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MR. BHUTTO

Razak: Happy to have ties with Pakistan again...

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, welcomed Pakistan's friendship overtures.

Tun Razak was referring to yesterday's statement to Jakarta newsmen by the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, that Pakistan was making peace with Malaysia.

Today, Tun Razak said: "We have had no official from them (Pakistan) yet.

"It was Pakistan who broke relations with us. But we shall be very happy to have them as friends again."

Police aid sought

MISSING SINCE FRIDAY AFTER LEAVING FOR AN UNDISCLOSED DESTINATION

Tun Lim mystery

CANBERRA, Sunday

POLICE have been called in to help find the Malaysian High Commissioner here, Tun Lim Yew Hock, who has not been seen since Friday afternoon.

The Second Secretary at the High Commission, Mr. Ajit Singh, revealed this tonight at a press conference to seek aid in finding the High Commissioner.

An official statement issued by the High Commission said that Tun Lim had been in ill health for some time.

He had left on Friday for an undisclosed destination.

He told his office that he was going away for a quiet weekend, the statement said.

The High Commission now wished to get in touch with him on a matter requiring his immediate attention.

Mr. Singh told reporters that the High Commissioner's car was still in Canberra and no-one from the High Commission had taken him to the airport.

26 die in floods

PULL OUT BY HO's TROOPS

SAIGON, Sun.—Two battalions of North Vietnamese troops withdrew from entrenched positions in the central highlands today in the face of pressure from reinforced American paratroopers.

Under cover of predawn fog, the Communist force of about 800 men faded into thick undergrowth and bamboo thickets 30 miles northwest of Kontum city.

A U.S. military spokesman said the North Vietnamese were no longer in the positions on ridges where they were known to be dug in last night.

Malik throws dinner for Ghazali

JAKARTA, Sun.—The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mr. Adam Malik, last night gave a dinner party at his official residence in honour of Tan Sri Ghazali bin Shafie, Permanent Secretary to the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, here on a peace mission.

Tan Sri Ghazali has been under heavy security guard since his arrival here on Friday night and pressmen have been barred from seeing him.

Statement

The security, defence and foreign affairs committee

Perak Derby claims two victims

By EPSOM JEEP

IPOH, Sun. — The $25,000 Perak Derby run over a gruelling distance of 12f claimed two victims here today.

Sinar Mata and Pena'alok collapsed and died in front of the packed grandstands after the race.

They were on their way back to the saddling enclosure when they showed signs of distress. Doug Weir, who rode Pena'alok, quickly dismounted, followed by Johnny Nelson on Sinar Mata.

The club vet, Dick Coughlan, was quickly on the scene but both horses died before help could be rendered.

PAID $118

Pena'alok, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Chong Kok Lim and trained by Lee Kim Yan, won the Derby trial over 9f to pay $118 last week.

Sinar Mata, owned by August stable and trained by Doc Rodgers, recently earned a promotion to Class 1 after a smashing win in a Class 2 10f race with 9.3.

The valuable classic was won by Felton, with Des Coleman up. Second was Dennis the Menace (Glen Preity) with champion (Luke Kang) third and Sinar Mata (Nelson) fourth.

Death fall

SINGAPORE, Sun.—A 16-year-old girl, Lee Yoke Chan, fell to her death from the block of flats

The Mystery of the Missing Diplomat

In June 1966, Lim Yew Hock, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia (and former Chief Minister of Singapore), bought a ticket to Sydney from Canberra. Then dropped off the face of the earth.

By Felix Cheong



WEEPING WIFE MAKES NATION-WIDE APPEAL ON TV

Beach search for Tun Lim

SPECIAL REPORT by telephone from LESLIE HOFFMAN

Toh Puan Lim..."I am sad at my husband's absence..."

SYDNEY, Tues.—A distraught Toh Puan Lim Yew Hock appeared on a nation-wide television hook-up today to appeal to her husband, missing Malaysian High Commissioner, Tun Lim Yew Hock, to rejoin the family, as police concentrated their search for him on Bondi beach.

Toh Puan Lim wept throughout her appearance and was only able to say: "I am sad at my husband's absence from Canberra. It has up-

OFFICIAL DENIES AUSSIE PAPER REPORTS

CANBERRA, Tues. —Newspaper speculation that Tun Lim Yew Hock might have dis-

TUN LIM
...Search for him on Bondi Beach.

Felix Cheong is the bestselling author of more than 30 books across different genres. His graphic novel, *The Showgirl and the Minister* (Random House SEA, 2023), was inspired by the 10-day disappearance of former Singapore Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock. Conferred the Young Artist Award in 2000, Felix has been invited to writers' festivals all over the world. He holds a masters in creative writing and is currently a university adjunct lecturer.

Over 10 days in June 1966, Tun Lim Yew Hock,[1] the Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand (1964–66) and Singapore's former second Chief Minister (1956–59), vanished.

It was an incident that had all the elements of politics and intrigue. It hogged the headlines of newspapers in Singapore and Australia for weeks, and reportedly sent thousands of women weeping. To this day, 60 years later, it remains a mystery, with more questions than answers.

The Man Who Fell Out of Power

Born in Singapore in 1914, Lim rose through the labour movement before entering politics, first under the Singapore Progressive Party and, later, the Labour Front.[2] When David Marshall resigned as Singapore's first Chief Minister in June 1956 after failing to secure full internal self-government from the British, Lim, the Minister for Labour and Welfare, succeeded him.[3]

In March 1957 and May 1958 respectively, Lim led the second and third All-Party Mission to London for constitutional talks with the British government, resulting in Singapore's full internal self-government in 1959.[4] But Lim's years in office were often viewed as turbulent. To the British, he was instrumental in acting firmly against left-wing activists, trade unionists and Chinese middle-school students whom they feared were aligned with the communists.[5] To the Chinese-speaking masses in Singapore, however, the same toughness looked like repression. The 1956 Chinese middle-school riots, and the hundreds of arrests that followed, stained his reputation among voters already leaning towards Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP).

The upshot: the PAP swept into power in the 1959 Legislative Assembly General Election, with Lim's Singapore People's Alliance winning only

(Facing page) In June 1966, the mysterious disappearance of Lim Yew Hock in Australia made it to front-page news. *Source: The Straits Times, 13 June 1966, 1 © SPH Media Limited. Permission required for reproduction.*

(Above) Lim Yew Hock's wife made an emotional appeal on television for his return, while the police concentrated their search on Bondi Beach. *Source: The Straits Times, 15 June 1966, 1 © SPH Media Limited. Permission required for reproduction.*



Lim Yew Hock was the second Chief Minister of Singapore from 1956 to 1959. *Image reproduced from Singapore Constitution Exposition, Jan–Feb 1959: Souvenir Number (Singapore: Dept. of Information Services, 1959), 29. (From National Library of Singapore, call no. RCLOS 959.51 SIN-[RFL]).*

four seats.[6] The formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 gave him another role. Taking up Malaysian citizenship, Lim was appointed Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand in 1964.[7]

Based in Canberra, Lim discharged his duties as Malaysia's chief diplomatic representative Down Under. Then, in June 1966, he suddenly vanished.

Ten Days Missing

On Friday, 10 June 1966, Lim left Canberra. According to early reports, he had told staff at the Malaysian High Commission that he was going away for a quiet weekend. A Canberra journalist who knew Lim had seen him buying a ticket with cash, under another name, before flying to Sydney. The journalist also said that Lim was "carrying no baggage and was wearing an open neck shirt with a sports jacket".[8]

When Lim failed to return on 13 June, concern turned into alarm. This was not a junior officer extending a holiday. This was a high commissioner, a former head of government, missing in a foreign country at the height of the Cold War. The Malaysian High Commission held a press conference that night to seek help finding Lim. An official statement by the High Commission revealed that he had been in ill health for some time and "had been under medical treatment for about two months", but did not disclose the nature of his illness.[9]

The High Commission enlisted the help of the Australian police, involving even the Australian security and intelligence agencies. Police concentrated their search around Bondi Beach, and the Malaysian Chief Protocol Officer, Abdul Rahman Jalal, was sent to Canberra to help in the search.[10]

Lim's elder daughter Shirley also went to Sydney personally to check the places where her father usually stayed.[11] Even students from Malaysia and Singapore studying in Australia were roped in for the hunt. The *New York Times* reported that "student leaders issued an appeal by radio for the 700 students from the two countries to check every place where the envoy might be found".[12]

The search for the missing diplomat was made even more poignant when Lim's wife, Chia Kim Neo ("Toh Puan" is the title given to the wife of a "Tun"),[13] appeared on Australian television with their two daughters on 15 June, pleading for him to come home. "I am sad at my husband's absence from Canberra. It has upset me very much. I don't know what to say because I am too distressed," crying as she said this. Then it was Shirley's turn: "We know that you are not very well. Please come back to us. Your absence is causing us much unhappiness and distress."[14]

The television appeal apparently struck a chord because the newspapers reported that thousands of women wept after watching the High Commissioner's wife.[15] According to Second Secretary of the High Commission Ajit Singh, Lim's wife had been just as ill as her husband – if not more – and had also been receiving medical attention for some time.[16]

The story, however, took an unexpected turn when a report by *Time* magazine linked Lim to a 19-year-old stripper named Sandra Nelson, who often performed at Paradise Club in Sydney's red-light district, Kings Cross.[17] Nelson was not just another showgirl. She had already gained notoriety two years earlier for her publicity stunts, such as taking a popular ferry in a see-through top that left little to the imagination. Russian by birth, she had run away from a migrant camp in Wollongong and then resurfaced in the strip club circuit.[18]

Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's Prime Minister, made a personal appeal from Kuala Lumpur. "Come back, my dear friend, and I will welcome you. I will be happy to let bygones be bygones," he said.[19]

Returning Home

After 10 days, Lim returned to his Canberra residence at 9.15 am on 20 June. His younger daughter Adeline was the only person at home as her mother and sister were still in Sydney. On opening the front door, she was shocked to find her father standing on the porch. "I was so surprised. I ran into his arms. I cried with joy," she said. "I kissed him and said: 'I'm glad you're home daddy'," she told the *Straits Times*. "Daddy just hugged me and said: 'Alright dear, don't cry'."[20]

The official explanation by the High Commission at the press conference later that night was that Lim was "suffering from a physical and nervous illness" from overwork, and that a "good Samaritan" had found him ill in Sydney, cared for him and driven him back. "The High Commissioner is back in Canberra but he is sick and is resting at his home," said Malaysian Chief Protocol Officer Abdul Rahman Jalal. "As you know, the High Commissioner took a plane to Sydney on Friday. While there he was in a state of collapse and a good Samaritan – that is the only phrase I could use – took him over. There he stayed with this kind soul." Abdul Rahman Jalal added that when Lim was found by the man, he was "vomiting and was very ill".[21]

The Malaysian Prime Minister was also informed of Lim's return on 20 June and was reported to be "very happy". In a message thanking Australian newspapers for their help, Tunku Abdul Rahman said: "He [Lim] will remain in Australia until I am satisfied that he is well enough to go to his new post in Rome."[22]

The media were dissatisfied with the responses from the High Commission about Lim's disappearance. Canberra police were informed of Lim's return only 12 hours after he had been driven home. "It is a pity that there was a 12-hour delay in telling the Australian people that the man about whose fate they have been perplexed and concerned for 10 days was safely home. One would have thought the news would have been sent out as soon as the good Samaritan had returned Tun Lim," went a *Sydney Sun* editorial.[23]

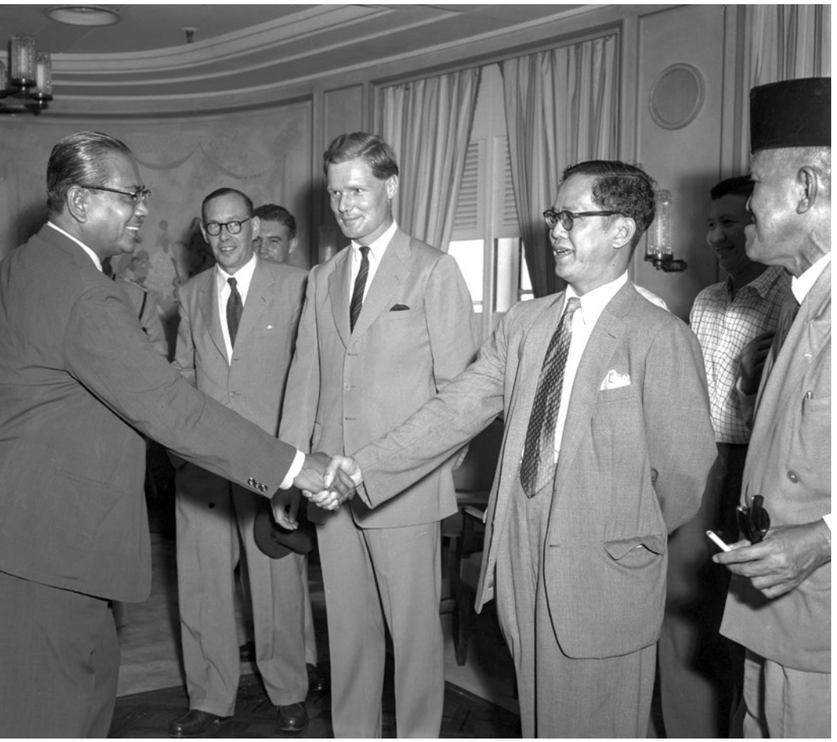
On 23 June, Lim expressed his gratitude in various newspapers throughout Australia, thanking the government, police, press, radio, television, the Australian public, and Malaysian and Indonesian students for their assistance during his recent illness.[24]

Before leaving Australia for good on 1 July, Lim gave a press conference on 30 June, his first since his return. He told reporters that he "could not remember anything of his disappearance earlier this month" and did not know the police were looking for him. "You see, I wanted to take a holiday," he said, "I had been working very hard, sometimes making three speeches in one day, and I was very tired." He explained, "I was walking around quite nicely when pop – I stumbled on something and fell and hurt my head. For many days after that I was looked after by this good Samaritan whose identity I still cannot reveal."[25]

Although Lim had "given his word not to divulge his helper's name", he was later identified in September 1966 as Vincent Laus, a 35-year-old guesthouse proprietor from the city of Gosford, near Sydney. According to Abdul Rahman Jalal



Lim Yew Hock with his first wife and two daughters at Paya Lebar Airport on 16 January 1964. He was bound for Canberra to take up his new appointment as the Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand. *Source: The Straits Times © SPH Media Limited. Permission required for reproduction.*



Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (left) exchanging greetings with Singapore's Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock, 1958. *Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No. 19980001343 - 0024).*

in the press conference on 20 June, "The man who was with [Lim] came to know that it was Tun Lim Yew Hock only last evening [the evening before he returned home]." Laus rejected the "many dirty stories" connecting Lim with Kings Cross strippers, and said "Tun Lim did not do anything wrong and that he was sick and needed rest".[26]

Years later, in his memoir *Reflections*, which was published posthumously in 1986, Lim offered a different explanation for his disappearance. He wrote that his relationship with his wife had become "strained and unbearable", but admitted that he was not free from blame. "I had been fickle and my wife was an unforgiving woman." He had felt that "life was no longer worth living and [he] wanted to do away with [him]self." Lim then hid in a boarding house, "planning to put an end to [his] misery", but the thought of his children changed his mind. Lim also wrote that he had grown a moustache to disguise himself but the boarding house keeper eventually recognised him from his pictures shown on television and drove him home to Canberra.[27]

The Aftermath

In October 1966, it was reported that Lim would take on a desk job at the Malaysian Ministry of External Affairs. "I have asked him to take complete rest for a few months. But he told me he wanted something to do," said Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.[28]

Two years later, news broke on 7 November 1968 that Lim had resigned in June from his post at the Foreign Ministry where he was the Deputy Secretary (Special Duties) because of the "strain" on him. "I am now no more a government servant. I just want to rest and relax and I'm out of politics for good," he said. Lim then retired to Melaka.[29]

Later in the month, on 29 November, the *Straits Times* reported that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (sultan) had "cancelled and annulled" the title of "Tun" that had been awarded to Lim in 1958. He was acting on the prime minister's recommendation and no reason was given.[30]

In 1972, Lim embraced Islam, took the name Omar and immigrated to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Over there, he worked as Special Assistant to the president of the Islamic Development Bank. After his first marriage broke down, he married Chinese Muslim convert Hajjah Hasnah Abdullah and had two children with her.[31]

Unanswered Questions

The simplest question in this whole incident is still the hardest: where was Lim in those 10 days, and why did he not make contact? He should have known that a senior diplomat could not just disappear without consequences.

Another unresolved question is the role of the good Samaritan Vincent Laus. His silence during the nationwide search remains difficult to explain. The Australian media had extensively reported Lim's disappearance. Why did Laus not alert local authorities to the man he had found?

Then there is the stripper Sandra Nelson. While she denied there was any serious relationship between them, the rumour travelled too widely to be ignored. Nelson maintained that her relationship with Lim was purely casual. "I knew him, but only just casually. I never met him. He just came to the club to see me," she told the *Straits Times* in an interview on 23 August 1966.[32]

A fourth question is in Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's interview appeal when he used the curious phrase, "let bygones be bygones". Lim said at his press conference on 30 June 1966 that he did not know what the Prime Minister had meant by this.[33] This seems to suggest that Lim must have incurred his wrath over something not publicly named. Whatever differences the two might have had, the Tunku buried the hatchet and he subsequently penned the introduction to Lim's memoir. Lim also dedicated his memoir to his "very good friend YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj First Prime Minister of Malaysia".[34]

The final question lies in Lim's account in his memoir in 1986. In *Reflections*, he claimed that he withdrew to a boarding house because of the breakdown of his marriage. Assuming the public story at the time about him falling, or having taken ill, was merely a cover-up for problems at home, what specifically were those problems? This question is particularly pertinent because by his own account in *Reflections*, he made another disappearance a year later "after the same domestic trouble erupted".[35]

Australian striptease performer Sandra Nelson, c. 1960s. Photo by Robert McFarlane. *© William McFarlane Trust.*



The disappearance of Lim Yew Hock can be read in many ways: a diplomatic embarrassment, a tabloid scandal, a marriage on the rocks, a medical episode, or the public unravelling of a man who had already lost one public life. None of these readings, however, cancel the others.

While he had led a very colourful life, his passing was quiet. Lim died on 30 November 1984, at the age of 70, in his home in Jeddah. The *Straits Times* reported that he had died peacefully and had been found lying on a sofa in the morning by his daughter. He was buried in Mecca.[36] ♦

NOTES

1 The title of "Tun" was awarded to Lim Yew Hock in 1958. "Tun" is the top civilian title in Malaysia, similar to a "Lord" in the United Kingdom. See "Now He's No More Tun Lim...," *Straits Times*, 29 November 1968, 1. (From NewspaperSG)
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15 "Thousands Wept with Her," *Straits Times*, 18 June 1966, 11. (From NewspaperSG)
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18 Martyn Jolly, "Girls Galore!: Photography in Australian Men's Magazines in the 1960s," *Journal of Australian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2023): 91–127, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14443058.2022.2157036.
19 "Australia: The Diplomat & the Samaritan."
20 "Tun Lim Found – He's Ill," *Straits Times*, 20 June 1966, 1. (From NewspaperSG)
21 "Tun Lim Found – He's Ill"; Fingleton, "Tun Lim: Police Not Told Till 12 Hours Later."
22 "Tun Lim Found – He's Ill"; Fingleton, "Tun Lim: Police Not Told Till 12 Hours Later."
23 Fingleton, "Tun Lim: Police Not Told Till 12 Hours Later."
24 Jack Fingleton, "Tun Lim to Say 'Thank You' in the Papers," *Straits Times*, 22 June 1966, 11. (From NewspaperSG)
25 "Tun Lim: I Was Walking Nicely When 'Pop' I Fell...," *Straits Times*, 1 July 1966, 1. (From NewspaperSG)
26 "Tun Lim Found – He's Ill"; Fingleton, "Tun Lim: Police Not Told Till 12 Hours Later"; "Tun Lim's 'Good Samaritan'," *Straits Times*, 8 September 1966, 20.
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31 Lim, *Reflections*, 115, 123, 128; John, "Lim Yew Hock Dies in Jeddah"; "Ex-Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock Dies in Jeddah," *Business Times*, 1 December 1984, 12. (From NewspaperSG)
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33 "Tun Lim: I Was Walking Nicely When 'Pop' I Fell...."
34 Lim, *Reflections*, 1–5.
35 Lim, *Reflections*, 110.
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