

# Down Kirkby lane with teachers

By William Tan

**PETALING JAYA:** Sweet memories and heartfelt reunions will fill the air as the 1959-1960 batch of Kirkby-trained teachers come together to celebrate their 50th anniversary tomorrow at the Sime Darby Convention Centre from 12 to 4pm.

“Many of us are in our 70s now, and we actually do this bi-annually but it is still so exciting to meet old friends, we are like family.” said Yoong Chew Hing.

Who are the Kirkby teachers? Between 1952 and 1961, some 1,500 students were sent to the Malayan Teachers Training College in Kirkby, Liverpool, England, on Malayan scholarships to meet the shortage of teachers.

“Most of us could not afford to enter university, so we jumped at this alternative to study abroad.” said Vimala Kandiah.

She said many of them were only 18 and had to go through rigorous interviews for about 150 spots opened to each batch.

They underwent two years of training and upon graduation were posted all across the nation. Some



From left:  
Cheah Lean  
Aing, Liew  
Poh Yuk, P.  
Ramakrishnan  
at a Kirkby  
Teachers  
gathering.

were even loaned to Brunei for a bond of 5 years.

“We are proud to have served the nation and many of us have chosen to remain as educators throughout our lives.” added Yoong Chew Hing.

Kirkby-trained teachers have always been synonymous with excellence and dedication.

However, the most endearing thing about these teachers is how they have stayed connected together through the years.

P. Ramakrishnan, president of Aliran (a major movement for reform in Malaysia), attributed this to

their shared experience in Kirkby.

“It was one that transcended ethnicity, where affectionate affinity, warmth and sharing were the norm. It was friendship at its best.” he said

Among prominent Kirkby teachers are Tan Sri Dato’ Dr Yahaya Ibrahim, Pro-Chancellor of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and current President of the Kirkby Alumni; R.R. Chelvarajah, ex-president of the Malaysian Bar Council, and former Singapore High Commissioner to Malaysia K. Kesavapany.