

Journey to Merdeka

Malaysia is one of the few countries that has managed to secure independence without bloodshed. Led by Tunku Abdul Rahman, widely known as the Father of Independence, the journey to Merdeka was, regardless, long and hard-fought. Do you still recall the milestones that led to our independence? Here's a refresher.

July 27, 1955
Malayan General Election
 > The Federation of Malaya held its only pre-independence election to the Federal Legislative Council, which resulted in a decisive win for the Alliance Party, comprising the United Malays National Organisation (Umno), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).

> Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, President of Umno, became Chief Minister of the Federation and later met Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was agreed that talks would be held in London to discuss the drafting of a constitution in January the following year.

Jan 18, 1956
Merdeka mission
 > The constitutional conference began in London, attended by a delegation from the Federation of Malaya. The delegation consisted of four representatives of the Malay Rulers, as well as Tunku Abdul Rahman and three ministers from his cabinet.

> The conference proposed the appointment of an independent commission to draft a constitution for a fully self-governing and independent Federation of Malaya. This proposal was accepted by Queen Elizabeth II and the Malay Rulers.

Feb 8, 1956
Treaty of London 1956
 > At the end of the constitutional conference, the Treaty of London 1956 was signed to kickstart the process for an independent Federation of Malaya.

Feb 20, 1956
Mission success
 > After returning from London, Tunku Abdul Rahman made a brief speech in Melaka, announcing that the Federation would become independent on Aug 31, 1957 to shouts of "Merdeka!"

March 1956
Reid Commission
 > The constitutional commission, known as the Reid Commission, was formed. It was headed by Lord William Reid, judge of the

Court of Appeal of England/Reid Commission and included constitutional experts from England, Australia, India and Pakistan.

> Members of the Commission travelled to every state in the Federation and received memoranda from a number of individuals and organisations, such as the Alliance and the Conference of Rulers.

Feb 21, 1957
Submission of draft
 > The Reid Commission submitted its working draft to a Working Committee, which included four representatives from the Malay Rulers, another four from the Alliance government and the British High Commissioner, Donald MacGillivray.

July 31, 1957
Federation of Malaya Independence Act 1957
 > The Federation of Malaya Independence Act 1957 was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom and came into effect on this date.

> The Act made provisions for the Federation of Malaya (formerly the Protected States of Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Selangor and Terengganu) and the Settlements of Penang and Malacca to become an independent sovereign country and join the Commonwealth of Nations on Aug 31, 1957.

Aug 15, 1957
Federal Constitution Ordinance 1957
 > The constitution draft was presented and debated by the Federal Legislative Council before it was passed on this date.

Aug 27, 1957
Malayan Constitution
 > The Constitution of the Federation of Malaya took effect for the first time.

> As the supreme law of the land, it established the Federation as a constitutional monarchy, with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of State in a largely ceremonial role.

> It established three branches of the government: the legislative branch (at the time the Federal Legislative Council, until the 1959 general election); the executive branch, led by the prime minister and cabinet ministers; and the judicial branch, headed by the Federal Court.

Aug 30, 1957
Minutes to midnight
 > On the night of Aug 30, crowds of excited citizens gathered at the Royal Selangor Club field in Kuala Lumpur to witness the historic handover of power from the British.

> At 11.58pm, two minutes of darkness were observed, and at the stroke of midnight, the lights were turned back on.

> The Union Jack was lowered and replaced by the new flag of the

"Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka!"

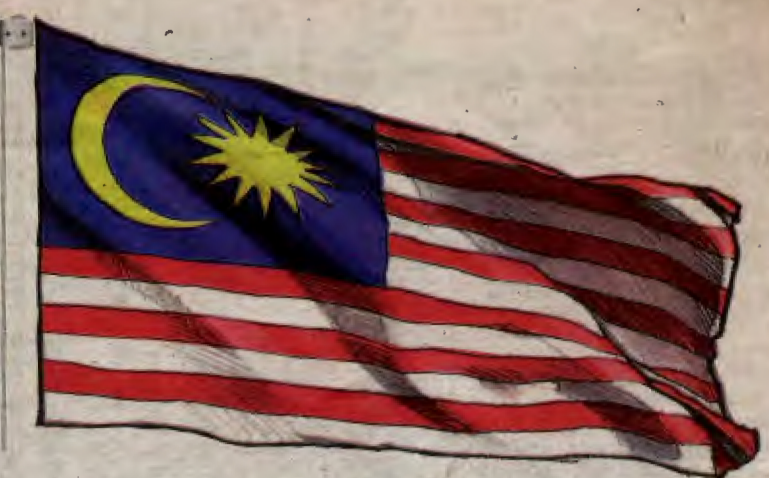
independent Federation of Malaya, accompanied by its national anthem, *Negaraku*. This was followed by chants of "Merdeka!" by the crowd.

> Prime minister-designate Tunku Abdul Rahman later hailed the ceremony as "the greatest moment in the life of the Malayan people."

Aug 31, 1957
The birth of a nation
 > At the newly completed Merdeka Stadium, more than 20,000 people were present for the official ceremony declaring the Federation's independence.

> Queen Elizabeth II's representative, the Duke of Gloucester, presented Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman with the Declaration of Independence, which Tunku read out loud, concluding with seven shouts of "Merdeka!"

> The ceremony continued with the raising of the national flag of Malaya, accompanied by the national anthem, and a 21-gun salute.



Jalur Gemilang
 Malaysia's national flag, named "Jalur Gemilang" (Stripes of Glory), is made up of 14 alternating red and white stripes and a blue rectangle in the upper left corner, bearing a crescent and a 14-point star known as the Bintang Persekutuan (Federal Star), representing the country's states and federal territories.

Meaning of Jalur Gemilang
 The Jalur Gemilang has a combination of four colours: blue, yellow, red and white. The design of the flag is symbolic of the country's states and federal territories. The 14 points on the star represent unity, while the crescent refers to Islam as Malaysia's official religion. Yellow stands for the royal colour of the Malay Rulers. Meanwhile, the dark blue canton on the top left corner symbolises harmony and togetherness. Lastly, the alternating horizontal stripes of white and red mean purity and courage.

Flag history
 The current Malaysian flag is based on the flag of the Federation of Malaya. In 1949, a year after the Federation was set up, the Federal Legislative Council announced a contest to design a new national flag. The competition garnered 373 entries, of which three designs were shortlisted and put forward to the public in a poll.

The first flag had a ring of 11 white stars on a blue background, with two red Malay keris (daggers) in the middle. The second was similar, but with the white stars forming a constellation in the shape of a six-pointed star around the keris. The third had 11 blue and white stripes and a red field in the top-left corner with a white crescent and five-pointed star on it. This design was chosen as the winner.

After the winning design was chosen, the Federal Legislative Council decided to make a few changes. Datuk Onn Jaafar, a legislator in the Council, suggested that the red and blue colours be swapped, the crescent and star to be changed from white to yellow, and six more points were to be added to the star to make 11, the number of states in the Federation.

The final version of the Malayan flag was approved by King George VI on May 19, 1950, and would continue to be used until 1963. After the formation of Malaysia, the flag was modified to reflect the addition of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore - three stripes were added, as well as three points on the star.

When Kuala Lumpur was designated a Federal Territory on Feb 1, 1974, the stripe and point in the star that had represented Singapore prior to its expulsion from the Federation were appropriated to represent the Federal Territories.

The designer
 Mohamed Hamzah was the Malaysian architect who designed the national flag. The 29-year-old, who was working for the Public Works Department, hailed from Johor Baru. He entered the national flag design competition with two designs. One of the designs made it to the final and was said to be influenced by the Johor state flag.

The design underwent many changes before it became the country's official flag today.



Negaraku
*Negaraku
 Tanah tumpahnya darahku
 Rakyat hidup bersatu dan maju
 Rahmat bahagia Tuhan kurniakan
 Raja kita selamat bertakhta
 Rahmat bahagia Tuhan kurniakan
 Raja kita selamat bertakhta*



The national anthem was composed when the country was preparing to celebrate its Independence Day in 1957.



A song composition contest for a national anthem was held in February 1957.



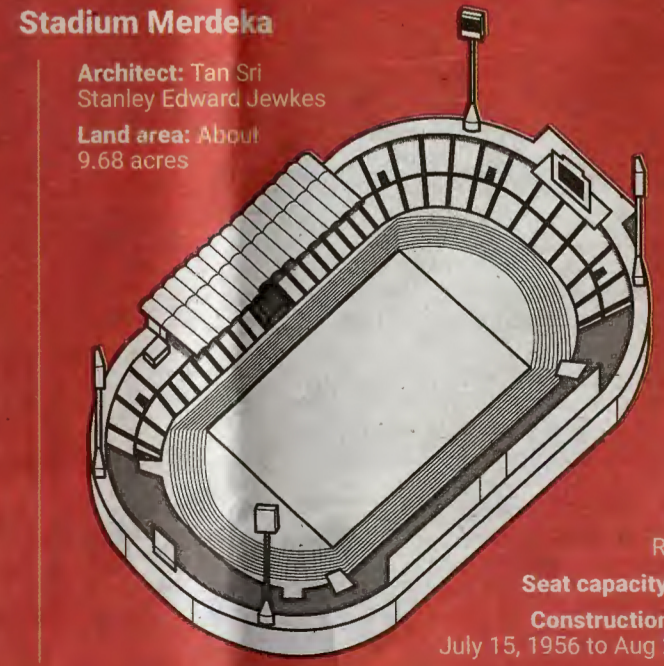
Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Special Committee of the National Anthem rejected the four shortlisted songs.



Tunku Abdul Rahman recommended the state anthem of Perak, *Allah Lanjutkan Usia Sultan* as the basis for *Negaraku*.

Negaraku score song prepared by:

Alfonso Soliano (Radio Malaya Orchestra leader)	D.S.P Croff (Federation Police Band music director)	Capt. Lenthall (Malay Army music director)	A.T Read (Radio Broadcasting director)
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Stadium Merdeka
Architect: Tan Sri Stanley Edward Jewkes
Land area: About 9.68 acres

The stadium was built for the declaration of independence, which took place in 1957 by the country's first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman.

It was also the first place where the Malaysian flag was hoisted.

The sports ground was once an important venue for sports and major celebrations. In 1996, the King of Pop, Michael Jackson held a concert at the stadium.

Two decades before Michael Jackson's performance, legendary boxer Muhammad Ali fought valiantly against British boxer Joe Bugner in 1975 at the stadium.

Stadium Merdeka will be hosting the 42nd Pestabola Merdeka, a friendly football tournament, this year.

The stadium was declared a national heritage building in 2003. This put a stop to its redevelopment plan that began in the 1990s.

With a capacity to hold more than 20,000 spectators, the iconic stadium underwent renovation in 2007, to commemorate Malaysia's 50th anniversary.

Budget: RM2.3mil
Seat capacity: 22,000
Construction period: July 15, 1956 to Aug 21, 1957

