

From Left Side Nasionalist to Pro-Government Politicians: Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim bin Mohamad (Seventh Menteri Besar Terengganu 09.11.1961 - 30.09.1970)

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Abstract

The State of Terengganu has a Law of Appointment of leaders that has been set. DYMM Sultan or menteri besar to be appointed must meet the conditions set out in the Law for the Government of Terengganu dated 2 November 1911 which is also known as 'Itqan Al Muluk Bitadil As-Suluk. Therefore, this paper aims to re-document the history of the 7th Terengganu Menteri Besar YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim bin Mohamad. This study was conducted qualitatively using Snowball Sampling Techniques to 7th Menteri Besar son, Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim. The results of this study can contribute to the knowledge of the history of the Terengganu state administration and be a source of lessons for the leadership of the menteri besar today and in the future.

Keywords: Terengganu Administration History, Seventh Terengganu Menteri Besar Appointed by Politics, History of Terengganu Menteri Besar, Administration And Struggle of Menteri Besar Terengganu

Introduction

From 21.04.1925 to 30.09.1970, a total of seven *Menteri Besar Terengganu* or Terengganu Chief Minister were appointed, five were appointed by DYMM Sultan (His Highness Sultan of Terengganu) and nine through the dominant political parties, either UMNO or PAS. The appointment of Chief Minister through His Highness Sultan of Terengganu was implemented before the General Election 1959 while through political appointment, which is appointment by the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaysia with the consent of His Highness the Sultan of Terengganu started in 1959 until now (Aziz, 2015). The state of Terengganu has a law on the appointment of leaders that has been established. The Sultan or Chief Minister

who will be appointed must adhere to the requirements stipulated in the Law for the Self-Government of Terengganu dated November 2, 1911 also known as 'Itqan Al Muluk Bitadil As-Suluk. This law is a solid foundation for the appointment of a Chief Minister of Terengganu. The first to fourteenth Chief Minister of Terengganu and the respondents who have been interviewed for this research are as shown in Table 1 and Table 2. The related for this paper is 7th Terengganu Chief Minister at Table 2:-

Table 1

List of Respondents of Terengganu's Chief Ministers Appointed by the His Highness Sultan (1925 – 1959)

No.	Chief Minister	Respondent
1.	Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Amar Di Raja Haji Ngah Muhammad bin Yusof (21.4.1925 - 28.6.1940)	Dato' Aria Pura Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad (Son)
2.	Y.B.M. Tengku Seri Maharaja Tengku Omar bin Othman (15.7.1940 - 9.12.1941)	Dato' Tengku Abdul Jalil bin Tengku Omar (Son)
3.	Y.A.B. Dato' Jaya Perkasa Da Omar bin Mahmud (10.12.1941- 1.12.1947)	Puan Zaleha binti Ismail (Grand daughter)
4.	Y.A.M. Tengku Panglima Perang Tengku Muhammad Ibni Al Marhum Sultan Ahmad (2.12.1947 - 26.12.1949)	Dato'Tengku Omar bin Tengku Salleh (Grandson)
5.	Y.A.B. Dato' Perdana Menteri Di Raja Dato Seri Setia Di Raja Haji Kamaruddin bin Haji Idris (27.12.1949 - 28.6.1959)	Dato' Suhami bin Kamaruddin (Son)

Table 2

List of Respondents of Terengganu's Chief Ministers Appointed by Political Parties with the consent of His Highness the Sultan of Terengganu (1959 – 2018)

Bil	Waris Menteri Besar	Responden
6.	Y.A.B. En. Daud bin Abdul Samad (29.6.1959 - 8.11.1961)	Hajah Fatimah binti Ismail (Wife)
7	Y.A.B. Tan Sri Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohammad (9.11.1961 - 30.9.1970)	Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim (Son)
8.	Y.A.B. Dato' Mahmood bin Sulaiman (1.10.1970 - 4.9.1971)	Toh Puan Che Zaharah binti Abdullah (Wife)
9.	Y.A.B. Dato Haji Nik Hassan bin Haji Wan Abdul Rahman (5.9.1971- 31.8.1974)	Dato' Nik Naim Shukran bin Nik Hassan (Son)
10.	Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Amar Di Raja Dato' Seri Haji Wan Mokhtar bin Ahmad (1.9.1974 - 30.11.1999)	Personel Itself
11.	Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Tuan Guru Haji Abdul Hadi bin Haji Awang (30.11.1999 - 21.3.2004)	Personel Itself
12.	Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Idris bin Jusoh (22.3.2004 - 22.3.2008)	Personel Itself
13.	Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Ahmad bin Said (23.3.2008 - 12.5.2014)	Personel Itself
14.	Y.A.B Dato Seri Haji Ahmad Razif bin Abdul Rahman (13.5.2014 - 9.5.2018)	Personel Itself

This paper aims to redocument the history of the seventh Chief Minister of Terengganu from several aspects including the personage, administration and contribution. To fulfill the purpose of the study, this paper attempts to provide authentic research findings related to the information of the seventh Menteri Besar of Terengganu, YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim bin Mohamad.

Document Research

Document research was conducted at University Library, Public Library, National Archives of Malaysia and Terengganu State Museum Board to obtain relevant information to the study. Among the institutions that were referred for bibliographic research include the Terengganu Collection Unit at the Terengganu State Library, the Terengganu State Museum Board, the Al Muktafi Billah Library Archives Unit at UniSZA Kuala Nerus, the National Archives of Malaysia Terengganu Branch, the National Archives of Malaysia Kuala Lumpur, and the Tun Sri Lanang Library, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Research Methodology

Sampling

The study sample is the result of an interview with the son of the figure, Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim on 04 July 2017 at Taman Setia, Durian Burung, Kuala Terengganu followed by a second interview on 21 August 2019 also at same address at Kuala Terengganu.

Research Design

The method used for this research is qualitative research which is Unstructured Interview through the snowball technique. The data collection method used is the "Face-to-Face Interview Method" which is conducted by the researcher on the respondents who are the children of the figures and is compiled by qualitative method manually. The medium used is a face-to-face interview arranged through a telephone call. The interview recordings will be recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed. The information obtained will be coded according to the themes that have been planned.

Research Findings

Background Seventh Chief Minister of Terengganu

Ibrahim bin Mohamad or Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri is the son of Mohamad bin Abdul Wahab and Hajah Cik Mariam. He was born on January 20, 1920 in Lorong Haji Jamil, Bandar Kuala Terengganu. Ibrahim Fikri's father was a rice and salt business entrepreneur while his mother was a well-known songket cloth business entrepreneur in Terengganu at that time. He has an older brother named Hashim and a younger sister named Aishah. His first marriage with Puan Hindun binti Ali was blessed with two children named Ahmad Merdeka and Faridah. However, his son and his wife passed away earlier. His second marriage with Puan Rogayah binti Mohamad (Dato') was blessed with nine children including Abdul Rahman, Ahmad (Dato'), Abdul Rahim, Zaharah, Mohd Nasir (Dato' Haji), Mohd Nor, Kamal Ariffin, Norma and Abdullah Kamil (Dato' Dr) (Awang, 1998).

Even though his father was busy running a business, his father was very concerned about the children's education and schooling. Ibrahim Fikri started receiving education at Sekolah Bukit Jambul, Kuala Terengganu in 1928 until 1932, which is until the end of grade VI. After completing primary education, Ibrahim Fikri was sent to Sekolah Menengah Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin (SMASZA). His teacher hoped that Ibrahim would continue his secondary studies

at Maktab Perguruan Sultan Idris (MPSI), Tanjung Malim, Perak but his father chose to send him to SMAASZA. During his time at SMAASZA, not only he showed excellent performance in academics, but was also active in extracurricular activities such as *Majlis Khitabah* (public speaking), debates, speeches, writing essays and poems for school magazines, as well as sports and uniformed bodies. His courage and leadership became even more apparent when Ibrahim Fikri participated in *Majlis Khitabah* which gave opportunities for students to deliver speeches or lectures in front of teachers and friends. He is indeed recognized to have a natural talent in delivering public lectures and eloquent arguments since his school days. His eloquence in arguing and debating during the *khitabah* competition caused his teacher to give him the title of 'Fikri' which means thinker (Awang, 1998). The title remains attached to him and used in the historical writing about him.

Experiences before becoming a Terengganu Chief Minister

As soon as he finished school, he was offered a scholarship to continue his studies at Aligarh University, India but could not be continued due to World War II. Even though he was prevented from continuing his studies, it never discouraged him in searching for knowledge. He applied for a job as a religious teacher and taught at Sekolah Melayu Paya Bunga, Kuala Terengganu in 1937 with a salary of RM 12.00 per month. In the afternoon, he sought knowledge by studying English at The Grammar School, Kuala Terengganu. However, his career as a teacher was short-lived when he chose to quit his job and venture into the rice business with his father. Later, he worked as a newscaster at the Public Relations Office and then he worked at Information Department (Awang, 1998).

Ibrahim Fikri's inclination towards current issues has been prominent since school days, along with his eloquent talent in lectures and speeches. In his early 20s, he began to get serious in the political arena and then became a famous and respected leader in the 1960s with great leadership for the development of the state of Terengganu in particular. Tracing back to the beginning of his involvement in politics, he chose to associate himself with left-wing nationalist parties that are quite radical.

In 1941, the first political party he joined was Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM). KMM was established in 1938 in Kuala Lumpur by Ibrahim Haji Yaakob with the aim to protect the rights of the Malays and opposing British colonialism. KMM is the first nationalist political organization in Malaya. It brought the demand for full independence from British colonialism by overthrowing British administration by any means and wished to unite Malaya with the Republic of Indonesia under *Panji Melayu Raya*. This radical nationalist opposition caused the British to classify the KMM as a left-wing party that could threaten their administration. When the Japanese conquered Terengganu on 10 December 1941, the position of the KMM throughout Malaya became stronger. This is because KMM's relationship with Japan started even before the arrival of the Japanese army (Aziz & Ismail, 2017). Their goal is the same which is to expel the British colonists from Malaya under the Japanese Slogan "Asia for Asians". When the Japanese army invaded Malaya, the KMM youth helped the army as guides and interpreters. The leader of KMM, Ibrahim Haji Yaakob, has been appointed as Commander of Giyuugun with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Ibrahim Fikri who at that time was the Secretary of KMM was appointed as the editor of "Cahaya Timur". Later, in 1942, he was appointed by the Japanese military government to hold a position as an Officer in charge of the Public Service Division (Somubu) and the Youth Meeting Office (Shingishitgh) under the supervision of the Chief Japanese Officer, S. Arai (Awang, 1998).

After the defeat of Japan to the Allies on August 15, 1945, Malaya was temporarily controlled by the army of *Bintang Tiga*. The army of *Bintang Tiga* is the Malayan People's Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA) who came out of hiding in the forest after the end of the war, wearing a soldier's uniform and a three-pointed hat with a three-pointed star symbol, complete with rifles and hand grenades. They began arresting Malays and Indians who were accused of conspiring with the Japanese during the Japanese military occupation. After being questioned, the offender will be punished with a severe punishment which is being shot to death. Due to his role during the Japanese occupation, Ibrahim Fikri and some of his friends were also hunted by the Bintang Tiga army. Fortunately, while trying to escape, he and his friends were caught by the police. He was then imprisoned in Kota Bharu prison by the British army for eight months until the situation calmed down. When he was released from the prison, Malaya was under the British Military Administration (BMA). At the same time, new parties started to emerge such as the Persatuan Melayu Negeri, Parti Komunis Malaya (PKM) and Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM). He became active again by joining the PKMM and became the party's Supreme Council Members in 1947 to 1948 (Aziz & Ismail, 2017).

In 1948, when all political parties were banned in Malaya, there was a string of emergencies except for the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the only party allowed by the (British) government at that time. Ibrahim Fikri finally decided to join the party because it was compatible with the Malay nationalist attitude and UMNO's goal of demanding independence peacefully from the British. He shifted from left-side politics (PKMM) to right-side politics (UMNO) because he began to have doubts about PKMM's objective to gain independence through bloodshed, violence, war and PKMM's mission to unite under *Panji Melayu Raya* with Indonesia. UMNO's struggle for independence through peaceful negotiations and without involving bloodshed is seen as more realistic to achieve. His initial involvement in the UMNO party was only as an ordinary member. But because he has a package of great leaders, especially speeches, he eventually made his way up, step by step, holding several key positions in UMNO. He then gained the trust of the party to be a candidate for the Terengganu City election in 1955 where he successfully won it with distinction (Awang, 1998). The influential opposition candidates were not able to diminish the people's trust in continuing to give Ibrahim Fikri and UMNO a mandate at that time. He was then appointed as Deputy Chief Minister from 1955 to 1959. In 1959, the PAS government won the state election, yet in the Seberang Takir state legislative assembly which was his stronghold, he still managed to maintain a comfortable victory.

However, in 1961, the PAS government was dissolved when the Terengganu State Legislative Assembly presented a vote of no confidence for the second time to the leadership of the sixth Chief Minister of Terengganu, Mr. Daud bin Samad. With the resignation of Mr. Daud Samad as a result of the defeat in the vote of no confidence, DYMM Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah has ordered the *Parti Perikatan* (Alliance Party) to establish a new government for the Terengganu state administration. Therefore, on 9 January 1961, he was officially appointed as the seventh Chief Minister for the Terengganu State Government (Awang, 1998).

Contribution

In 1961, after two years the state government was under PAS administration, the Alliance Party took over the state government with the appointment of Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad as the seventh Chief Minister through a vote of no confidence. During his nine years as Chief Minister, various services have been poured by him for the prosperity and development of the state. Among his services is establishing *Pelajaran Derma* which is now

known as *Yayasan Tunku Abdul Rahman*. The State Government has allocated RM 250,000 to the fund. On 8 December 1965, an agreement was made between the Terengganu State Economic Development Corporation and the National Development and Finance Corporation regarding the Palm Oil Plantation project in Sungai Tong, Setiu. It is his proactive effort to cover the lack of state government revenue due to the decline in tin production at the Bukit Besi Mine, Dungun. He also helped reduce bumiputera unemployment with extensive agricultural projects of 30,000 hectares which eventually provided employment opportunities to 20,000 people in the district.

Other projects implemented by Ibrahim Fikri was the establishment of the Fishing Company on May 23, 1957. The establishment of this company has helped fishermen who are generally wallowing in poverty to obtain basic fishing equipment by providing credit loans. This is the government's effort to ensure fishermen and farmers can work to the utmost as the majority of the people of Terengganu depend on these jobs. Later, he built mosques, *surau*, piers, toilets and wells for the convenience of the people. This includes low-cost house projects in Telaga Daeng, Seberang Takir as well as other similar low-cost house projects.

His generous nature and love to see the development of education continued by donating a piece of land near his house to build a secondary school. Sekolah Menengah Kg Seberang Takir is now known as Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ibrahim Fikri considering his sincerity in donating land to actualize the secondary school in Kuala Nerus. He was well liked by the people that in Setiu district a village was named after his name, Kampung Fikri. Sekolah Menengah Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin also took a step to commemorate his services as one of the famous alumni by naming the main hall of the school as Dewan Fikri.

In appreciation of his service to the Terengganu State government, he was awarded several orders of the stars. *Bintang Sri Paduka Mahkota Terengganu* was awarded by His Royal Highness the Sultan of Terengganu which entitled with the title of Dato' while *Bintang Panglima Mangku Negara* was awarded by His Majesty the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong which entitled with the title of Tan Sri. He also received several medals, namely the *Pingat Pekerti Terpilih* (PPT) in 1969 and the *Pingat Jaksa Pendamai* (JP).

After Retired

At the end of September 1970, he chose to resign as Menteri Besar of Terengganu and was later replaced on an interim basis by Dato' Mahmood bin Sulaiman (Aziz, 2015). Even though he is no longer a Chief Minister, he is still a people's representative or a member of the Kuala Nerus State Legislative Assembly. On September 26, 1973, a shocking incident occurred where he was involved in an accident at Batu 123, Jalan Kuantan-Temerloh while traveling to Kuala Lumpur to welcome the return of his son who had just graduated from the University of London, United Kingdom. This accident caused his death and his body was buried at the Sheikh Ibrahim Cemetery, Jalan Pusara, Kuala Terengganu on 27 September 1973 with full ceremony for the great people of the state of Terengganu.

Conclusion

At earlier political party carier, Ibrahim Fikri chose a left-wing party, *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM) and became the leader of *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM), but later switched to a right-wing party, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Ibrahim Fikri's personality shows that he is tenacious, visionary and possesses a leadership style that is different from previous leaders. The argumentative skills honed since his school days at Sekolah Menengah Sultan Zainal Abidin to the political stage have opened the eyes of the country's top leaders such as the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Second

Prime Minister, Tun Razak Hussein. His involvement in right-wing politics with the UMNO party is a solid foundation in the political struggle coupled with his stature, speaking and lecturing ability as well as his leadership which earned him the trust to be appointed as the seventh Chief Minister of Terengganu. His confidence in the prospects of agriculture led to the establishment of state government subsidiaries that are able to stand on their own until now such as KETENGAH, Ladang Rakyat, TDM Plantation and so on. His insistence on defending agricultural companies based on rubber and palm oil instead of accepting the idea of Malaysia's federal agriculture by Tun Razak through Felda Plantation which caused him to give up his position as Chief Minister of Terengganu despite winning the General Election in 1969. Among them are several corruption issues made by the opposition party to bring him down. Besides, he is also involved in several issues that have not yet been proven guilty by the UMNO Central Committee. These pressures caused him to take the decision to resign his position on September 30, 1970. At that time, Terengganu could be considered able to compete with other states even though it had not yet been able to experience the benefits of the luxury commodity which is petroleum. Although Petroleum was discovered during his administration, exploration efforts have not yet been carried out by Petronas. Therefore, the results have not been enjoyed during his administration. Indeed, Ibrahim Fikri's vision, perseverance, sincerity, hard work and devotion to the state of Terengganu should be emulated by the administrators and Terengganu Chief Minister in the present and for the future time.

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Temubual bersama waris mantan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad. Dato' Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim Fikri, Kuala Terengganu (2017) dan (15 Februari 2019).

APPENDIX



Picture 1: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad was a great orator who joined the left-wing nationalist movement (KMM and PKMM) before switching to right-wing politics supporting the government's policy under the leadership of YAB Tunku Abdul Rahman by joining the UMNO party (Source : Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim - son).



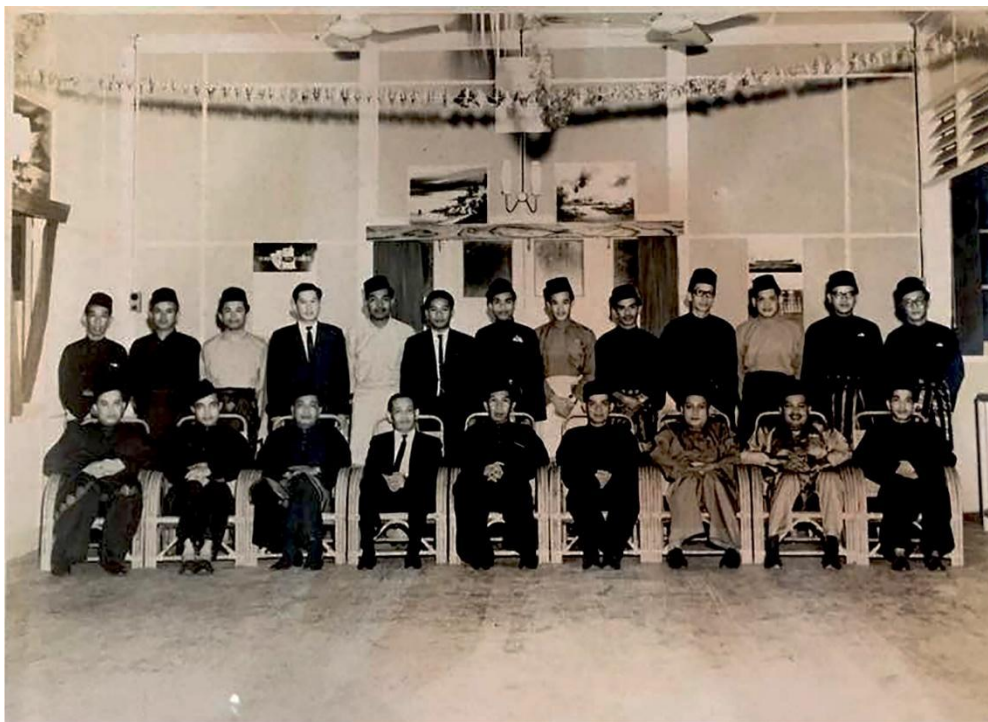
Picture 2: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad with To' Puan Rogayah
(Source: Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim - son).



Picture 3: Working visit to an oil palm plantation in Sungai Tong, Setiu, Terengganu
(Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 4: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad (right) in an official ceremony with His Majesty the Sultan of Terengganu and His Majesty the Sultan of Kelantan (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 5: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad (seated in the middle) with Terengganu State Administrative Officers at the State House, Kuala Terengganu (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur)



Picture 6: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad attending the Commonwealth Conference in England in 1973 (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 7: DYMM Sultan Yahya Petra Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ibrahim, Sultan of Kelantan departing from the Resort, Terengganu Chief Minister's Official Residence in Batu Buruk, Kuala Terengganu (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 8: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad accompanying the First Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 9: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad with the Second Prime Minister, Tun Razak bin Hussein (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 10: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad delivering a welcoming speech in conjunction with the celebration of Malaysia Day and the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah Stadium at Padang Paya Bunga, Kuala Terengganu on 17 September 1963 (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 11: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad presenting the trophy to the Football Team Leader who became the Sports Champion in conjunction with Malaysia Day in 1963 (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 12: YAB Tan Sri Dato' Ibrahim Fikri bin Mohamad presenting a gift to Johan Qari at Terengganu State Level in 1965 (Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).



Picture 13: Photo of the incident at Batu 123, Kampung Awah, Jalan Kuantan-Temerloh, Pahang on 26 September 1973 (Source: Dato' Haji Mohd Nasir bin Ibrahim- son).