

History made at Dataran Pahlawan, Melaka

By Sager Ahmad, NST

30th. August 2004

DATARAN Pahlawan in Bandar Hilir, Malacca, is indeed a historic site. This was where Chief Minister of Malaya (later Prime Minister) Tunku Abdul Rahman announced on his trip back from London on February 20th, 1956, that the British Government had agreed to grant Malaya Independence the following year, on August 31st, 1957. He made the historic announcement at the Dataran.



Pyramid with Letter 'M' marks the place where Tunku made his historic announcement at Dataran Pahlawan on February 20th, 1956.

The Front part is being excavated to locate the walls of A Famosa.

August 2004

Malacca was Tunku's first stop in his nationwide tour in 1956 to garner support in his quest for the country's independence. The significance of choosing Malacca was that it was the first State to be colonised in 1511 by the Portuguese.

The Tunku had also collected money and jewellery from the people of Malacca at the Dewan Meng Seng, a hall which still stands today, to pay for the Merdeka delegation's trip to London. The independence delegation returned home via the Batu Berendam airport and a massive rally greeted Tunku and his delegates. From the airport, chanting 'Merdeka', rally participants marched to Padang Pahlawan, about 16 km away, to hear the official announcement of the date for Independence.

Despite the Malayan Emergency (1948 to 1960), Tunku and his delegation succeeded in securing independence without bloodshed and indeed it is a feat which only few countries have achieved in their struggle for freedom. The 39th. Merdeka Day celebration was held at the Dataran Pahlawan in 1996.

The site, now a 6.4 ha open field in the heart of Malacca City, is actually situated on reclaimed land. It will soon be transformed into a commercial centre and car park similar to Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur. When the RM 60million development project is ready, it will have entertainment centres and cineplexes, with space for exhibitions, cultural and sports events. Dataran Pahlawan will have 830 car park bays, an International Club, 168 air-conditioned shoplots and more than 100 non-airconditioned ones. Three light minarets, a distinct feature of the Dataran, will brighten the area. A monument pillar and water cascade with sculptures of warriors and characters from Malacca's history will decorate the area.

The International Club will offer a swimming pool, a gym, a jacuzzi, a sauna, an Internet café, a cricket ground and a karaoke lounge.

State Museum and Antiquities Department senior assistant curator Iesnordin Malan had said the site was reclaimed shortly after World War 1 (1918). Dataran Pahlawan is dotted with stalls selling souvenirs and snacks to tourists visiting the historical attractions in the area – A Famosa, replica of Malacca Sultan's palace and St. Paul's Hill.



*Photo shows tourists enjoying their beca ride in front of A Famosa at Bandar Hilir.
The former Malacca Club Building, now a museum, is on the left background.
August 2004*