told me to stay under the lorry as it was safer. I was alone because two others

managed to hide elsewhere

"For two hours, I laid under the lorry and heard non-stop gunshots.

"I kept thinking about my wife, who I married just a few months before the tragedy happened," he added.

"I was rescued by the army and then brought to Gerik Hospital for a check-up. About a week later, I went back to work.

"Every time I think about the highway, I will cry. Just a few minutes before it happened, Hussin told me that he wanted to apply for leave to get engaged.

"It may have happened 49 years ago but the memory of losing my good friends is still fresh in me," he said.

Despite the hardship and deaths, the 123km highway connecting Jeli, Kelantan and Gerik, Perak was finally opened to the public on July 1, 1982.

At the event, Mohamad Sarif and 36 other men who were involved in the project received a token of appreciation and RM1,000 for their hardwork by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.



**An honour:**  
Mohamad Sarif (right) shaking hands with Anwar Ibrahim at the Works Ministry's MyJalan campaign at Jetty Pulau Banding, Gerik.