



SPECIAL COVERAGE

LIPUTAN KHAS

KOTA KINABALU (Bernama) -- The world of journalism in Sabah or North Borneo as it was then known, started with the British North Borneo Herald and Official Gazette (1883-1941) and later by the North Borneo News (NBN) in 1948 as a bi-monthly in Sandakan, in the east coast of Sabah. In its Sept 1, 1948 edition, NBN's main story was about a review of the North Borneo

about a native legend in Papar and in another page about a Quran-reading competition at Jesselton. In 1954, the North Borneo News combined with the Sabah Times to become North Borneo News and Sabah Times.

Radio broadcasting in Sabah began in 1939, providing live English commentary on horse racing in

on to become Sabah's first Chief Minister when North Borneo or Sabah gained independence from the United Kingdom. The media fraternity in Sabah was further replenished with the establishment of the Daily Express on March 1, 1963, the sister newspaper of the Overseas Chinese Daily News (OCDN), which was founded by Tan Sri Yeh Pao Tzu. OCDN's Chinese language

SABAH MEDIA AT A GLANCE

BY EMIN MADI



FILE PICTURE

reconstruction and development plan on aviation, particularly the airfields in Labuan, Jesselton and Sandakan airport. The 26-page tabloid reported that the present airfield in Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu), the state capital of the country, was subjected to severe bombing during the Japanese occupation. In the same edition, the paper also carried a brief account

Jesselton and telecasted to Sandakan via radio-telegraph. On Nov 9, 1955 Radio Sabah Service was officially launched by the North Borneo Governor Sir Roland Turnbull.

Sabah Times was founded by Donald Stephens, himself a former NBN staff. Stephens (later known as Tun Muhammad Fuad Stephens) went

daily started in 1949. According to records, two other Chinese language newspapers, Api Siang Pao and Kinabalu Observer Evening News were established in 1960.

In the absence of television service in Sabah until the launching of RTM Sabah on Dec 28, 1971, print media became the single source of



disseminating information, catering various types of news, especially political, sports and cultural. It was reported that during the first general election for Sabah State Legislative Assembly in April 1967, the 193,712 electorates voting for the 32 state seats ran for almost three weeks.

This was made necessary due to the state's poorly developed internal communication and widely scattered population. Based on the North Borneo Report on the census population, the total population of the British protectorate as at August 1960 was 456,331. The current population of Sabah is 3.8 million people.

The role of mass media in Sabah in the post-independence era became more significant, especially during the general election, where journalists are not only to cover campaigns but provide unbiased information to the public. Likewise, the local press also played important roles in promoting national unity and identity, as well



as galvanising the people to achieve socio-economic progress. By and large, Malaysians in Sabah have been relying on the mass media as a medium for keeping abreast with the political, sports, cultural and socio-economic development of the country. The Sabah media has also contributed impactful roles in environmental journalism, especially in helping the government to create public awareness on the importance of forest conservation and wildlife protection.

Recently, Kan Yaw Chong, a Sabahan veteran journalist working for the Daily Express, won the Prime Minister's Hibiscus Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism, the highest national environmental journalism award. Despite the challenges brought about by the advent of social media, the role of mainstream media will remain as a powerful tool in providing fair and accurate reporting.

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