

# Septuagenarian recounts first recitation of *Rukun Negara* in 1971

**KUALA LUMPUR:** On Aug 31, 1971, a 21-year-old student from Institut Teknologi Mara (now UiTM) was entrusted to lead the first recitation of the *Rukun Negara* pledge.

The historic event took place during the 14th National Day celebration, a year after the *Rukun Negara* was introduced to strengthen the unity of the Malaysian people following the May 13, 1969 tragedy.

Although his name is seldom mentioned in history books, Kamarudin Ibrahim, now 74, remains proud of being honoured with the task in front of the then Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, the second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak, and thousands of Malaysians.

Recounting the events of 53 years ago, Kamarudin, who hails from Batu Kurau in Perak, said he was in a lecture hall when an administrative officer from ITM informed him that someone wanted to see him.

"At the time, we didn't have mobile phones and while I was

walking down from the fourth-floor lecture room to the office, many thoughts crossed my mind, was it bad news from my hometown? When I entered the office, there were two individuals who introduced themselves as members of the National Day celebration committee.

"They said I was nominated as one of the candidates to lead, the recitation. I was quite shocked, especially since I had no prior experience in public speaking," he said in a recent RTM programme.

After being shortlisted with two or three other candidates, they were sent for training at the ITM language lab before he was asked to go to RTM for intensive training in public speaking, voice projection, body posture and intonation.

"During my training at RTM, there was an officer who taught me to keep my sentences short because thousands of Malaysians would be following along.

"In front of me were the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, prime minister, ministers and representatives from

neighbouring countries, so I couldn't afford to make mistakes. I was also instructed on how to maintain my posture and was advised to focus straight ahead while reciting the pledge," he said.

On the historic day, Kamarudin confidently and proudly stepped onto the stage in front of all the dignitaries to recite the *Rukun Negara*.

Kamarudin also shared that the event instilled a deep love for the country, and although he has been living in Brunei for nearly 34 years, he still watches the live broadcast of the National Day celebrations to reminisce the moment when he led the first recitation of the *Rukun Negara*.

He also believes that by adhering firmly to the principles of the *Rukun Negara*, the people of Malaysia, regardless of race, can achieve harmony and stability.

"The principles contained in the *Rukun Negara* must not only be appreciated but also practised in daily life." - Bernama