

Document of the month

October 2008

In the year 1967, Godrej & Boyce forayed into the international scene with its maiden venture in Malaysia. After taking office as the first Prime Minister of the newly established Federation of Malaysia in 1963, Tunku Abdul Rehman was in search of industries to promote the country's economic potential. In response to this, Godrej initiated plans to set up a steel furniture manufacturing plant in Malaysia at the southernmost tip of the country, in Johor Bahru. The consideration for this location was its proximity with Singapore which at that time was an integral part of Malaysia. Permission and pioneer status, amongst other economic advantages such as sanctioned tax holidays etc., for the first five years of operations, were granted in the year 1965. Operations at Johor Bahru commenced in early 1967.

In the same year, Naval Godrej, visited Malaysia to see the factory and then proceeded to Tokyo. We bring to you a letter written by Mr. Naval Godrej from Tokyo dated 10th October 1967 to his father Pirojsha Godrej, who was then the Managing Director of the Company, describing the Malaysian scenario and the factory. It also refers to the racial tensions in Malaysia that eventually led to the secession of Singapore from the Malay federation in the year 1965.

10th Oct. 1967

My dear Father,

So far this trip has been quite successful. In Kuala Lumpur which is the capital of Malaysia the government is so friendly towards India that I was able to do my work very quickly. The only unfortunate part is that our factory is located in a wrong place now due to the separation of Singapore. According to our High Commissioner the conditions in Malaysia are going to be quite stable for the next ten years and therefore we should be able to make a fair profit. The factory looks quite nice. In fact it is the best in Johore Bahru which is just across Singapore...

With lots of love,
Naval.