The Manila Accord 1963

> *The agreement that was never honoured*

What Was the Manila Accord?

The Manila Accord was signed on 31 July 1963 by the leaders of Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia. It set out agreed principles for how the proposed Federation of Malaysia would be formed, including a requirement that the United Nations ascertain whether the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak genuinely supported joining Malaysia.

The UN Ascertainment Process

The UN Secretary-General dispatched a mission to North Borneo and Sarawak to assess public opinion. The mission's methodology, timeframe, and scope were widely criticised as inadequate. The Philippines and Indonesia refused to accept the results, arguing that the ascertainment was conducted improperly and that Malaysia was proclaimed before the mission had concluded its work.

Was the Accord Honoured?

Critics — including the Government of the Philippines, which maintains a territorial claim over Sabah to this day — have consistently argued that the Manila Accord's provisions were not properly fulfilled. Malaysia was proclaimed on 16 September 1963, even as the UN mission was still in the process of reporting. The Manila Accord thus remains an unfulfilled international agreement with direct bearing on the legitimacy of Sabah's inclusion in Malaysia.

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