

# *Star* Special

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MALAYSIA DAY

## *Pride of Malaysia*

It has been 60 years since the nation's formation, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds, religions, cultures and traditions. We, the tough and resilient Malaysian race, stand united to deal with challenges and shape the country together.







# Towards one goal

Segulai Sejalai has become a national conversation since being adopted the nationwide slogan for unity.

By **ANDY CHUA**  
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DURING the Sarawak Gawai dinner in Kuching in June, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim moved to adopt the Iban catchphrase *Segulai Sejalai* as a slogan for unity nationwide.

"I was struck to hear the *Segulai Sejalai* phrase, which I think should be used across Malaysia, and not just Sarawak. "Wherever I go from now on, when I talk about unity and cooperation, I'll make sure I say *Segulai Sejalai*," he said.

Since then, this phrase has become a national conversation.

Bill Jugah, founder of the Sarawak Independent Council of Natives, said *Segulai Sejalai* literally meant "United Towards One Goal".

"An apt and necessary criteria during this 'turbulent' national political standoff trying to seek equilibrium and harmony in a multiracial nation such as Malaysia.

"Unity without coherent direction too is folly, for this creates misinterpretation among the many factions, political or otherwise, in defining Malaysia's direction," said Bill.

He said a slogan like *Segulai*

*Sejalai*, which made no reference to religion, was more suitable as a "war cry" to accentuate the drive to propel the beloved nation to greater heights.

"It is leaning more on the merits and cohesive synergy of groups of individuals regardless of creed and colour, to collaborate on preserving and developing this home we call Malaysia," he added.

Bill felt that in realising the essence of *Segulai Sejalai*, the mission did not fall only on the government but also depended on the crux of any nation – its people.

"Outstanding examples of remarkable unity beyond the boundaries of skin colour, religion and political beliefs need to be highlighted to the public to constantly reignite the fact that deep down inside, we are all the same, we are humans with bonds with each other," he said.

For Umie Liau, chairman of the Kenyah Uma Baha Women's Association Sibu, *Segulai Sejalai* in today's context meant all Sarawakians need to have the same goal, vision, and mission.

A Kenyah of Sungai Asap, Belaga, Umie said the catchphrase meant unity in diversity.

"There should be strong spirit of inclusivity, a sense of belong-

ing and solidarity whereby the welfare of all races and ethnicities, regardless of religion and beliefs, be upheld and promoted intensely to enable everyone to live in a harmonious, respectful and prosperous manner," she added.

Umie said although *Segulai Sejalai* was actually an Iban

**Bill:** Realising the essence of *Segulai Sejalai* also depends on the people.

phrase, the Sarawak government perhaps used it because Dayak Iban was the ethnic majority in Sarawak.

"Even though I come from the Dayak Kenyah ethnicity, I can speak Iban as I have been mixing well with schoolmates and university mates who come from a multicultural and multi-

**Umie:** *Segulai Sejalai* in today's context means all Sarawakians need to have the same goal, vision and mission.

racial society," she said.

Sarawak Dayak Iban Association permanent chairman Munan Laja said that while *Segulai* meant together, *Sejalai* referred to being together moving forward with our aspiration and vision, as a people who are inclusive and caring for one another.



Anwar (third from left) playing the sape during Gawai dinner at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching. On his left is Sarawak Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud. — Filepic

By **PHILIP GOLINGAI**  
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IF THERE is one phrase to describe cohesion in Sabah, it is *kita kita juga baini* (we are all one).

It encapsulates what most Sabahans say when they think about unity.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah linguistics and anthropology senior lecturer Dr Trixie Tangit translates the phrase as: "We're all in this together" or "Whatever it is, it is just us that are affected or involved."

She said the overall focus of the phrase was on "us" and the sense of connection between one another.

The expression is typically used to generate feelings of togetherness or oneness, she added.

Its opposite expression – *diarang diarang juga bah tu* (it is only them who are affected) – if used in a grave manner, informs us of a collective monopolising or overtaking something or someone.

"This expression can help us understand *kita kita juga baini* to mean the collective spirit that exists amid something negative or harsh and the resolve to endure, withstand and/or overcome it," she said.



Tangit: The expression is typically used to create feelings of togetherness or oneness.

Tangit said the tone of these expressions is salient, as it provides more meaning, whether uttered in an uplifting, despondent or matter-of-fact way.

"*Diarang diarang juga bah tu* or *kita kita juga baini* become perfectly understood to facilitate common understanding or incite malice," she said.

The slogan actually belongs to Kupikupifm Sabah, a radio station launched seven years ago. It also created a catchy *kita kita juga baini* music video.



Miol wanted a slogan that resonated and was relatable to the local people.

"We wanted a slogan that resonates and is relatable to the local people," said Kupikupifm Sabah and Sarawak general manager Lester Calvin Miol.

"The one thing Sabah folk like to showcase to the people outside the state is how united we are. We are one. That is one of our strongest traits.

"Of course, not all may feel that way, but it really does show, especially when you enter the kampung areas of Sabah," he added.

Tangit, the linguistics and

anthropology expert, demonstrates how the phrase was used in her state:

a) A dispute between siblings or friends, and one seeks to ease the tension by using the expression to remind all that they ought to remain united in their aim or friendly to each other at the very least.

b) A desire to charge/overcharge a friend on a bill or project is balanced out by the decision to give the friend in question a "friend-only price".

c) An instability in Sabah politics that pit one party against another, but voting for either one does not appear to matter too much. Realising this, one may seek to make sense of the situation through the expression.

On how *kita kita juga baini* became popular in Sabah, Tangit said colloquial expressions, including phrases such as *Ini kali lah* (this is the time) and *bossku* were naturally occurring in the overall speech of a community in the territory and can be generated by any one of its speakers.

"It is important to observe the period in which such expressions became popular and to note individuals or movements that seek

to embody the expression exclusively, for example the tagline of Kupikupifm Sabah," she said.

What does the catchphrase say about Sabahans?

Miol says it shows that Sabah folk are proud to be Sabahan and are not afraid to show it.

"They wear it proudly on their sleeves. It's cool to see people use the catchphrase on the streets," he said.

Tangit noted that it tends to refer to the Sabahan worldview of how congenial ties among them have knitted them into a singular society.

She said Bornean societies are generally not homogenous, and intermarriage is key.

"The output is the camaraderie that is greatly cherished and protected. Uttered and frequently uttered as a reminder or warning, therefore, may help Sabahans to reframe discussions and thinking to stay on the course and in line with putting brotherly-like love above own needs," she said.

Just like how Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim adopted Sarawak's *Segulai Sejalai* catchphrase as the motto for unity for the whole nation, Malaysians should also use *kita kita juga baini*.

Say after me, "*kita kita juga baini*."

## 'Kita kita juga baini' explained





Pandelega (second from right) with her family in Kuching.

# Queen of national unity

Pandelega, the nation's darling diver and Olympian, is a true Malaysian who believes everyone is equal.

By R. KIRUBASHINI  
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COMING from a diverse background and being at ease mingling with anyone that she meets, it is no wonder that diving queen Datuk Pandelega Rinong Pamg has been chosen as the national unity icon.

The Olympic silver and bronze medalist knows just too well about the subject as she has travelled far and wide for her tournaments and training.

The 30-year-old Bidayuh, who hails from Kuching, Sarawak, appreciates the diversity among her teammates, who are from different states and ethnicities.

"We all come from different backgrounds and places, even coaches. But we share the same goals, therefore we always work as a team.

"Besides that, we also sacrifice many similar things to be good in what we do, we spend more time with each other than with our families during training and competition," said Pandelega.

"For example, I only get to go back to my hometown twice a year – during Christmas until New Year and Hari Raya.

"My teammates and I try our best to achieve the same goals and respect each other's strengths and weaknesses. We also always encourage each other to achieve the best result for the team."

Pandelega is exemplary not just to all her teammates but every aspiring athlete.

She was named a national unity icon in June, thanks to her groundbreaking success in diving and her diverse background.

She speaks fluent Mandarin after attending a Chinese school, SRJK (C) Stampin. She can also converse in Bidayuh, Bahasa Malaysia and English.

Pandelega is the only female athlete from Malaysia to win two medals at the Olympic Games.

She captured a bronze medal in the 2012 Olympics in London for the 10m individual platform event, followed by a silver medal in the 2016 edition in Rio de Janeiro for the 10m synchronised event with Cheong Jun Hoong.

Malaysians' interest in diving increased a lot thanks to Pandelega's achievements, as previously, only badminton had contributed medals for the country in the Olympics.

"People started seeing diving as a sport that can contribute medals after I won the bronze in London," she said, adding that previously a fair number of people in the country did not know what diving was.

"Some asked if diving was scuba diving while others referred to me as a swimmer.

"Winning medals and getting recognition and acknowledgement overseas, make people know that Malaysians also can do well in this sport. Now people understand diving better."

On being the national unity icon, Pandelega said: "I feel grateful and proud to be appointed.



Pandelega (squatting, centre) with her teammates and coaching staff.

"This is a recognition by the government to honour my achievement and acknowledge my experience throughout my career as a sportsperson representing Malaysia for the past 16 years."

Pandelega's success has not come easy for her.

She recalled how she wanted to call it quits a few times but with her family's constant support, she had changed her mind.

She is the second of four siblings. She has an older brother, Pardika Indoma and two younger sisters, Pici Parnia and Parcelia Renyelia.

Her father, Pamg Joheng is a contractor while her mother Hartini Lamim is a housewife.

Pandelega's biggest challenge throughout her career is coping

with injuries.

"I've always been a bit injury prone. I train harder when major competitions are near and if I don't balance rest and recovery with my training, I can get injured.

"Diving is a physically challenging sport, especially for women, and it's not easy to come back from injuries."

Pandelega's next big assignment is the Asian Games from Sept 23 to Oct 8 in Hangzhou, China. She also aims to qualify for her fifth Olympics in Paris next year.

She believes sports play a big role in uniting the multiracial people of Malaysia.

"Sports do not discriminate. Playing sports encourages us to go out of our comfort zone and

work with all races.

"When travelling overseas for competition, we get to open our minds to new things and learn about others," she said, adding that sports also brought a sense of hope and patriotism.

Pandelega really appreciates the support and encouragement that she gets from fans.

"I receive encouraging words and prayers through social media from fans.

"There was once when I was in a restaurant, a lady came and told me not to give up, saying she was looking forward to watching me on television

"This motivates me and keeps me going, to contribute as much as I can to meet the expectations of those who root for me," said Pandelega.



# Lat's sentimental journey

Cartoonist who depicts multiracial characters recalls father's 1957 trip to KL for Merdeka declaration.

By **SHALINI RAVINDRAN**  
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A VIVID memory for famed cartoonist Lat of Aug 31, 1957, was of his father and his friends driving to Kuala Lumpur to join in the momentous event marking the country's independence.

Lat, whose real name is Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid, recalled that when he was a young boy of six his father travelled from Pahang to join in the celebrations at Stadium Merdeka.

"We were living in the army camp in Mentakab as my father was a clerk with the Fifth Malay Regiment.

"At the time I didn't fully understand the significance of that moment as I was just a young boy.

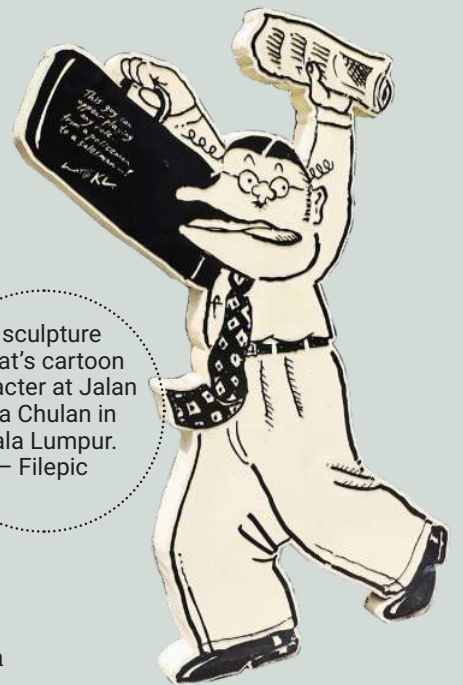
"Although I did not go, I knew everyone was happy and it was a very important moment."

Now 72 years old, the artist, known for his uncanny ability to capture the essence of the multiracial Malaysian life, got a chance to revisit the army camp where he had lived.

Lat said he was fortunate to be able to make the trip back in early August.

"It was a trip I had been planning for years. Even during my visit there I shared stories with

Lat at the opening of Lat House Gallery in Batu Gajah. — filepic



A sculpture of Lat's cartoon character at Jalan Raja Chulan in Kuala Lumpur. — Filepic

the army folk about living there and about National Day in 1957.

"It was a sentimental journey for me as I have love for that place."

Lat said his career as a newsman in Kuala Lumpur had painted a clearer picture for him on the significance of National Day and Malaysia Day.

"It was nice to see families watching the parade in Kuala Lumpur and kids sitting on parents' shoulders," he said.

Lat, who was recently bestowed the title of Seniman Diraja (Royal Artist) by Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, hopes Malaysians will mark Malaysia Day in some way.

He hopes the people will go out and celebrate the occasion, especially the youth.

"We are Malaysians and we are happy and proud of our country."

Lat, who was born in 1951 in Kota Bharu, Batu Gajah in Perak, gained his nickname from the Malay word *bulat* (round), which referred to his rounded cheeks.

At 11, he designed the cover of his school magazine *Suara Pasir Puteh*.

His early works included *Tiga Sekawan Menangkap Pencuri* (Three Friends Catch Thieves) in 1964 and *Karya Tua Keladi* that was published in a Singaporean

magazine called *Majalah Filem* in 1966.

He also had a comic series called *Keluarga Mamat* that was first published in 1968 and continued for 26 years in *Berita Minggu*.

In 1974, his comic *Bersunat* (Circumcision) was published in Hong Kong.

The publication led to him being appointed as a cartoonist in a national English daily where he had a special column called 'Scenes of Malaysian Life'.

His caricatures captured the realities of living in a multiracial society, including its harmonious aspects.

Artworks of the iconic cartoonist is now showcased at Galeri Rumah Lat (Lat House Gallery) in Batu Gajah.

The gallery, launched by Sultan Nazrin Shah, is housed in a traditional Malay Perak Limas house, which features five roofs.

It consists of several sections such as two exhibition areas, a Lat exhibition area, Lat art garden, souvenir shop, cafe and an office.

By **STEPHANIE LEE**  
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## Peninsular folk embrace Sabah

WHEN Kelantan native Ahmad Shahirman Zuni was first sent to Sabah to work, the thought going through his mind was – "I am the only one from Peninsular Malaysia in this office".

He never had any Sabahan friends before, and could not quite grasp the local Malay dialect.

"I had a total culture shock. I did not know if I could survive let alone make friends," said the 32-year-old PETRONAS engineer who arrived in Kota Kinabalu in September 2017.

However, Ahmad Shahirman was warmly welcomed and accepted as "one of the boys". Today, he is happily married to a Sabahan from Kuala Penyu district and is a father of one.

"The thing about people here in Sabah is that they are very accepting. When I first arrived, my new colleagues made me feel welcome and included me in their group," he said.

The fact that no one really bothers about race and religion is wonderful.

He said the locals respected one another and knew their boundaries enough to be able to not just be friends but also be part of a family.

He felt less restricted as a person, free to be himself without



Ahmad Shahirman, his wife and her cousin at a relative's wedding.

worry of being judged.

These were some of the many wonderful things about Sabah that convinced Ahmad Shahirman to decide to remain in Kota Kinabalu, returning to Kelantan only to visit relatives and friends.

He met his wife Elma Lim, who is of mixed Chinese, Bisaya and Dusun Tatana parentage, during a working stint at the PETRONAS chemical methanol plant in Labuan in early 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We fell in love and got married on Nov 21, 2021," he said, adding that her family welcomed him and were supportive of their

marriage although she had to embrace Islam.

He said they celebrated each other's festivals such as Hari Raya, Chinese New Year and Kaamatan.

His parents had also visited Kota Kinabalu a few times to celebrate the local festivities.

Ahmad Shahirman encourages those from the peninsula to visit Sabah and integrate with the locals.

"You will find that Sabahans are the friendliest people and you will fit in, in no time.

"Just respect one another and have an open mind on their culture," he said.



Idris (second from right) with his wife and children.

Idris Sani Saberun, 48, who was born in Selangor and moved to Kota Kinabalu when he was eight, chose to stay and build a family with a woman of Kadazan and Chinese parentage.

Apart from being mesmerised by the beautiful women, one of whom he married in 2002, he is also in awe of the flora and fauna in Sabah.

"I followed my parents here due to their work commitments when I was eight and we've lived here ever since," said the father of two who still travels to the peninsula to visit relatives.

"The people of Sabah are very helpful, caring and friendly.

"They don't care where you come from, what race you are and what religion you practise, as long as there is mutual respect and trust," said Idris.

His wife converted to Islam to marry him and they celebrate the various festivals including Chinese New Year and Kaamatan with extended family and friends.

Although Sabah is far behind in terms of social and economic development compared to his home state of Selangor, Idris said it did not bother him.

He finds the Land Below the Wind the most suitable place to grow old in.



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# Delicacy, dialect & diversity

These are just some of the elements Sabahans want their peninsular friends to learn and understand about their home state.

By **JADE CHAN**  
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FOR Sabahans working in Peninsular Malaysia, the things they miss the most from their home state is their local delicacy and the culture of the Land Below the Wind.

They say the most important elements that need to be introduced to the people in the peninsula is their food, the Sabah-Malay dialect, and Pesta Kaamatan (Harvest Festival).

They also speak proudly of the unity among people of all races with different religious backgrounds that exists in Sabah.

Hazel Annabelle Bainon said Sabah food such as Tuaran *mee* and *hinava* should be made widely known in Kuala Lumpur, alongside the Kaamatan festival.

"There are organisations that have Sabah and Sarawak events here, but they still cater to people from those states alone.

"We can have more events such as the Borneo Native Festival that was held in Kuala Lumpur's Central Market, to teach those in the peninsula about the Bornean culture," said the radio show producer who is of Kadazan-Murut-Chinese descent.

Bainon said that being a Malaysian, she could speak three languages and easily change her communication styles depending on who she was speaking to.

"I speak English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin. And when I speak to Sabahans or KL-ites, I can easily switch to the Sabah or KL slang. It's fun!" said the 30-year-old who came to Kuala Lumpur nearly 10 years ago for further studies. She stayed on for work.

Freelance talent manager Jasmine Rajah said besides the yummy indigenous food, the other thing that should be introduced to those in Peninsular Malaysia was the Sabah-Malay dialect.

"It's very distinct from the dialects in the peninsula and is often confused with Bahasa Indonesia. But it definitely has a character of its own.

It's fun and vibrant, a mix of old-school Bahasa Malaysia, local Sabahan words, Bahasa Indonesia and Melayu Brunei," said the 33-year-old who is of Kadazan ethnicity.

She feels particularly proud of being a Malaysian whenever she comes across heartwarming stories about Malaysians helping one another, or Malaysians speaking in languages other than their native tongue with fellow Malaysians.

"It's something so small, but it's stories like these that make my heart feel whole," she said.

"Unity means being celebrated

for our differences, or having people be curious about who you are and where you come from. I appreciate it when people ask me about my culture and heritage.

"I think leaders play a big role in fostering unity and better ties among Malaysians. We need more leaders instilling curiosity and appreciation for each other's religion and traditions, instead of prejudice and fear," said Jasmine.

Cassandra Jane Albanus who owns and is managing director of The Tattoo Parlor Malaysia, said nothing showcased "unity" more than Sabah's Pesta Kaamatan in May.

"You have to experience it to believe it!" exclaimed the 37-year-old Sino Kadazan.

She is proud that as a Malaysian, she can mix different languages and slangs in a single sentence and still be understood by fellow Malaysians.

"It's been scientifically proven that being multilingual makes you smarter!" said Albanus, who hails from Biau, Papar, but has been based in Petaling Jaya for better job opportunities.

"On a more serious note, being a Malaysian gives me a sense of belonging. I am deeply rooted in my land, culture, customs and people. Not many can say this about themselves."

After working in Kuala Lumpur for four years, Mohd Hazli Ali Zapar

said people in his hometown of Penampang, near Kota Kinabalu, appreciate human interactions and build meaningful relationships outside of work.

"However, I wish the work culture in Sabah can have some sense of urgency and be more efficient, which is more visible in KL," said the fitness educator.

To him, unity means embracing diversity, celebrating similarities and coming together as one.

"It is a powerful force that fosters understanding, compassion and collaboration among individuals regardless of race, culture and religion.

"Through unity, we can overcome challenges, celebrate our shared humanity and create a home in Malaysia where everyone feels valued and supported," said the 34-year-old who is of Brunei ethnicity, a minority race in Sabah.

"Having more platforms for open discussions where individuals can express their perspectives and concerns, while practising respectful conversations about sensitive issues to foster empathy and understanding, will help us all move toward a better future as a nation," said Mohd Hazli.

Sylvian Shooi believes that education and experience are key to fostering unity among Malaysians. "I am fortunate that my upbringing and education gave me the opportunity to mix with friends from diverse ethnicities and religions, and who speak different languages. "Having cultural exchanges with international students and being involved in scout activities locally and internationally have had a huge impact and shaped me into who I am today," he said.



Bainon wants more events to introduce Borneo culture in the peninsular.



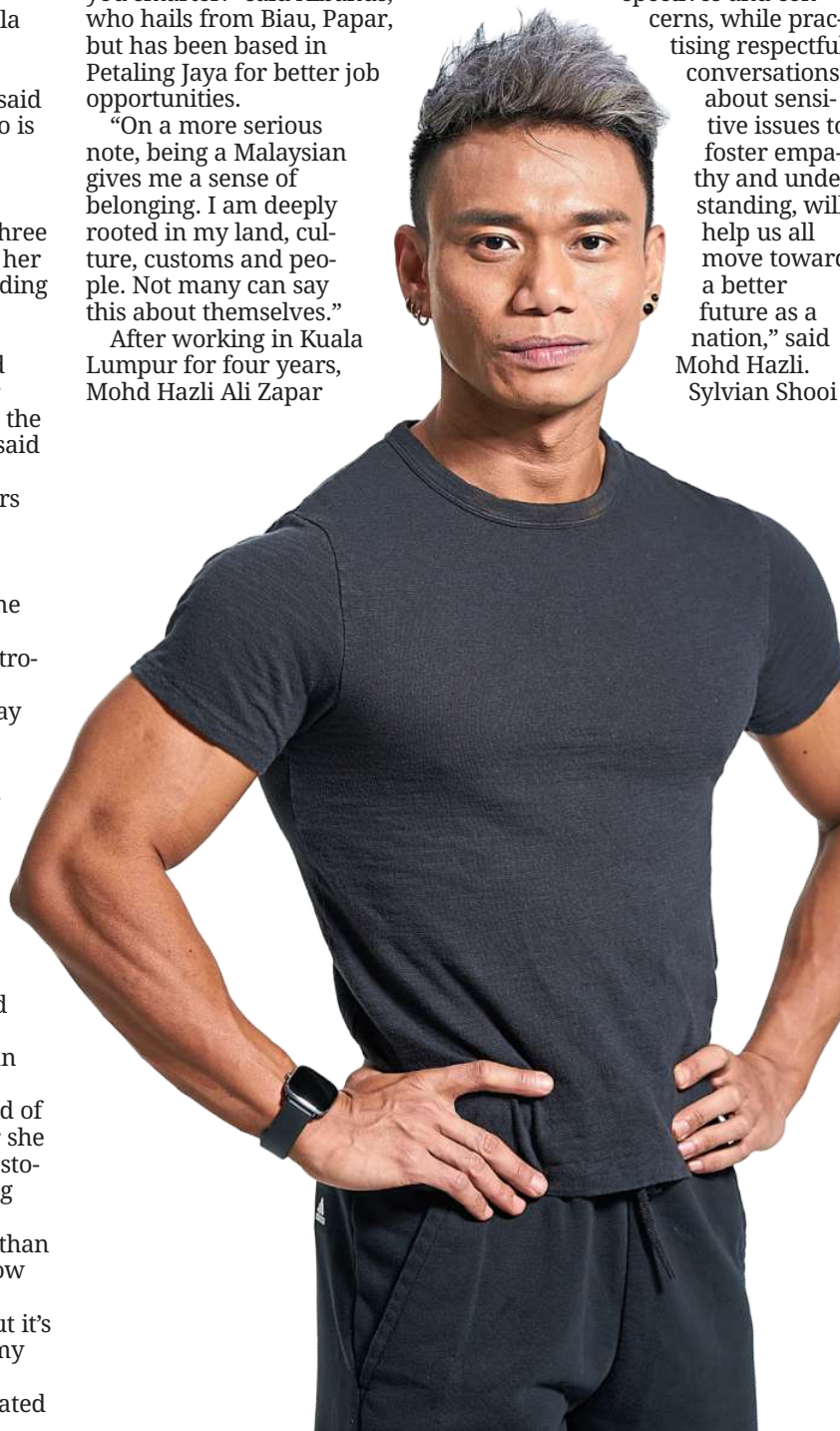
Shooi says education and experience are key to fostering unity among Malaysians.



Jasmine says the Sabah-Malay dialect has a character of its own.



Albanus says Pesta Kaamatan has to be seen to be believed.



People in Penampang build meaningful relationships outside work.

Mohd Hazli





Participants learning a traditional Bidayuh dance at a workshop during the Rhythms of Borneo event. (Right) Bob describing the sape instrument to visitors at the event. — Photos by ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star

By SHARON LING  
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AS A member of the multicultural Sarawakian band At Adu, percussionist Meldrick Bob believes in the power of music to bring people together and foster mutual understanding.

He sees this in the band itself, whose seven members come from diverse backgrounds to create and play music together.

"I'm Bidayuh-Iban, some are pure Bidayuh and some are Orang Ulu. It doesn't matter where we come from, music triggers an instinct inside us of peace and understanding each other," he said.

"What makes it more intimate is that we use our homegrown traditional instruments like the Bidayuh drum, Iban drum and the famous sape lute.

"These instruments come alive when they are played together by people with the same understanding to create positive music."

Bob, who is also At Adu's music director, finds inspiration in the band's story of coming together from different tribes to spread the message of unity and understanding.

"To us at At Adu, if people start quarreling among themselves, that will be the end. It's a frightening thing to think about.

"By putting our story out there and our intention to the community, hopefully everyone will join us to promote understanding and celebrate life together," he said.

Towards this end, Bob and At Adu sape player Luke Wrender David recently organised "Rhythms of Borneo" in collaboration with La Promenade Mall in Kota Samarahan to showcase Sarawak's rich heritage and diversity.

The event, which took place over two weekends in August, brought together the arts, music

# Music to move the spirit

Sarawak band showcases state's rich heritage and diversity to spread message of unity and understanding.



Bob (left) and Luke co-organised the Rhythms of Borneo event which took place over two weekends in August. — Courtesy pic

and culture of the Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and Melanau under one roof.

It included traditional dance and music workshops, a tattoo exhibition and local craft merchandise such as the sape and beadwork.

Luke said the event created an immersive experience celebrating Sarawak's musical heritage by featuring indigenous musical instruments from diverse tribes, including the Orang Ulu sape and Bidayuh bamboo zither called pratuong.

Bob described "Rhythms of Borneo" as an expression of Sarawak's unity in diversity.

"We call this a community celebration and we take it seriously. When we learn each other's cultures and traditions, we can understand each other better.

"Opening up everyone's heart to learn different cultures is something precious. When we know each other's stories, we have no reason to hate one another," he added.

For Bob, this reflects the spirit of *Segulai Sejalai*, an Iban phrase translated as "together in unity" which has been adopted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as the national slogan for unity.

"The first time I heard the Prime Minister use the *Segulai Sejalai* motto, I was very proud, firstly because it comes from my tribe.

"Secondly, it's about the deep meaning behind that phrase. *Segulai* is about gathering together and *sejalai* means we walk together," said Bob.

He said the spirit of togetherness came not from one group but represented everyone from different races and lifestyles.

"When people *segulai sejalai*, that will solve the problem in any situation because we can come together and talk openly with each other," he added.



At Adu performing at the Rainforest World Music Festival in July. — Photo courtesy of Sarawak Tourism Board

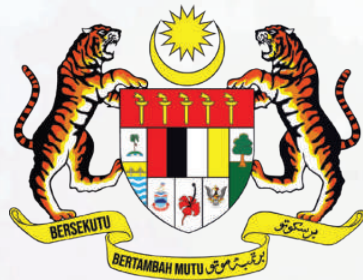


A stall selling beadwork and other crafts at the showcase in La Promenade Mall.



# Get to know the Jata Negara

The country's coat of arms has been in use since May 30, 1952. This national insignia contains symbols of the 13 states and the Federal Territory which make up Malaysia. This along with the national philosophy - Rukun Negara - are explained in detail.



## RUKUN NEGARA

Rukun Negara was proclaimed on Aug 31, 1970 in conjunction with the 13th anniversary of the country's independence by the IV Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ismail Nasiruddin Shah. It is a national philosophy instituted to encourage unity following the race riots of May 13, 1969. The formulation of the principles of the Rukun Negara was the efforts of the National Consultative Council, headed by the then deputy prime minister Tun Abdul Razak. The aim of the Rukun Negara is to create harmony and unity among the various races in Malaysia.

### The objectives of Rukun Negara

Rukun Negara was formulated with the inspiration or objective to build a progressive, democratic and united Malaysia through the orientation of science and technology in all aspects of life.

#### • Achieving greater unity

All Malaysian citizens are dedicated to create a united nation in which everyone regards himself or herself as a Malaysian citizen, regardless of his or her ethnic origin or religious affiliation.

#### • Maintaining a democratic way of life

The Federal Constitution has guaranteed people's fundamental rights and freedom to carry out political activities as long as it is consistent with the country's laws. However, this right should not be abused in the name of democracy.

#### • Creating a just society

Every Malaysian has an equal opportunity to enjoy the wealth of the country. A just society would exist when there is a fair and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth. By doing so, it is fair when the disadvantaged are assisted to enable them to compete on equal terms with those who are fortunate.

#### • Ensuring the growth of a liberal society

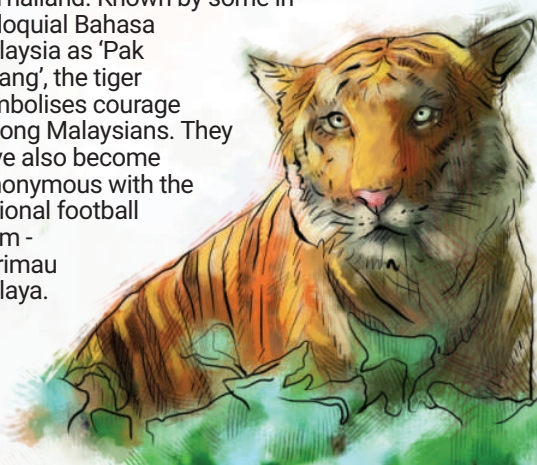
Members of the society are free to practice and profess their own religion, custom and culture, consistent with the aims of national unity. This diversity would be an asset and a source of strength for the nation.

#### • Building a progressive society

Progressive society moves on par with the advancement in the fields of science and technology in the effort to turn Malaysia into a developed nation in line with Wawasan 2020.

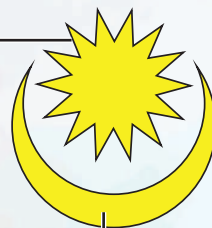
## MALAYAN TIGER

The Malayan tiger is a native species in the Malay peninsula and southern parts of Thailand. Known by some in colloquial Bahasa Malaysia as 'Pak Belang', the tiger symbolises courage among Malaysians. They have also become synonymous with the national football team - Harimau Malaya.



**Two tigers on left and right**  
Symbolise the courage and strength of Malaysians.

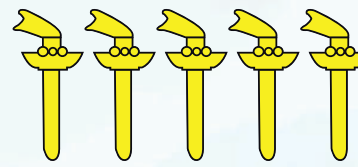
**Fourteen-pointed star**  
Each point represents the 13 states in Malaysia and the Federal Territory



**Crescent and star**  
Symbolises the position of Islam as the country's official religion.



**Five keris**  
Symbolise the Unfederated Malay States - Johor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu.

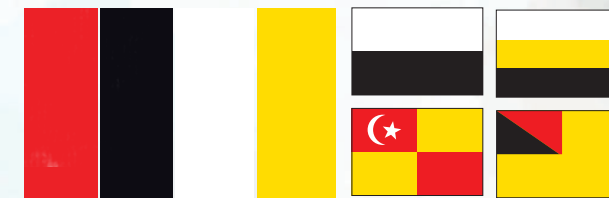


**Melaka tree**  
(*Phyllanthus emblica*)  
Symbolises Melaka.



## MELAKA TREE

The state of Melaka is widely believed to have been named after the Melaka tree, also known by its scientific name *Phyllanthus emblica*. In Sanskrit, it is known as 'amalaka'. It is said that Parameswara, who founded the sultanate, took shelter under one such tree during his journey. He subsequently decided to name the empire after the tree.



**Red, black, white and yellow strips**  
Symbolise the Federated Malay states - Pahang (black and white), Selangor (red and yellow), Perak (black, white and yellow) and Negri Sembilan (red, black and yellow).

## THE FEDERATED MALAY STATES

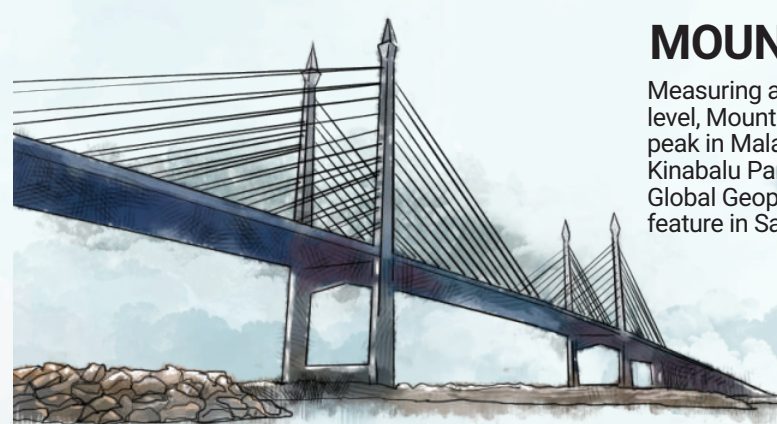
The Federated Malay States (FMS) was a federation of four protected states in the Malay peninsula - Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Pahang - established by the British government in 1895, which lasted until 1946, when they, together with two of the former Straits Settlements (Melaka and Penang) and the Unfederated Malay States, formed the Malayan Union. Two years later, the Union became the Federation of Malaya, which achieved independence in 1957. Malaysia was formed in 1963 with the inclusion of North Borneo (present-day Sabah), Sarawak and Singapore.

**Palm tree & Penang bridge**  
Symbolise the state of Penang.



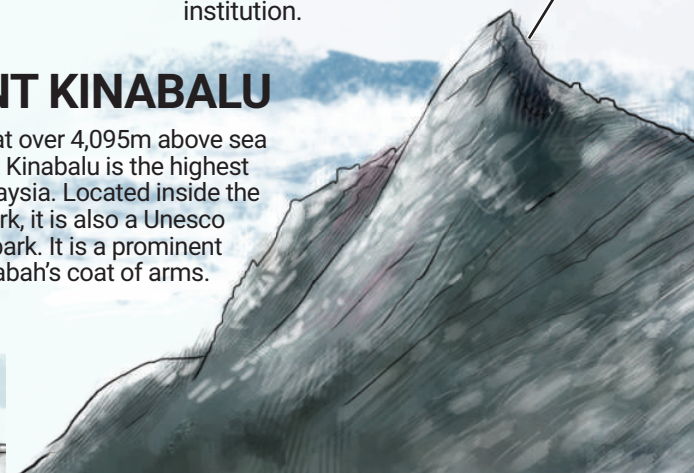
## PALM TREE & PENANG BRIDGE

Pokok pinang (palm tree) was planted on the island after the arrival of the British in the late 1780s. Following this, the island's name was changed from Pulau Ka Satu to Pulau Pinang, which has remained in use until today. The Penang bridge is the most popular landmark in the state. Opened on Sept 14, 1985, it connects the island with the peninsula.



## MOUNT KINABALU

Measuring at over 4,095m above sea level, Mount Kinabalu is the highest peak in Malaysia. Located inside the Kinabalu Park, it is also a UNESCO Global Geopark. It is a prominent feature in Sabah's coat of arms.



## HIBISCUS

Bunga Raya (hibiscus) was declared the national flower by our founding father and first premier Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj on July 28, 1960. It was among seven flowers which were initially considered for the title. The hibiscus was chosen as no other country had made it their national flower at the time.



## HORNBILL

This bird is culturally significant for the people of Sarawak. It is especially important for the Dayak community, and is featured in the Sarawak coat of arms. Nowadays, images of hornbills are often incorporated into local arts and performances in the state.



## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS LEADING TO THE FORMATION OF MALAYSIA

1945

'Malayan Union' was introduced by the British government as a proposal towards independence. It was protested by the majority of the local people because it caused the sultans to lose political power.

1948

State of emergency declared in Malaya due to the Communist insurgency.

1949

The first election of Malaya which was spearheaded by the Alliance Party namely UMNO, MCA and MIC representing the three main races - Malay, Chinese and Indian.

1955-56

Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman leads a delegation to London to discuss the independence of Malaya. Following this, the Independence of Malaya Treaty was signed on Feb 8, 1956 at Lancaster House in London.



1957

Independence and formation of the Federation of Malaya on Aug 31, 1957.



1960

The Malayan Emergency is formally declared over on July 31, 1960, with the Communist insurgents withdrawing to southern Thailand.

1963

The formation of the Federation of Malaysia on Sept 16, 1963, consisting of the 11 states in Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (henceforth known as Sabah).

1965

However, due to a misunderstanding between the leaders of the central government and the Singaporean authorities, Singapore decided to leave the Union on Aug 6, 1965 and form a separate country.



**The Five Principles of Rukun Negara**  
■ Kepercayaan Kepada Tuhan  
■ Kesetiaan Kepada Raja dan Negara  
■ Keluhuran Perlembagaan  
■ Kedaulatan Undang-undang  
■ Kesopanan dan Kesusilaan





# 'We are one'

Sarawakians say the spirit of unity among fellow Malaysians give them a sense of belonging.

Myra with Imran and their three children.



Lavindar (furthest from camera, on left) during a reunion with his Chinese, Malay, Bidayuh and Iban schoolmates from SMK St Joseph in Kuching.

By GRACE CHEN  
gracechen@thestar.com.my

WHEN Lavindar Singh Jay first arrived at his university campus in Nilai, Negri Sembilan, 20 years ago, the Kuching native remembered feeling like a small townner in a big city.

Over time, however, he discovered how the Malaysian spirit has the ability to unite, regardless of race and background.

Although Lavindar had only visited Peninsular Malaysia no more than three times before he came to pursue his degree in electrical electronics in Nilai, the then 19-year-old's friendly demeanour would see him building a network with Malaysians from other states as well.

His first group of peninsular buddies were his university mates from Penang, Perak and Kuala Lumpur.

Lavindar, now 39, can still recall how they bonded.

"They were all curious about what life in Sarawak was like and I would joke that where I came from, it was the norm for people to travel from place to place by crocodile surfing," he said.

Over the next 15 years, Lavindar met his wife Harveen Kaur, 39, from Damansara Kim in Petaling Jaya, and set up their family home in Subang Jaya. He also made friends with others from Peninsular Malaysia through a biker's club.

On his Honda VTX, he has joined them for biking trips to Krabi in Thailand, and for an



Networking with people of other races — Lavindar (middle) with Lim Jit Nee (right) who is head of Innovation and venture in a telecommunications company, and Ahmad Khairi Zulkifli who is head of digital channels in a funding company for startups.

event in Ampang, Selangor, called "The Gentleman's Ride" where riders turned up in their dapper best, to raise awareness of colon cancer.

Today, Lavindar is back for good in Kuching where he is in the midst of growing his own digital solutions enterprise.

"What makes me unique in Sarawak is there are not many Sikhs there."

He and his multi-ethnic fellow Sarawakians often gather for lunch.

"We were doing this from my school days where all the races, including the Ibans and Bidayuh, would get together," he said.

Although based in Kuching for the past two years, his activities

are still bi-coastal in nature.

"I still travel to Johor and Kuala Lumpur to meet potential clients," he said.

Although he professes his loyalty to Sarawak, there remains an irreplaceable favourite of his from the Klang Valley where his beloved hometown has never been able to replace — the banana leaf rice in two Indian restaurants in Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya.

## Cultural melting pot

Fellowship and unity are the glue that binds all Malaysians together.

Growing up in Petra Jaya, Kuching, Myra Liyana Razali, a Malay, saw first-hand how this can be achieved by embracing each other's differences.

One story the 40-year-old mother-of-three likes to share is how her grandparents hosted a Bidayuh family at their home on weekends.

"Nevermind if they were from a different ethnic background. All that mattered was they were friends."

"My late grandpa used to work with the Agriculture Department and was based in Padawan. He made friends with many Bidayuh farmers from there and they treated him like family. When he retired, they continued to keep in touch."

"Another example of togetherness can be seen at the *kopitiam* in Kuching, where it is the norm for a mix of ethnicities to sit and eat together," said Myra, recall-



Myra (right) taking a best friends' photo with Ganesh Muren (left).



ing fondly the warmth of her neighbours from different racial backgrounds.

“As both my parents worked, our neighbours would not only ensure I had food but that our helper, who is Indonesian, was also fed. There was no limit to my neighbours’ kindness. If my parents were running late, they would be the ones who’d take me home,” she said.

With some 40 ethnic groups in Sarawak, Myra said the communities there had become a cultural melting pot. Her parents are of Malay and Melanau descent while her cousin is married to a Dayak.

Having been exposed to such values, it was not surprising that Myra would find a life partner who is also of mixed parentage. Her husband, Imran Ghazali, 40, is of Malay and Chinese parentage.

“When my in-laws have family gatherings like Hari Raya in Terengganu, the house can have as many as about 40 people.

“The cousins, some 20 of them, would stay together and sleep in the hall.

“What touches me most is how they have accepted me as one of them,” said Myra, who lives in Kuala Langat, Selangor.

She imparts this sense of closeness to her three children too.

“I always tell them that they should be similarly close to their siblings and cousins,” she said.

In fostering the spirit of harmony and unity, it is also important to expand one’s horizons, she emphasised.

“My parents have always encouraged me to go far and not



Lee with his collection of luxury sneakers at his home. — ONG SOON HIN/The Star

have tunnel vision where studies, career and life are concerned.

“Although there were universities in Sarawak where I could have pursued my tertiary education, my father encouraged me to study in Peninsular Malaysia.

“I believe this is why my children are able to have the best of both worlds now,” she added.

Equal opportunities

In unity, lies strength and stability.

For Northon Lee, this is the very essence that has afforded all Malaysians the chance of a good life.

“No matter where you are

from, be it a small village or a city, regardless of your background, the chance to succeed is there as long as one is willing to adopt a growth mindset and build resilience, tenacity and grit.”

The 36-year-old legal, compliance and sustainability department assistant manager in a public listed company in Kuala Lumpur, said he spoke from experience.

Hailing from Kampung Bintawa, a fishing village along Sungai Sarawak, a teenaged Lee loved fashion and was fascinated by designer and luxury brands. One item which he coveted then was a pair of Nike sneakers.

Though his family was not poor, branded goods were still considered a luxury as his father was the sole breadwinner in a family of five.

A young Lee then decided to earn his own money as an Additional and Modern Mathematics tutor. Being a straight-A student, he had no problems finding customers.

His first pair of Nike shoes was bought while he was pursuing a degree in Chinese Literature at Universiti Malaya.

In addition, he pursued a law degree at a private college at the same time, with financial loans from the National Higher Education Fund Corporation

(PTPTN).

To earn pocket money, he took up tutoring jobs again.

“I didn’t have time to sit at home and watch television. I remember carrying my textbooks along with me while on the way to my students’ homes, studying and rushing assignments in the LRT,” he said.

Despite juggling a hectic academic schedule and tutoring sessions, Lee emerged as one of the top five students at the private college where he took his law degree.

Now as a working adult, his success is reflected in his favourite hobbies – collecting magazines, branded sneakers, bags and clothes.

In his new home, the bachelor has a collection of luxury sneakers and shelves of limited-edition magazines.

His first pair of luxury sneakers was by Balenciaga, a birthday gift in 2021 from his best friend.

For now, Lee has decided to settle in Kuala Lumpur where he feels at home with its shopping malls and easy access to fashion.

His mother and sisters have also moved here, so he has lots of family support.

He doesn’t really miss the food from back home, as Sarawak dishes are easily available here, even if they are not as tasty.

“I have never felt any discrimination, especially where the pursuit of economic opportunities are concerned.

“I have always felt welcomed. I hope the closeness between Sarawak, Sabah and the peninsula can remain and be further strengthened,” added Lee.



# Happy Malaysia Day 2023

Let's commit to protecting the environment for our beloved nation



Indah Water  
New Life for Water





# Guardians of indigenous culture

By HANIS MAKETAB  
lifestyle@thestar.com.my

TO THE indigenous peoples of Malaysia – known collectively as Orang Asal, or Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia – everything has a soul.

“From the trees, the mountains, rivers and rocks to the soil, flora and fauna. Once you know that, you understand why the Orang Asli hold respect and reverence to everything in their environment,” said Wendi Sia, co-founder of Gerimis ArtProject, a collaborative art project and archiving initiative aimed at preserving the history and oral storytelling traditions of the Orang Asli.

“Not many Malaysians have the opportunity to be in touch with the Orang Asli and hold conversations with them, so Gerimis brings together these different world views to find a universal understanding through the lens of art and culture,” added Sia.

## Broader exposure

Earlier this year, Gerimis published *Mah Meri Animal Folklore*, a compilation of folk tales revolving around animals, as told by Julida Uju, a Mah Meri cultural activist.

The storytelling sessions to launch the book in the Klang Valley were well-received, attracting an all-ages audience.

Sia noted that since the collective was formed in 2018, there has definitely been increased interest among Malaysians in learning about Orang Asli culture and folklore.

“Firstly, it is because Orang Asli themselves have started many initiatives, such as Apa Kata Orang Asli Wanita and Persatuan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Orang Asal Perak (PKKOAP), from the realisation that it is urgent to have their voices and cultures heard and seen.

“Secondly, many events now include Orang Asli in their programmes, making space for the larger public to learn about our

How Malaysians are tirelessly working towards keeping alive the storytelling culture of the communities.



A selection of books featuring indigenous folk tales and cultures from across Malaysia is seen at the Bundusan Books pop-up stall at a recent folk arts event in Kuala Lumpur. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

indigenous communities,” said Sia, who hopes to see more Orang Asli youth championing their arts and cultures.

Orang Asli artist Saluji Yeok So Alu, who has published illustrated books such as *Nenek Dengan Yeok Luat*, and *Let The Maps Speak! (Biar Pete de Besuara! in Semai)*, is one of the new generation storytellers who works to raise awareness about the preservation of the Semai tribe’s tradition of sharing knowledge, culture and history orally.

“Storytelling is the best tool we have for effectively communicating our own history and culture. Right now, we are racing against time to collect our own stories ... but it’s heartening to find so many Malaysians now who are

keen and curious to learn about Orang Asli stories,” says Saluji when discussing how his most personal stories are tied to his village, Kampung Ulu Penderas in Slim River, Perak.

## Bridging the gap

In Miri, Sarawak, the Tuyang Initiative, a social enterprise, has been actively – since 2017 – connecting the indigenous Borneo communities and their cultural guardians to the creative economy through the arts.

Its first book project *Dayak Lore: A Collection From The Indigenous People Of Sarawak (Borneo)*, which was released in late 2020, is a storytelling/colouring book for children and the

young at heart.

“The three stories – from the Penan, Kayan and Iban communities – in the book were adapted from Tuyang Initiative’s Tuesday Tales, an online platform for folk-based stories from Sarawak’s indigenous communities,” says Juvita Tatan Wan, the co-founder of Tuyang Initiative.

“We are still building up this digital library of traditional folk tales. We have more than enough material for a volume two of *Dayak Lore*. However, we are not really a distribution outfit, and it has been difficult to get *Dayak Lore* into peninsular bookshops.

“In the beginning, the book received international and regional support through online

sales, but gradually, more people from all over Malaysia have been contacting us directly to get a copy,” she added.

Juvita points out such books surrounding indigenous stories and oral traditions are not new in Malaysia.

“Today, I feel that more people – especially families with young children – are actively seeking such books, and it’s great to find home libraries in Penang and Ipoh having room for local books from this part of Malaysia.”

Sabahan filmmaker-artist Jesse Joy, who is the founder-curator of Bundusan Books, started the online bookshop after trying to learn more about the *bundusan* plant, which his grandmother used to weave mats.

“There weren’t many resources or reading materials about it, so it highlighted the need for resource materials about Sabahan and Bornean cultures to be made available,” he said.

Joy, who moves between Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu, said some of the books found in Kuala Lumpur did not reach Kota Kinabalu.

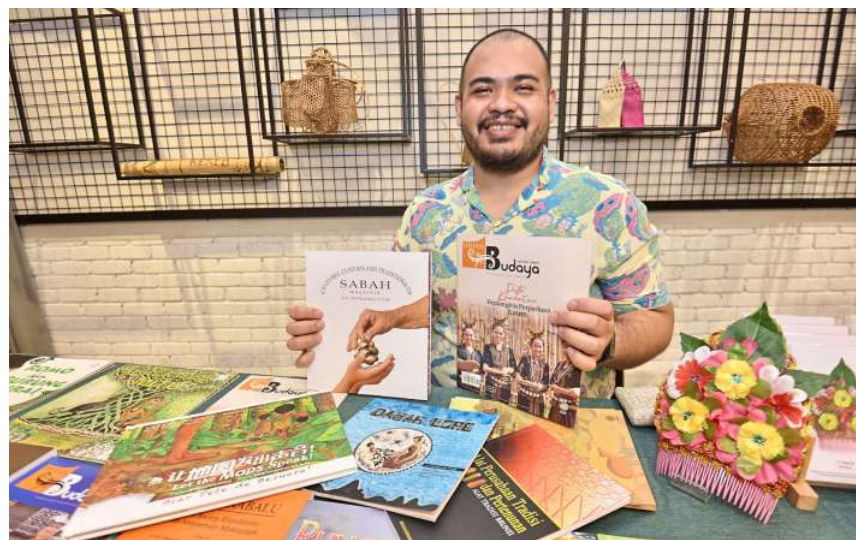
“I see Bundusan Books as more than just a bookshop. It’s a service – bringing forth books about Borneo, indigenous peoples, Orang Asli and championing local authors.

“Some who bought my books were happy that they could know Sabah better and connect with their heritage and culture. Others say it is great that these books are available because they don’t know much about Borneo,” he said.

Joy also points out the importance of industry support for fledgling indigenous writers.

“Telling their stories is one thing, presenting them is another. Monetary support or funding is necessary, as publishing a book will cost a lot of money.

“We also need bookshops that care enough to put their books on their shelves, as well as collaborators – those with knowledge of how the publishing industry works, someone on the creative side to do the designing, layout, art, printing and so on.”



Julida (left) and Sia during a storytelling recording session for the ‘Mah Meri Animal Folklore’ book project. — Gerimis Art Project

Joy has been actively connecting cultures between the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak through books.





By AIDA AHMAD  
aidaahmad@thestar.com.my

# Mark of rich history

Local author talks about life in Melaka's Portuguese Settlement and what it means to be Malaysian.

PENNING a book to share his experience throughout his years as a fisherman, community leader and activist at the Portuguese Settlement in Melaka is testament to how much Martin Theseira loves Malaysia.

The 67-year-old Portuguese just released his book called *The Story of Pedro Theseira The Fisherman*, which is deeply connected to the roots of his Kristang (Melakan Portuguese) community from an early age.

His father Lionel and mother Catherine instilled in him a profound appreciation for his cultural heritage.

The book is actually based on the story of Theseira's life, with various stories weaved in featuring Pedro as the main character.

"I wrote this book because it was always in my mind to record my experiences through the years as a fisherman, including organising festivals, choir, and doing church work," he told *The Star* as he walked along Praya Lane in Bandar Hilir, Melaka.

The church he refers to is the Assumption Church Malacca in Jalan Melaka Raya 14, just behind Praya Lane.

From a young age, he lived in Praya Lane, a part of the suburb of Bandar Hilir, not far from the city and the beach.

"We had a nice backyard fronting the Straits of Malacca before the reclamation started in 1974.

"Our way of life started to change and affected our cultural activities in church. Many people eventually moved out," he said.

On what it means to be Malaysian, Theseira said he would be ever ready to defend his country from foreign invaders.

"We are descendants of Portugal, but we are Malaysians first and I'm proud of it. I believe I'm 100% Malaysian.

"Growing up in Praya Lane with Chinese, Indian and Malay fishermen was so harmonious. Things have changed because of politicising and politicians exploiting race and religion," he said.

Theseira feels the theme of unity and strength best describes his upbringing.

"We didn't split over small, petty issues. Malaysia is so blessed with resources, beautiful forests and oceans.

"I lost my seafront at Praya Lane. I hope there is no more reclamation, the sea is important for fishermen's survival," he said.

Anthony Madrigal, 52, who was born and raised in the Portuguese Settlement, referred to all Malaysians as family.

"When I was growing up, it was an amazing place which had a wonderful community that was intact and composed of all races and religions. Everyone was friendly and helpful to each other," he said.

He remembers the Friendship Wall built in 1975 at the Assumption Church by the church and community members.

It still stands until today despite the elements and exposure to reclamation.

"Unity means family under



The annual San Pedro Festival at the Portuguese Settlement is a crowd puller. — Filepic



Monteiro (right) and Sta Maria are proud of their mixed heritage.

(Above, from left) Madrigal, his mother Stella Lopez, 78, and Theseira pouring over old photos of their community.

one flag," said Madrigal.

Violet Monteiro, 39, a marketeer and a mother-of-three who lives at the settlement, remembered growing up with not much racism issues in school, but it showed up during her university days.

"It is sad to see society is now worse with social media sparking racist sentiments," she said.

She often talks to her children, ages four to 13, about mixed cultures in Malaysia as her hus-

band is of Chinese and Indian parentage.

"We celebrate Chinese New Year, Christmas and Deepavali, and bring the children along to church and temple.

"We feel proud to live in Malaysia and would not want to live elsewhere," she said.

Monteiro's first-cousin-once-removed Alysa Sta Maria, 26, enjoyed their growing-up years in Melaka.

Sta Maria, who is of

Portuguese-Indian parentage, is proud of her Eurasian roots.

"My family often visits Melaka for the San Pedro Festival and Good Friday.

"While I saw many youths moving out of the settlement, I wanted to go back to learn more about my heritage.

"It is interesting to learn about my ancestry and traditions.

"And there is so much opportunity for youths at the

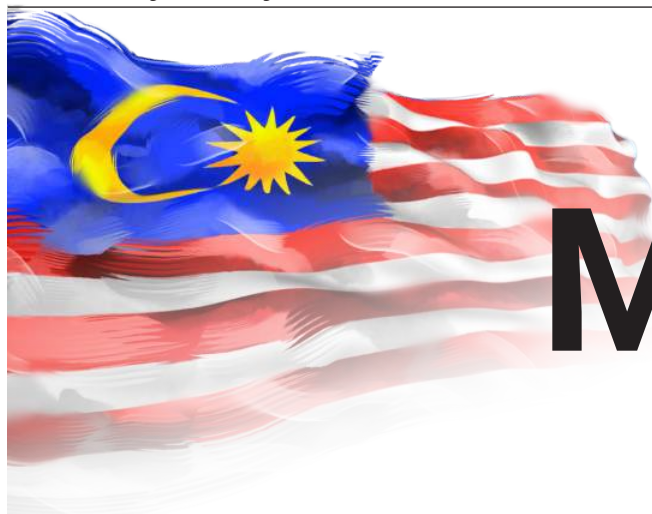
Portuguese Settlement," she said.

Musician Raynier De Silva, 27, a communications officer for a non-governmental organisation, said music was a uniting factor for people of different backgrounds in Malaysia.

"Everyone is interesting and unique in our own way, even in our music; we fill the creative and cultural space differently.

"We can all acknowledge our ethnicities without prioritising our identity," he said.





# What Malaysia Day means to us

By ADORA LEONG  
metro@thestar.com.my

MORE should be done to help people understand just why Malaysia Day is so important – that's the consensus among the people interviewed by *The Star*.

They believe we should all be more sensitive, open our hearts and respect each others' religion, culture and lifestyle.



Tan Chor Dean

**Tan Chor Dean, 22**  
Selangor-born, Student

As a Malaysian, I understand the significance and beauty of Malaysia Day, a day that fills our hearts with pride and gratitude. It is the day which the country was formed, bringing together Sabah and Sarawak with Peninsular Malaysia. As we reflect on our history, we are reminded of the sacrifices made by our forefathers to bring us this far – a united and harmonious Malaysia, and as such I think more emphasis should be placed on the significance of this day. Our nation's rich tapestry is woven with the threads of various cultures, traditions and beliefs, creating a vibrant mosaic that defines who we are as Malaysians. Let us cherish our multicultural heritage and embrace one another regardless of our backgrounds. I believe we should raise our flag with pride, and honour the shared dreams and aspirations of our fellow countrymen. May we never take for granted the beauty surrounding us and the warmth of our people's hearts.

**Ethan Zachary Bonny, 20**  
Sabahan of Bidayuh Padawan and Kadazan mix Dusun descent, Student

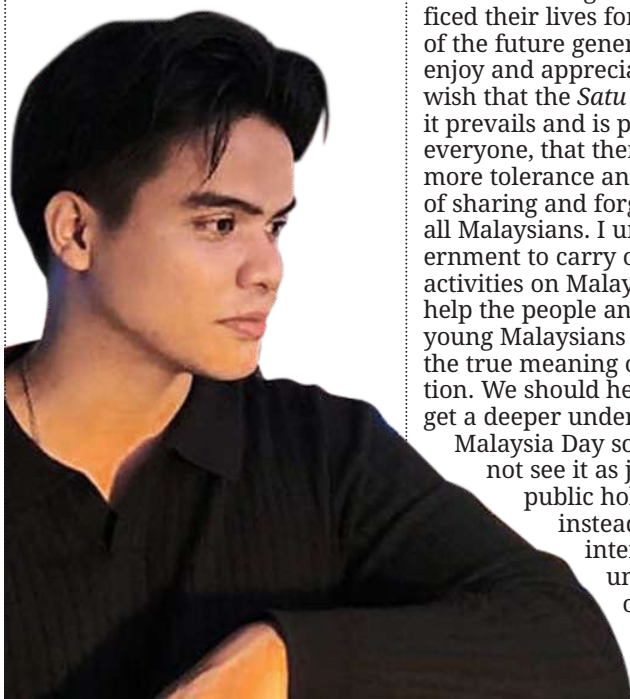
Malaysia Day is one of the most vibrant and significant events in the country, where people

We should have a greater understanding about the significance of this day to better appreciate our rich tapestry of cultures.

from diverse ethnicities and cultures come together to celebrate our unity and the richness of Malaysia's heritage. It is a day that holds great importance as it honours the sacrifices made for the nation. However, I am a little upset that people's enthusiasm to celebrate Malaysia Day depends on their states, cities or districts. I live in Sabah but moved to Peninsular Malaysia to continue my tertiary education. Each state in Malaysia has its own unique culture and customs, and moving meant adapting to new social norms. Initially, it took me some time to understand and embrace these differences, but it was a rewarding experience to immerse myself in a diverse cultural setting. While some in the peninsula do show familiarity and

Each state in Malaysia has its own unique culture and customs, and moving meant adapting to new social norms.

Ethan Zachary Bonny



Patrick Louis

respect towards the traditions in Sabah and Sarawak, a small percentage of people may see it as sensitive and may disagree or dislike the traditions. I hope moving forward, that everyone can learn to better respect each other's tradition, culture and religion.

**Patrick Louis, 58**  
Ipoh-born, Shipping/logistics manager

As Malaysia Day was declared a public holiday, there is now a growing awareness among Malaysians on the significance of this special day. I am proud to celebrate the occasion that brought forth a multi-race and multi-religious nation. The struggle of intimidation and control by foreign nations was so severe that this nation went through much pain in the fight for independence and unity. I take this opportunity to thank the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the benefit of the future generations to enjoy and appreciate. It is my wish that the *Satu Malaysia* spirit prevails and is practised by everyone, that there will be more tolerance and an attitude of sharing and forgiving among all Malaysians. I urge the government to carry out more activities on Malaysia Day to help the people and especially young Malaysians to understand the true meaning of the celebration. We should help our youth get a deeper understanding of Malaysia Day so that they do not see it as just another public holiday, but instead develop an interest in the unique heritage of all races in Malaysia.



Azman Hezry

**Azman Hezry, 23**  
Kuala Lumpur-born, Student

I personally wish we are educated more on the cultures, customs and experiences of people of Sabah and Sarawak. I feel it's important to celebrate a historical event such as Malaysia Day, as many might not actually know the reason behind the celebration and I think it should be more prominently explained or highlighted on the same level as our National Day. Many in the peninsula are largely unfamiliar with traditions of Sabahans and Sarawakians aside from what we are taught in our Civics textbook. The main mentions are usually about the Ibans and Kadazans, which is a shame as there's lots more information that has been left out.

**Omanisha Sidda, 22**  
Selangor-born, Psychology graduate

I only learned the difference between Malaysia Day and



Omanisha Sidda



Ervina James

National Day during high school. Even in school, we celebrated National Day more than Malaysia Day. As a resident of Peninsular Malaysia, I am slowly learning about Sabah and Sarawak through my friends whom I met in university, and people I've met by chance. I am realising how much I do not know about Sabah and Sarawak although both states are part of Malaysia. Malaysians have this tendency to be extremely accepting and welcoming to most foreigners, which is something we are well-known for. I wish we are also as welcoming and accepting towards traditions and cultures from Malaysian states across the South China Sea.

**Ervina James, 43**  
Sabahan of Dusun descent, Lecturer

Back in Sabah, Malaysia Day is widely celebrated just like any other public holiday. To be honest, Sabahans and Sarawakians love celebrating festive seasons that are closer to their ethnicity. I think it's great that there is acknowledgement that Sabah and Sarawak played a great role in the formation of the country, but it is also bittersweet how hard both the states fought for this recognition. Most Malaysians in the peninsula are familiar with commercialised parts of the two states but I think it would be nice if some do a little bit of in-depth reading on our traditions. I hope harmony is practised nationwide. Sabahans and Sarawakians prioritise religion in our culture, traditions and way of life. And I feel the best way to preserve our way of life and traditions is by respecting each other.





# One nation

Reflecting unity in diversity, dancers from the Sarawak Cultural Village look resplendent in a colourful array of traditional costumes to celebrate Malaysia.

Photo: ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star



# HAPPY MALAYSIA DAY



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