



TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN PUTRA AL-HAJ

FATHER OF INDEPENDENCE

FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA (1957-1970)

BIRTH

Tunku Abdul Rahman, the seventh prince of Kedah Sultan Abdul Hamid Shah, was born in Alor Setar on 8th February.

1903

EDUCATION

Tunku had his early education in Sekolah Rendah Melayu in Jalan Baharu before attending the Government English School (later to be known as Sultan Abdul Hamid College) two years later, the state's only English school then.

1909

1913

BANGKOK

Tunku moved to Bangkok with his eldest brother, Tunku Yusuf, who served in the Royal Thai Military Force. There, Tunku attended Debsirin High School. Tunku Yusuf was killed by bandits two years later. After the death of his brother, Tunku returned to Malaya and studied at Penang Free School.

1920

CAMBRIDGE

Tunku received the first Kedah state scholarship to further his studies at Cambridge University. He gained admittance to St. Catherine's College.

GRADUATION

Tunku returned to Alor Setar after he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Law & History from the University of Cambridge.

1925

KEDAH CIVIL SERVICE

After failing part one of the Bar, Tunku returned to Malaya and served the Kedah Civil Service as a cadet in the Legal Advisor's Office.

1931

KUALA NERANG

Tunku was posted to Kuala Nerang as its District Officer in 1932.

1932

WIFE'S DEATH

Meriam contracted malaria in Kuala Nerang and died a month after the birth of Tunku Ahmad Nerang.

1933

2nd MARRIAGE

Tunku married Violet Coulson, an English lady. Soon after, Tunku was transferred to Langkawi as District Officer. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last, and Tunku and Ms Coulson separated, then divorced.

1935

STUDIES, INTERRUPTED

Tunku returned to London and passed part one of the Bar examination. However, he was recalled to Malaya as there was news of impending war.

1938

3rd MARRIAGE

Tunku married Sharifah Rodziah, the daughter of Syed Alwi Barakbah of Alor Setar, and with her, adopted three children: Faridah, Sulaiman, and Mariam.

1939

FATHER'S DEATH

Tunku was appointed as Superintendent of Education for Kedah. In May, his father, the Sultan of Kedah, passed away.

1943

MALAYAN UNION

The Malayan Union was established on 1st April, 1946. An All-Malay Congress opposing the Malayan Union took place in Kuala Lumpur. With the political landscape in Malaya shifting, Tunku decided to return to England to complete his law studies. Tunku passed his Bar exams in 1948 at the age of 46.

1946

UNION DISSOLVED

On 1st February 1948, after strong and sustained protests from the Malay community, the Malayan Union was dissolved and replaced by the Federation of Malaya.

1948

UMNO KEDAH

Tunku returned to Malaya and was appointed as the Chairman of UMNO Kedah. He was also appointed as a Sessions Court Judge.

1949

UMNO PRESIDENT

Dato' Onn Jaafar resigned as President of UMNO to set up the multi-racial Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) and Tunku was persuaded to run for party President. He won and became the new President of UMNO.

1951

NEGOTIATIONS

Tunku negotiated terms for the first Federal Elections to be held on 27th July 1955.

1953

1st FEDERAL ELECTIONS

The Alliance won in a landslide victory in July 1955 and Tunku became the first Chief Minister of Malaya as well as its Home Minister. He was determined to lead Malaya to independence within four years of the Federal Elections.

1954

JOINING CABINET

Tunku joined the Cabinet as an Official Member. In February 1953, the first national convention gathered representatives from all over Malaya as well as six political parties, including UMNO, MCA and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (later to become PAS).

1955

MALAY RULERS; BALING TALKS

In September, Tunku met with the Malay rulers to reassure them that their positions would not be affected after independence. In December, Tunku and Chin Peng met in Baling talks, to discuss terms of amnesty for the Malaya Communist Party. The negotiations failed.

1956

MALAYA TREATY

In January, Tunku led a delegation to London to negotiate for Independence. A month later, the Independence of Malaya Treaty was signed and 31st August 1957 became the date for Malaya's independence.

1957

31st AUGUST: ANNOUNCEMENT

Tunku announced the date at a rally in Malacca upon his return. In June, Tunku took on additional portfolios as the Defence and Internal Securities Minister of Malaya.

1958

MERDEKA!

31st August: Malaya gained Independence and became known as the Malay Federation or Persekutuan Tanah Melayu.

1959

ALLIANCE ELECTORAL WIN

At the Federal Election, the first since Independence, the Alliance won 74 of the 103 seats contested.

1960

MALAYSIA: A PROPOSAL

Tunku proposed the idea of "Malaysia" comprising the Malayan Federation, Singapore, Brunei, Sabah, and Sarawak.

1961

COBBOLD COMMISSION

In January, the Cobbold Commission was established to gauge the response of East Malaysians to the proposed 'merger' with Malaya.

1962

MALAYSIA: AGREEMENT SIGNED

In July, Tunku signed a formal agreement for the setting up of Malaysia in Marlborough House, London.

1963

BIG WIN FOR ALLIANCE

The Alliance won big in the 1964 General Election - securing 89 out of the 104 seats in Federal Parliament, 15 seats more than in 1959. However, the first signs of trouble were brewing between the Alliance leaders and Lee Kuan Yew of the People's Action Party (PAP) Singapore.

1964

BUMIPUTRA ECONOMIC CONGRESS

In May, the first Bumiputra Economic Congress was held. Following that Congress, Bank Bumiputra was established with Tunku Razaleigh Hamzah as its Executive Director.

1965

ASEAN

In August, ASEAN (the Association of South-East Asian Nations) was born consisting of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippine, and Thailand.

1967

1969 GE

In May, the 1969 General Elections were held. The results indicated dissatisfaction, particularly among the Malays, with the ruling government. The Alliance won 76 seats with 37 seats captured by the opposition parties.

1969

INTERNAL CRITICS

Tunku faced a very critical faction in UMNO who wanted him to resign, a faction he labelled as "Ultras". Among those critical of Tunku's leadership at the time was Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

1970

RESIGNATION

Tunku announced his resignation as Prime Minister of Malaya. On 31st August 1970, he was succeeded by Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

1971

CHAIRING THE STAR

Tunku took up a stake in The Star and became its Chairman in 1974. He also became one of the most famous columnists, writing weekly for the "Looking Back" (and later "As I See It") columns which boosted the circulation of the newspaper. He remained with The Star until his death.

1974

SETTING UP THE IDB

Tunku helped establish the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

1975

89th BIRTHDAY

In a move to mend the rift with Tunku, Tun Dr. Mahathir attended Tunku's birthday celebrations in KL.

1982

HIJRAH AWARD

For his contributions to Islam, Tunku Abdul Rahman shared the King Faisal Award with Egypt's Hasanein M. Makhlouf. He was also the first recipient of the Pakistani Hijrah Award.

1983

DEATH

On 6th December 1990, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj passed away at the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital at the age of 87. He was subsequently laid to rest at the Royal Mausoleum of Alor Setar.

1990

AUSTRALIAN AWARD

The Australian government bestowed Tunku Abdul Rahman the Companion of the Order of Australia Award "for service to Australian/Malaysian relations."

1987

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1969

SEC-GEN OF THE OIC

Tunku became the first Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), at the invitation of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia.

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