What they aspired for and agreed upon must never be forgotten – of a united multi-ethnic nation built upon the strength offered by the rich cultural diversity. Those were the hopes 50 years ago that are now entrusted to a new generation of leaders.

Merdeka generation of leaders formed an illustrious class of men and women of considerable courage and commitment. They were already successful in their careers, some of them very wealthy, but decided to give up time, comfort, and even personal interests to lead their people towards independence.

Though from diverse backgrounds – aristocrats, rubber magnates, a miner, a fisheries officer, a journalist – and from different parts of the country, they shared a common educational background, which allowed them to appreciate the country's rich cultural diversity and to a broad worldview.

They were a generation that was perfectly placed to shape the destiny of their country. They were born at or early part of the century and Datuk Onn Jaafar (1883) was the eldest while Aziz Ishak (1922) the youngest. Tun Tan Cheng Lock addressing the Alliance's first National Convention on Aug 23, 1953.