

Biographical Notes

Tun Sir (Colonel) Henry H.S. Lee (1901 - 1988), Politician/tin miner/banker

Henry Lee Hau Shik (H.S. Lee) was born in Hong Kong on 19th November, 1901. He started his education at Canton Christian College, in Guangdong Province where his ancestral home in the Xinyi district was located. He went on to Queen's College in Hong Kong and upon graduation from the college, he proceeded to University College, London University in the United Kingdom where he took law. He continued on to St John's College, Cambridge, where he obtained his degree of B.A. in Economics and Law in 1923 and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Economic Society.

Upon his return to Hong Kong, H.S. Lee joined the P&O Bank after declining a post in the Chinese Government service. In 1924, he visited Malaya and was persuaded to acquire a tin mine in Kepong, Selangor and subsequently established himself in the 1920s as a major tin mine owner in Selangor and Perak. Besides being the president of the All Malaya Chinese Mining Association which he founded in 1946, he also led various mining and business organisations.

When the Japanese invaded Malaya in 1941, HS Lee was appointed the Chief of the Passive Defence Forces and took some members of his force to Singapore when Kuala Lumpur fell to the invading force. At the fall of Singapore, HS Lee managed to get to India and was appointed a Colonel in the Allied Forces, assigned to perform liaison duties among the British, Americans and Chinese Forces in Burma and India.

After World War II, HS Lee was appointed to committees entrusted with rebuilding the Malayan economy. In 1946, he founded the China Press, a Chinese newspaper, with the intention to counter the Communist newspaper Min Sheng Pao and its propaganda. HS Lee helped found the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1949 and played a key role in forging an electoral alliance with UMNO in 1952 that later became the Alliance Party, now the ruling Barisan Nasional. As a prominent member of the Malayan Chinese community, HS Lee was part of the Alliance mission led by UMNO President Tunku Abdul Rahman that held constitutional talks in 1956 in London, and he was the only Chinese signatory to the Malayan Independence Agreement. He was the Minister of Transport from 1955 to 1957 and served as the first Finance Minister of an independent Federation of Malaya from 1957-1959. He assumed the post of Financial Chairman for the Board of Commissioner of Currency, Malaya from 1959 to 1961.

HS Lee was deeply involved in the Chinese guilds and clan associations, helping to form the Kwang Tung Association, Chinese Mining Association, and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Being an avid golfer, he was the President of the Federation of Malaya Olympics Council from 1957-59.

He also contributed to the founding of the Lady Templer Hospital in 1960. In 1966, HS Lee established the Development and Commercial Bank (D & C Bank) which became Malaysia's fifth largest bank and he led the Bank till his death in 1988.

Link to [HS Lee Private Papers Index List](#)