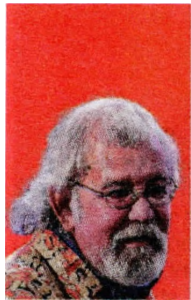


## RICH HISTORY

# Remembering Sarawak's role in the formation of Malaysia



**JAMES RITCHIE**

ON July 23, 1961, Malayan prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, who was in Singapore, asked whether it was feasible to form a federation of five countries — Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei — creating one great nation.

Tunku was speaking at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Regional Conference in Singapore.

They agreed to study the proposal and form the Malaysia Solidarity Consultative Committee (MSCC).

North Borneo responded to the proposal and held the first MSCC meeting in Jesselton on Aug 25, 1961.

In January 1962, the British appointed a Commission of Enquiry for North Borneo (Sabah)

and Sarawak to determine if the people supported the proposal to create a Federation of Malaysia.

The five-man team, which comprised two Malaysians and three British representatives, was headed by Lord Cobbold.

Sarawak was not represented.

Despite the misgivings of a large proportion of the citizens of Sarawak, the British went ahead to form a Malaysia Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC).

On July 6, 1963, 23 representatives of the governments of Britain, Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak met in London to sign the formal IGC Agreement.

Britain, headed by prime minister Harold Macmillan, was represented by four members, Malaya by six under Tunku Abdul Rahman, Singapore by prime minister Lee Kuan Yew and finance minister Goh Keng Swee, Sabah by six and Sarawak by five.

Sarawak's four-member delegation comprised Tan Sri Ling Beng Siew, Sea-Dayak paramount chief Temenggong Tun Jugah Barieng, and two prominent Kuching leaders, Datuk Abang Mustapha Abang Moasli and Tun Abang Openg, who left for London to sign the historic document.

On their return to Sarawak on July 9, the four were given a hero's welcome at the old Kuching airport.

On their return, Ling suggested that the pro-Malaysia Council Negri members of Sarawak, comprising Panas, Pesaka, SCA, Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak (Berjasa) meet at his house to decide on a six-member "shadow cabinet" before the formation of the federation.

On July 21, Tun Jugah chaired a two-day meeting at Ling's residence, now called Rumah Sarawak, where a secret ballot elected SNAP's Tan Sri Stephen Kalong Ningkan as Sarawak's inaugural chief minister.

SNAP party member Datuk Amar James Wong became his deputy.

Others in the line-up included a third SNAP member Dunstan Endawie anak Enchana, Awang Hipni Pengiran Anu (Berjasa), Abdul Taib Mahmud (Berjasa) and Teo Kui Seng (SCA).

On July 22, 1963, the six inaugural members of the Sarawak Alliance coalition were sworn in as the state's first cabinet before governor-elect Tun Jugah.

On Aug 31, 1963, Taib was chosen to make a landmark broad-



(From left) British Commonwealth secretary Duncan Sandys, Sarawak delegate Temenggong Tun Jugah Barieng, British prime minister Harold Macmillan, Malayan prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj and his deputy Tun Abdul Razak Hussein after signing the Malaysia Inter-Governmental Committee Agreement in London on July 6, 1963. FILE PIC

cast over Radio Sarawak.

He said: "Next to Malaysia Day, which we look forward to celebrating on Sept 16, this day is definitely the most anticipated day in the history of our country.

"The challenge for us now as a self-governing state is to preserve our ways of peace and harmony, and to uphold the freedom that comes with democracy.

"If we are to keep this country of ours a paradise of peace that it has always been, we should now unite and work together."

Over the next two weeks, a grand send-off was arranged for outgoing governor Sir Alexander Waddell.

At 12.30pm on Sunday, Sept 16, 1963, the Union Jack was flown

for the last time as thousands bade the last colonial governor farewell in a splendid ceremony.

After bidding goodbye to the new governor, Tun Openg and his wife, Sir Alexander and Lady Waddell boarded the HMS *Loch Killisport*, which slowly moved down Sungai Sarawak.

A 17-gun salute boomed from Fort Margherita while the Sarawak Constabulary band played *Auld Lang Syne*.

As the frigate disappeared behind the promontory, it heralded the closure of another chapter in Sarawak's rich history, ushering in a new one of independence in the face of greater challenges.

The writer is a veteran journalist