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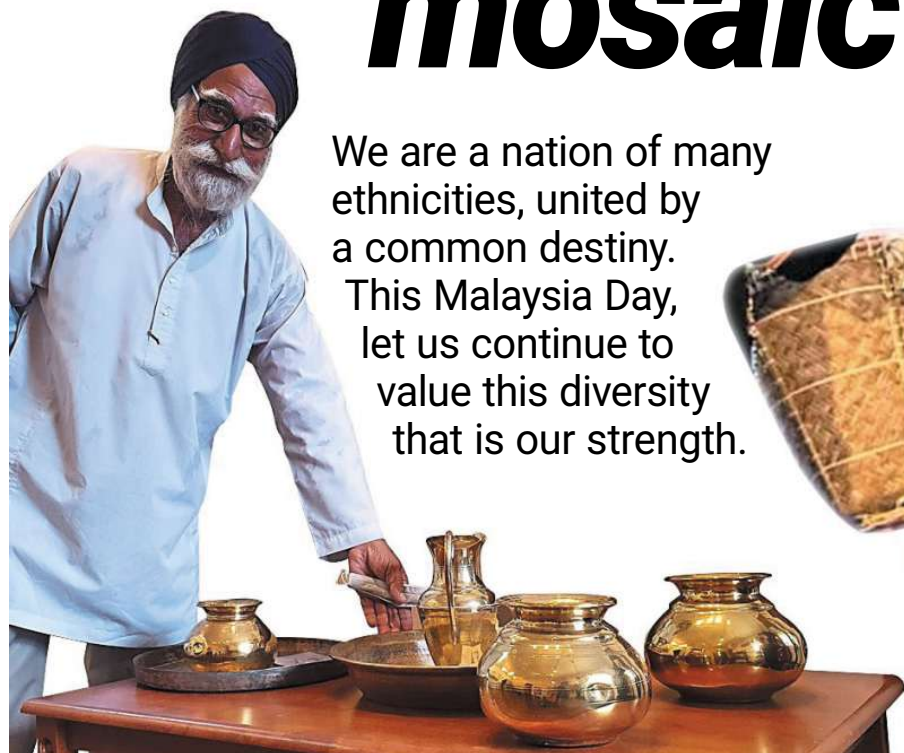
THE STAR, FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2022

MALAYSIA DAY



Malaysian mosaic

We are a nation of many ethnicities, united by a common destiny. This Malaysia Day, let us continue to value this diversity that is our strength.



By **SIMRIT KAUR**
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MALAYSIA came into being in only 26 months, from the time Malaya's first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj broached the Malaysia Concept on May 27, 1961 in Singapore to its fruition on Sept 16, 1963.

This was considered a remarkable achievement, considering the complexities of forming a federation encompassing so many territories, and the hurdles faced, both within and without, including armed opposition from a neighbouring country.

In his speech to the Foreign Correspondents' Association, Tunku formally expressed his wish for a closer association between Malaya and the British protectorates of Singapore, Brunei, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak.

Assoc Prof Dr Bilcher Bala of Universiti Malaysia Sabah's history programme said Tunku emphasised the need for and benefits that would be derived from a larger federation in terms of political, economic and social development.

"Malaya, Singapore and Brunei were more developed at the time while Sarawak and Sabah were lagging behind," he noted.

"This perceived benefit was a strong impetus during the process of consultation and referendum on the Malaysia Concept until the signing of the Malaysia Agreement on July 9, 1963."

Dr Bilcher said that despite the 1962 Cobbold Commission already having established that two-thirds of the people of Sabah and Sarawak accepted the Malaysia Concept, the two nations most opposed to the federation – the Philippines and Indonesia – were not satisfied.

The Philippines claimed Sabah and Indonesia saw the formation of Malaysia as a neo-colonial plot.

"An independent UN commission, the United Nations Malaysia Mission, was established with rep-

How Malaysia came to be

Historians look back at road to forming a new federation in 1963



Dr Bilcher: The formation of Malaysia was delayed because a referendum had to be carried out.

representatives from nine countries.

"Because the referendum had to be carried out in Sabah and Sarawak, the formation of Malaysia was delayed.

"The Malaysia Agreement was amended to postpone the date of Malaysia Day from Aug 31 to Sept 16, 1963."

The UN's commission's report, which was published on Sept 14, affirmed that Sabah and Sarawak supported the Malaysia Concept.

Not satisfied, Indonesia launched the *ganyang* or "crush Malaysia" campaign, which led to an armed confrontation between the two nations from 1963 to 1966.

Although the concept of regional integration had been floating around for years, Tunku was initially not keen on a merger with Singapore in particular during the early years of Malaya's independence, said Prof Datuk Dr Danny Wong Tze Ken, who is dean of Universiti Malaya's Arts and Social Sciences Faculty.



Prof Wong: People-to-people ties between the British protectorate states were already strong.

Ironically, by the early 1960s, it was the situation in Singapore that hastened the merger as Prof Wong said Tunku was concerned about the growing communist influence there and its effect on the peninsula once the British left.

Tunku, in his speech to Parliament on Oct 16, 1961 when he introduced the motion on Malaysia, said: "A merger would prevent those who are communist-minded from being able to align an independent Singapore with the Communist bloc."

Prof Wong noted that the term Malaysia had been used since the 1920s to refer to the region of the eventual Malaysian states and that the idea of coming together was not entirely alien as "personal networks were already very strong and people felt quite at home in each other's states".

While then Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew had backed Malaysia, other leaders such as Sabah's Donald Stephens

and Sarawak's Stephen Kalong Ningkan and Temenggung Jugah had been more cautious at first but were persuaded by Tunku and the economic development they saw taking place in Malaya.

Tunku, too, acknowledged these bonds when he said that "there is a natural affinity between the (Borneo) territories and the Federation, an affinity which I should say has no exact parallel anywhere."

Dr Bilcher said the British had first envisioned a merger in 1949 – dubbed the Grand Design, later the Malaysia Concept, based on the concept of federation.

Most agree that the inclusion of the Borneo states was also aimed at balancing Singapore's majority Chinese population with the indigenous peoples of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei.

In fact, the idea of Singapore, Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak forming a federation, affiliation or union first before joining Malaysia had been raised earlier but Tunku felt that this would take years and exposed these territories to the Communist threat.

In the same speech in Parliament on Oct 16, 1961, he noted that the new federation would enable the Borneo territories to transform their present colonial status to self-government for themselves and absolute independence in Malaysia simultaneously, and "balk the Communist attempt to capture these territories."

Dr Bilcher agreed: "The truth of the matter was that Sabah and Sarawak could not go it alone back then."

It was a busy time for all those involved in the merger as many issues had to be ironed out, including the problems of divestiture for these colonial entities and

the viability of the new nation.

"Making such a union work was challenging as each entity was at different stages of development under the British crown," noted Prof Wong.

An important matter that had to be fulfilled was the rights of the people of Sarawak and Sabah to express their opinion through the democratic process, especially by elections.

"This was especially challenging in Sabah as there were no political parties among the indigenous communities until after Malaysia was mooted," noted Prof Wong, who is Sabahan.

Dr Bilcher, who is a Kelabit from Sarawak, said the district and state elections results offered further proof of support for a federation.

"Parties supporting the Malaysian Concept won a majority of the seats," he noted.

When asked about the current state of the union, Prof Wong believes that the people of Sabah and Sarawak as well as their leaders are conscious of the fact that their predecessors made a commitment to Malaysia.

"They are honouring it but looking carefully at their rights and what is due to them under the Malaysia Agreement," he said.

For Dr Bilcher, Malaysia Day also means Unity Day to commemorate how the people and their leaders worked together to free the nation from colonialism.

"So, the phrase 'Stronger Together' as the theme of Malaysia Day 2022 symbolises that the people of Malaysia who are made up of various races, religions and political beliefs should live peacefully and support the strength and unity that the country has achieved all this while," he said.

Brotherhood in the trenches: A Sabahan's experience

By **DURIE RAINER FONG**
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LIKE many young men in his unit, Emin Madi burned with the desire to protect a fledgling Malaysian nation when he enlisted in the 3rd Battalion Malaysian Rangers in 1965.

Born into a Kadazandusun family in Sabah's interior Tambunan, Emin decided to take up arms against the communist insurgents.

Aged only 16 at the time, he was sent for a nine-month basic army training at Suvla Line Camp in Ipoh, Perak, before being deployed into active duty.

Emin said Malaysia faced communist insurgencies at the time from the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in the peninsula, North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP) and Sarawak Communist Organisation.

"The 3rd Rangers were involved in tracking down NKCP in Sarawak as well as CPM in Peninsular Malaysia," he said.

Given it was the first time he had ever stepped foot outside Sabah, the young Emin heaved a sigh of relief when he was placed in a barrack with other recruits from his home state and Sarawak.

"That was the first time I met an Iban with tattoos all over his body," the 73-year-old veteran journalist recalled.

But months before completing the training in Ipoh and much to his annoyance, he suddenly found himself segregated from his Sabah and Sarawak mates when he was put in another barrack housing personnel from the peninsula.

Emin said although his new dormitory was located adjacent to his old one, he was upset as it felt like being sent to unfamiliar territory.

"I thought that I would be placed with my Sabahan colleagues permanently.

"My biggest concern was integrating with the 'Orang Malaya' batch.

"And for that matter, I was wondering whether they would welcome a Kadazandusun from Sabah," he said.

But not only did they manage to overcome the cultural barrier over time, the young men from various backgrounds achieved something more important – brotherhood.

The trust that they developed among each other would prove to be life-saving as they navigated thick jungles trying to track down communists both along the Malaysia-Thailand border and in Sarawak.

Emin was later stationed at Bunan Gega in Kuching and Tong Nibong in Serian after completing his training.

"Over the years, the bond became stronger as I made it a point to be with them not as a Sabahan but as a



Emin: Working in a tight-knit group and facing difficult situations together made the bond stronger.

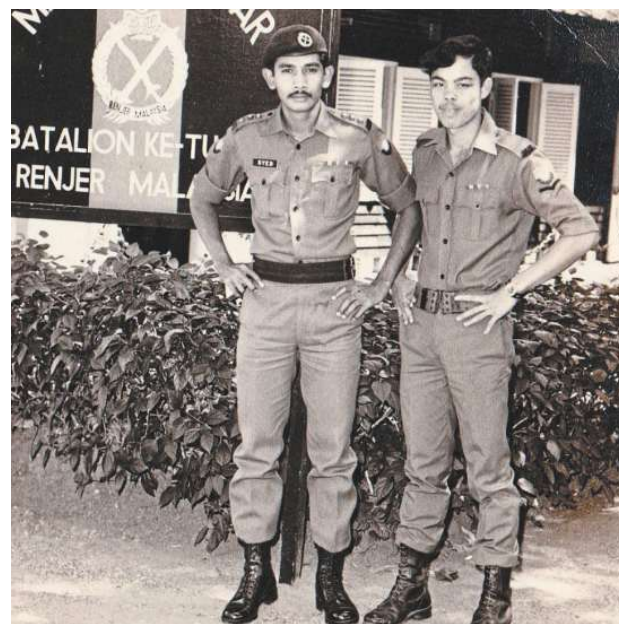
Malaysian who was part of 3rd Rangers.

"My spoken Bahasa Melayu improved and I learned more about Malay culture.

"I certainly found the Kelantanese dialect intriguing," he said.

added that experiences like working in a tight-knit group and facing difficult and dangerous situations together only made their bond stronger.

Emin resigned from active duty in 1971 and attended a journalism course at the South East Asia Press Centre (now the Malaysian Press Institute) in Kuala Lumpur in 1973, before going on to have a long career with *Sabah Times*, stretching



Lance corporal Emin Madi (right) with his former platoon commander Captain Syed Marzuki Syed Harun in Wallace Bay, Tawau.

some 20 years, including as Bahasa Melayu sub-editor.

He also worked as press secretary to Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam, the former Land and Cooperative Development minister from 1998 to 2003.

He then became a stringer for Bernama and is still with the government news agency.

Looking back, Emin said the memorable experiences he went through with his comrades would always have a special place in

his heart.

"It was important, especially in the context of integration since the 3rd Rangers comprised personnel from Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula.

"It was a lesson in accommodating and adapting.

"Thanks to the multi-ethnic background of the 3rd Battalion Malaysian Rangers, I discovered the true meaning of comradeship throughout my five-year stint as a Malaysian soldier," he said.

Instrument of unity

Sape's growing popularity attributed to its adaptability, distinctive sound and contemporary vibe

By SHARON LING
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IN FEBRUARY this year, 257 sape musicians gathered at the Kuching Waterfront to play a concert for the Citrawarna Keluarga Malaysia finale, a four-day programme that showcased cultural performances and traditional activities.

The show made it into the *Malaysia Book of Records* for having the most number of sape players in a single performance.

What made the concert even more special was the presence of not only Sarawakian musicians but also other Malaysians and a few international performers, said Persatuan Anak Seni Sape Kuching (Pusak) chairman Danison Manium.

For Danison, whose association was involved in the concert, this illustrates the sape's growing popularity and its ability to bring Malaysians together in appreciation of its distinctive lilting tones.

"The sape is a traditional lute instrument of Sarawak's Orang Ulu communities.

"It was originally used for healing and in rituals, to treat the sick and call upon the spirits," he explained.

"When Christianity came to the Baram area (where the Orang Ulu lived), the sape evolved into an instrument to accompany dance."

The 1980s saw another step in the sape's evolution with the advancement of electronic technology and devices such as pick-ups and amplifiers were introduced.

"Previously, the sape was played as an acoustic instrument but now, it can be plugged into an amplifier," said Danison, 34.

He said the sape entered a new era from 2000 onwards as

musicians like Jerry Kamit introduced the modern sape, which had up to six strings.

The traditional sape has two or three strings for playing traditional tunes, but modern instruments with four, five or six strings can be used to play contemporary music.

"The sape has become more popular because artistes like Jerry Kamit and Alena Murang play it in a new way.

"They do not just play traditional tunes or use it to accompany traditional dance, but incorporate it in current music trends, bringing the sape closer to the hearts of the current generation," he said.

Danison, who teaches sape classes, has seen a growing interest in the instrument among people from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and other countries.

He said Pusak had received calls from customers in Terengganu, Johor and Pahang who wanted to buy the sape.

"This shows there is growing interest in the instrument," he added.

Alena, 33, said it was "incredible" to see sape's revival.

"When I started learning in 2000, there was hardly anyone from my generation or even my father's generation playing the sape," she recalled.

Alena observed that sape makers had been adapting the shape, size and sound of the instrument to make it easier to transport and use with modern equipment.

For her, the sape's appeal lies mainly in its unique sound.

"I hope people will learn our heritage stories and culture through sape music," she added.

Sape maker Tomi Bulen, 57, agreed that the musical instrument was now popular because of its contemporary vibe.

"You can play the sape in a band now, as it has become more well-known.

"In the past, it was played in longhouses, not in urban areas.

"But this has changed; anyone can learn to play the sape if they are interested," he said.

Tomi, who works at the Sarawak Cultural Village, said he had friends in Kuala Lumpur and Negri Sembilan who play the sape.

"An Indian friend who plays the sitar now plays the sape too.

"Another guitarist friend has also picked it up.

"If you can play the guitar, it's easier to learn as it is also a stringed instrument," he added.

Tomi said he received orders from customers in Sabah, Peninsular Malaysia and overseas.

It takes him at least a week to complete one sape, from preparing and carving the wood to decorating it with traditional motifs.

"The wood has to be dried first and traditionally, it is smoked.

"This will protect it from pests and improve the sound of the instrument," he said.

Tomi uses different types of wood to make the sape, from softer varieties such as nyatoh and adau to hardwood like meranti.

"The sound will be different depending on the wood," he said.

"Softer wood will produce a more acoustic sound, while sape made from harder wood will have a sharper sound," he explained.

For Danison, the sape has the potential to promote unity among Malaysians.

"You cannot really play this musical instrument alone, it is more fun to ask someone to play it with you.

"We now have sape players everywhere in Malaysia and that is a good thing," Danison added.



Tomi says it takes at least a week to make a sape. — Photos: ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE/The Star



Danison, who teaches sape, showing some of the instruments at the Pusak office in Kuching.



A record 257 sape musicians performed at the Citrawarna Keluarga Malaysia finale at the Kuching Waterfront in Sarawak.

Malaysians on Malaysia Day

Abdul Kahar Achok, 44

Sabahan of Bugis descent, tuition teacher

I do hope the government will hold the main Malaysia Day celebration in Sabah in future. When the main celebration is held elsewhere, Sabahans organise their own celebration and have fireworks. In celebrating the occasion, we should put aside our differences and create a harmonious community together. As a Sabahan, I find that it's easy for me to fit in in Peninsular Malaysia. However, those who move from here to Sabah will have to learn the local language for daily use, but do not worry, the locals are friendly.



Divya Shree Richard Gomez, 18

Selangor-born, student

Personally, I do not think there is much difference between peninsular states and Sabah and Sarawak, other than that there are more ethnic groups in the latter two states. Even with multiple ethnicities and religions there, they are more united. Tolerance and understanding of one another are necessary to exist together and avoid unnecessary issues. The younger generations should be educated on equality and be provided opportunities equally.



Edna Kawili, 45

A Bajau, works in a mall in Selangor

It should be seen as a uniting symbol for Malaysia, as it is the day Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia agreed to form a nation together. Those in the peninsula can look to Sabah and Sarawak as examples of unity among different cultures and ethnicities which number more in the two states than the races here. Celebrating Malaysia Day will also show tourists our country's unity. One of the things new to me when I came to the peninsula 22 years ago was the many *mamak* and roadside stalls, which were not a common sight in Sabah.



Julia Tan Wan Er, 23

Selangor-born, social media manager

We should be aware of the reason why we are celebrating this memorable day, especially the younger generations. I find the cultures and traditions of Sabahans and Sarawakians incredibly beautiful. The scenery in Sabah and Sarawak attracts more foreign travellers and that helps us build a stronger economy. I think the Rainforest World Music Festival in Sarawak can attract youngsters and be used to raise their awareness of the cultures in those states. Also, with the Internet, it is much easier now to

spread positive messages about the formation of Malaysia. Most importantly, as Malaysians, we must help each other regardless of background and ethnicity, besides supporting local brands. Every small step counts. Making changes is hard, but it will be easier if we have a stronger bond with each other.



Hakimi Yusmadi Erwandi, 18

Sarawakian, retail salesperson

My family moved to Selangor when I was an infant, so I grew up here. My friends would ask me about the word "*kitak*",

and they were always surprised that the word meant "me" instead of "us" as it does in Malay. I would represent Malaysia in a heartbeat if I had the chance. Regardless of our origins, we are all Malaysians and I believe we can all progress together.

Sufiyanie Soffian, 24

Sarawakian, social media executive

In the five years of living in Kuala Lumpur, I always get noticed as a Sarawakian; people are interested in my origins.

To me, Malaysia Day represents me as a Malaysian. It is a day of celebrating the richness of cultures that makes Malaysia what it is. Sarawak is a developing state but we have big cities too such as Kuching, Miri, Sibul and Bintulu. To me, this is no longer an era where we get irritated at differences, we should embrace them.



Anis Suraya Abdul Nasir, 23

Selangor, sales and administration assistant

Malaysia Day needs to be commemorated with more grandeur since it gives recognition to Sabah and Sarawak joining us to form a new country. We are fortunate that Malaysia exists and the day is to remind us that we are from different backgrounds but living harmoniously together. We should have student exchange programmes that would enable the younger generation of Malaysians to learn and appreciate the numerous cultures of people in the country. We should highlight the variety of ethnicities, cultures and heritage of Sabah and Sarawak rather than focusing only on the three main races in Peninsular Malaysia. It is important to understand that with multi-cultures should come multi-mentality and that if we understand well along with unbiased lens the cultures that we are born into, then we will be able to appreciate other cultures without being ethnocentric.



Chin Kim Moy, 65

Selangor-born, retired cultural executive

It's been ingrained in my mind since primary school that Sabah and Sarawak are part of the country. I have seen Sabahans in my area, but they seem shy and reserved. As for Sarawak, I am amazed by the big state. As Malaysians, we must strive to understand one another better, put aside our differences and come together as a nation. Foremost, we are all human beings, we must learn how to live together and depend on one another.



Lawrence Leong Wan Onn, 45

Kuala Lumpur, e-hailing driver

We must accept the differences of all ethnic groups, and over the years our cultures have merged. In my opinion, Sabahans

and Sarawakians are down-to-earth and they do not overthink in matters of race. We in Peninsular Malaysia like to overthink a situation and individuals will get defensive about preserving their own culture. During my childhood, I lived in an apartment and mixed with everyone in the building. It is simple — we should treat our fellow Malaysians as our own family. Harmony means a pleasant musical sound consisting of different notes played or sung together, hence we will only have harmony when we accept our differences.



Emyrull Iman Azami, 23

Selangorian, fresh graduate currently working as food delivery rider

In my eyes, Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak are united and their cultures

are well preserved. I think our nation is stronger with Sabah and Sarawak because a lot of our main natural resources come from there and they have helped in the development and progress of the Malaysia we see today. I can see some people in the peninsula are hesitant to talk to those from Sabah or Sarawak, maybe because of inability to understand their accent, resulting in them avoiding interactions completely even though we are all Malaysians. We need to look beyond the differences. During Malaysia Day events, invite Sabahans and Sarawakians to join in and show our unity. The government should organise more events that highlight cultures of Sabah and Sarawak.



Elsie Joyce Joel, 23

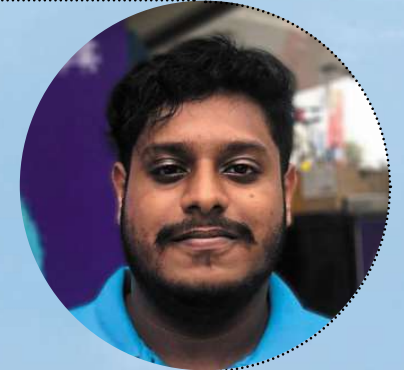
Kadazan working in the creative industry

We love our local products and will go to great lengths to bring them to the peninsula from Sabah. I think Sabahans are more relaxed and warm, we can be instantly welcoming even to people we've just met. More exposure to Sabahan and Sarawakian cultures through films and the performing arts as well as inclusion of artists from the two states would help the nation grow closer together. It is wonderful to share culture not just from a single perspective but from everyone. I take pride in my heritage and I am proud to be Malaysian.

Thinesen Santhiragasan, 22

Kedahan, fresh graduate

As a Malaysian, I love that Sabah and Sarawak truly bring a variety of cultures, which adds more flavour to our multicultural nation. For me, the more the merrier. Teachers should educate students about the cultures in Sabah and Sarawak, so that the younger generations will have a good grasp of the cultures that exist in Malaysia. We should stop hating and being prejudiced. Be kind to one another and we can progress further than any other country.



Jagdave Singh, 53

Selangor-born, school principal

Malaysia Day is at the heart of our National Unity policy as it focuses on embracing diversity for nation-building. In my opinion, Sabah and Sarawak are the best models

for national integration and Malaysia Day should be accorded a high level of respect and recognition and celebrated on a scale that it deserves as the starting point of a new era in nation-building. I believe that deep in our hearts, we have always been Malaysian first. I have visited Sabah and Sarawak and have many friends from there. With globalisation, we are now closer than ever, especially over social media. It is important for all of us to embrace the unique religious and cultural diversity of our Malaysian family in Sabah and Sarawak. If you can afford to travel, do visit the amazing paradise in those two states, to have a first-hand experience of their multicultural lifestyles. As a principal, I have always worked to eliminate prejudice in school among teach-

ers and students. The cultures and food from Sabah and Sarawak are always showcased during events at my school. *Umai* and *Laksa Sarawak* are my favourite dishes. We should work harder to truly celebrate and appreciate our unified Malaysia.

Kasiyati Karjuni, 58

Sabahan, salesperson

I have been living in Selangor for more than 20 years. I discovered that the *marang* fruit, which is common in Sabah, is not available here, although I have heard of someone who took the seedlings from Sabah and planted two *marang* trees in Muar, Johor. In my view, wages are an issue. I think with better salary offers, more Sabahans and Sarawakians will come here to work and that will make it possible for us to be not so dependent on foreign workers. Our people can coexist with one another; I personally have never come across social issues in my time living here. If we have good intentions, we will be fine.



Angelina Wong, 21

Of Sino-Dusun and Chinese-Indian parentage, student

During my time in the Klang Valley, I appreciate the city vibe. Although my hometown of Ranau in Sabah is considered a city, there is a significant difference from cities in the peninsula. The Sabahan culture is different too. I believe that organising school trips for students from the peninsula to Sabah and Sarawak and vice versa will introduce the cultures to one another as well as encourage the younger generations to open their minds and expand their horizons. Sabah and Sarawak make Malaysia stronger because we can benefit from each other, such as the availability of natural resources. I encourage people to learn and appreciate the beauty of other cultures. Malaysia Day is a day for us to realise how important it is for us to live a united life together.





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Susieleen urges more Orang Asli to take up TVET programmes to improve their job prospects.

Orang Asli like these villagers in Simpang Pulai, Perak, mostly live in semi-rural areas.
— RONNIE CHIN/The Star



Looking ahead to a brighter future

By ILI AQILAH
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SUSIELEEN Suki firmly believes that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) can ensure a better future for the Orang Asli.

“Only through education can Orang Asli improve their livelihood.

“When I meet members from my community, I advise them to enrol in TVET, as it can also help reduce the country’s dependence on foreign workers.

“I believe Orang Asli should take advantage of the opportunities provided in TVET to enhance their skills and enjoy better job opportunities,” said the 31-year-old Semai who is the ground coordinator for TVET Orang Asli at the Human Resource Development Corporation.

Susieleen, who was born in Kuantan, Pahang and raised in Ipoh, Perak, is also involved with several non-governmental organisations such as Persatuan Mahasiswa Orang Asli Malaysia, Persatuan Orang Asli Perak and Malaysia Orang Asli Development Association.

Her father is a registered town planner and runs several businesses while her late mother was a housewife.

“Ever since I was small, my father encouraged me to give back to my community.

“I try to help Orang Asli villagers get scholarships to further their studies,” said Susieleen, who graduated with a Bachelor in Real Estate and Property Management from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and has a MSc in Planning from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Sarawak-based Independent Council of Natives founder Bill Jugah believes that a stronger body is needed to help the Orang Asli narrow the socio-economic gap.

“Even about 20 years ago, there was already a clear gap between us and the Orang Asli.

“In Sarawak and Sabah, the indigenous groups such as Dusun, Murut and Kadazan are actively involved in the economy, from working in big companies to running businesses,” he said.

While being a majority group might be a contributing factor to the progress of indigenous groups

Orang Asli draw inspiration from achievements of Sabah and Sarawak’s indigenous peoples



Yahya says most Orang Asli rely on customary land to earn a living.

in Sarawak and Sabah, Bill said the lives of the Orang Asli could be improved further by removing bureaucracy.

“Be it at the federal, state or local government, there should be equal opportunities given to all, including indigenous groups.

“For example, while there are many entrepreneur programmes offered by the government, many indigenous folk don’t know about them or how to apply.

“Attention must be paid to cascading information about these programmes to all groups in the country.

“We need more statistics on the participation level of different groups in government programmes, so that more inclusive planning can be done,” he added.

People of the land

Some Orang Asli say not much has changed for them since Malaya achieved its independence from the British on Aug 31, 1957.

Most are still earning a living by selling forest produce and through subsistence farming.

Yahya Yok Perukas, 28, a Semai, said for the Orang Asli community to thrive, the government must recognise their ownership over customary land (*tanah adat*).

“Most Orang Asli rely on cus-



Bill believes that a stronger body to help the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia will help narrow the socio-economic gap.

tomary land to earn a living, since the majority of us sell produce from the jungle.

“If the government recognises our land ownership, it will improve our livelihood,” said Yahya who resides in an Orang Asli village in Sungkai, Perak.

He pointed out that the money Orang Asli earned was used mostly for their children’s education expenses.

“What makes matters worse is that some of our customary land is considered forest reserve,” he added.

Yahya, who has been an activist for the Orang Asli community since he was 18, said there was a vast difference between the Orang Asli in the peninsula compared to indigenous folk of Sabah and Sarawak.

“They have better education opportunities and are able to secure good jobs.

“They become ministers, members of Parliament and state assemblymen while in the peninsula we have never had an Orang Asli minister,” he said.

He pointed out that assistance was channelled through the Orang Asli Development Department (Jakoa).

“But there is a lot of bureaucracy involved,” he said.

An Orang Asli who wished to

be known only as Ramli, said many settlements in the interior like his in Kelantan, had no Internet access.

“If only I was given a chance to get a good job, my children would have gone to better schools and had a brighter future,” he said, adding that his eldest son is a waiter while his second son works at a farm.

“While I appreciate that Jakoa was set up for us, most of the officers I met are not Orang Asli so they might not understand our struggles and hardship,” said the Senoi whose greatest wish is for the Orang Asli to be given more attention.

“We are living far from others, but that doesn’t mean we should be excluded.

“We want to improve our lives and the lives of our children.

“Apart from food assistance, we wish for more facilities and better opportunities,” he added.

In August, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob in a Facebook post in conjunction with the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, had said that the government would continue the agenda of empowering the Orang Asli community so that they could enjoy economic, social and educational progress.

On July 28, Rural Development



Jenifer says more young Orang Asli are speaking up for their rights.

Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said in the Dewan Rakyat that an Orang Asli Development Policy was expected to be finalised in the fourth quarter of the year and implemented by the middle of 2023.

Mahdzir added that the policy, which would focus on matters related to land management, education, health, economy, leadership, infrastructure and culture, was aimed at boosting efforts to bring the Orang Asli community into mainstream development.

Sabah-based Indigenous People Network of Malaysia project coordinator Jenifer Lasimbang said the situation of the Orang Asli in the peninsula was very different as they were a small minority.

“In Sabah, indigenous people make up about 60% of the population,” said the former Moyog assemblyman who is glad to note that more young Orang Asli activists in the peninsula are speaking up about their rights.

“Recently, I went to a seminar where the majority of those who attended were young Orang Asli activists, including women,” she added.

Jenifer said Orang Asli views should be taken seriously.

“Their rights must be recognised first,” she said.



Tree planting at Eco Viaduct as an effort to reforest and provide safe crossings for tigers and other wildlife in the area.



CAT Walk is a form of anti-poaching and anti-deforestation surveillance walk organised by MYCAT where volunteers come together to protect and restore a critical tiger habitat.



CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

AS a public-listed company and one of Malaysia's top property developers, UEM Sunrise believes that its actions today can shape the world of tomorrow.

The company strives to bring values to all its stakeholders. To ensure that its actions are able to create positive impacts, the company regularly engages with its communities to understand their challenges and the changing needs of society.

UEM Sunrise established its Sustainability Blueprint 1.0 in 2021 to further strengthen its sustainability agenda while underscoring its commitment to supporting the nation's ambitions and goals. The company ensures that the agenda is integrated into its business strategy as it plays its part in nation-building.

The Sustainability Blueprint 1.0 sets the company's sustainability roadmap towards reaching Carbon Neutrality 2050. The blueprint is also in line with the government of Malaysia's aspiration in achieving net zero emissions by 2050 building towards a sustainable, resilient and inclusive Malaysia.

UEM Sunrise is committed to achieving Carbon Neutrality 2050 and will kick-start its journey by building towards a low-carbon future by 2030. This will be followed by reaching Ambition Zero 2040 prior to achieving the ultimate Carbon Neutrality 2050 goal.

Saving our Malayan tigers with MYCAT

In tandem with the Year of the Tiger and marking UEM Sunrise's commitment towards biodiversity conservation, the company introduced the adorable 'Happy Tiger' characters to cast a spotlight on the plight of Malayan tigers' declining population. There are now less than 150 Malayan tigers left.

Recognising the significance of protecting our national animal and symbol of courage in safeguarding our biodiversity and our children's future, UEM Sunrise pledged to raise public awareness and contributed monetary donation through #SendHappyTigerHome game.

The "Send Happy Tiger Home" is UEM Sunrise's mini-game during its "Happy Duo Duo" Chinese New Year and "Ini Baru Raya" Hari Raya campaigns.

Participants had to answer eight questions and complete the game by clearing the tiger trail of snares and traps, sending the Happy Tiger home safely in one piece, which mirrors the real-life dangers that our tigers face. With each completed game, RM100 went to the Happy Tiger Bank to help achieve the RM22,200 pledged to support the Malayan tiger conservation efforts.

Thanks to the public's involvement and enthusiasm, the company

UEM Sunrise established its Sustainability Blueprint 1.0 in 2021 to further strengthen its sustainability drive



UEM Sunrise's donation to MYCAT for Malayan tiger conservation efforts.



UEM Sunrise's CHIEF Happiness Officers.

mission of Saving Tigers Together, we are excited to join hands with like-minded nature-loving partners such as UEM Sunrise.

"After more than a decade of CAT Walk, over 2,000 volunteers have come to protect and restore a critical tiger habitat. The persistent vigilance and action have enabled the local ecosystem to recover together with tigers and their prey. This has been made possible through the public's efforts and the long-term support of corporate donors.

"I hope more Malaysian companies will follow suit and get directly involved in the ecosystem restoration effort with the tiger as the flagship species," said Dr Kae Kawanishi, tiger biologist and general manager of MYCAT.

"Like us, to survive, tigers need large healthy forests. By saving tigers, we are also saving our biodiversity and making development sustainable for all," she added.

More environmental and animal conservation initiatives

Earlier this year, UEM Sunrise unveiled "K'Artulistiwa", an art and community engagement initiative that serves as a platform for collaborations with local artists in support of environmental and animal conservation efforts at its sales galleries.

Having its sales galleries showcasing works by local artists and becoming a space for various community-led art activities, UEM Sunrise aims to spark interest and spread awareness on environmental and animal conservation as well as preservation of cultural heritage as they work and strengthen ties with the community.

"Our sales galleries are evolving to be more than just spaces to showcase our developments and for sale transactions, but platforms that encourage innovation and nurture the community's creativity. We hope that we can work together with our local artists on a deeper level to develop a self-sustainable community which not only champions wildlife conservation but also champions art as a form of expression and a means to support the local economy," said UEM Sunrise chief executive officer, Sufian Abdullah.

UEM Sunrise has teamed up with an environmental and wildlife conservationist artist, Suzi Chua to kick-start "K'Artulistiwa". The initiative was launched at the company's latest sales gallery, KAIA Heights at Taman Equine, Seri Kembangan. The exhibition has been open to the public since March 12, 2022 and admission is free.

accomplished its monetary pledge to help protect our endangered cats. The RM22,200 donation was made to Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers' (MYCAT) during the International Tiger Day.

Strategic collaborations with like-minded partners such as MYCAT is in line with the company's Sustainability pillar that anchors UEM Sunrise's Sustainability Blueprint 1.0 alongside other pillars such as Liveability, Affordability and Resilience. UEM Sunrise aims to realise its sustainability goals through stakeholder engagement initiatives including establishing strategic cooperations to support various causes like biodiversity conservation.

As part of the company's National month 'Inspiring Malaysia' National and Malaysia Day campaign, UEM Sunrise assembled its CHIEF volunteers to join "Citizen Action for Tigers Walk" (CAT Walk); a form of anti-poaching and anti-deforestation surveillance walk organised by MYCAT. The walk signified the conclusion of the #SendHappyTigerHome initiative.

"The Malayan tiger is on the brink of extinction with fewer than 150 left in the wild. In our



Chia holding the frozen Sabah giant grouper fish that he imports from the state for his Ara Damansara eatery.



Sofya and Loong at their restaurant that specialises in select Sarawakian dishes in Mutiara Damansara.



Fatimah, a Sabahan, carrying on her parents' legacy through her own Restoran Ikan Bakar Semporna in Kepong.

Culinary ties that bind

Of the many things that unify Malaysians, food holds major sway, and enterprising foodies are playing a big role by helping people in the peninsula get familiar with dishes of Sabah and Sarawak.

By **CLARISSE SONIA**
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FOOD is an integral part of Malaysian culture and is another element that binds our multiracial nation.

The passion and pride we feel for our varied cuisines know no bounds.

In conjunction with Malaysia Day, we turn the spotlight on the food of Sabah and Sarawak along with the individuals who are providing people in the Klang Valley the chance to savour these dishes.

Preserving food heritage

Sofya Yusuf, born in Kuching, Sarawak, was inspired by just one thing to open her restaurant after she moved to Kuala Lumpur in 2009.

"I could not find any Sarawakian food to my liking over here," the 42-year-old said with a laugh.

She has been operating her family-owned restaurant SALTed in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, for the past six years with her husband, Karel Loong, serving authentic dishes from her home state.

The menu is simple, focusing on six Sarawakian dishes — Sarawak laksa, kolo mee, bihun belacan, tomato mee, mee jawa and kacang ma with rice.

"I had considered expanding my menu, but I was not sure of the reception from locals here."

"There are a few I would love to introduce, such as *kuih penyaram* made with *gula apung* (palm sugar from Sarawak) and *kuih tongkol* that is sometimes called *bongkol*, depending on where you are from," Sofya revealed.

One can find a representation of the whole nation among her customers — Sarawakians, Sabahans and people from the peninsula.

Sofya provided a glimpse of her driven personality when she explained that the lack of desserts on her menu was because she felt the need to master them first, as she was not the type of person to do things halfway.

She has high standards to uphold since her cooking often receives heaps of praise from her family and friends when she shares her dishes at potluck gatherings.

"I have to make large portions at one go because of the length of time it takes to prepare the food,"

she elaborated.

The praises gave Sofya the push to operate a modest food kiosk in a restaurant in Bandar Utama (Petaling Jaya, Selangor) in 2015, which eventually led to her opening the restaurant in Mutiara Damansara, Petaling Jaya.

SALTed is often jam-packed with customers during lunchtime because the restaurant operates for only four-and-a-half hours a day. It opens at 10am.

On the personal front, Sofya keeps her Sarawakian roots alive by communicating with her children in the dialect of her hometown, besides making sure they are familiar with Sarawakian food.

She still makes it a point to visit Sarawak with her children at least twice a year and they often spend their school holidays there.

Sabah's fish star

Having spent almost 10 years working in Sabah, Nicholas Chia Ee Howe is no stranger to the culture there.

After leaving the corporate banking industry, he moved to Sabah in his 20s when a job opportunity came up to venture into the fish farming industry.

Today, he has poured his expertise and experience gained in the Land Below the Wind into his restaurant in Selangor.

Sabah Keratang Restaurant in Ara Damansara, Petaling Jaya in Selangor, specialises in dishes featuring the Sabah giant grouper fish.

Chia said his customers found his prices reasonable, ranging from RM39 to RM70.

"I have a direct supply of this fish from Lahad Datu in Sabah, which is why I can serve it in my restaurant at such prices," he said.

The supplies are flown fresh to him every two weeks, or anytime he requests for it, and each trip brings about 700kg of the fish.

According to Chia, the fish farm that supplies to him uses a Japanese quick-freezing method which sees the fish vacuum-packed and frozen solid within 30 minutes.

He noted that the stark difference between the imported fish and those farmed in the peninsula was due to the pristine waters in Sabah as well as the type of feed used by farmers there.

"Our fish fillets have a firmer texture and are white in colour.

"This is because we are able to reduce the blood clots in the fish by our quick-freezing method," he said.

Customers can enjoy the Sabah giant grouper fish prepared in various ways, such as steamed, stir-fried, cooked in clay pot or Penang *asam* style.

Chia said he had faced numerous challenges over the years since starting his restaurant business, such as increase of raw ingredients' prices and inflation.

A more recent challenge, said the Kuala Lumpur native, was the 5% government tax on seafood exported out of Sabah, implemented at the end of last year.

But he stands firm on the ingredient that is the star of his menu.

"Even though we are able to get the same type of fish from suppliers here at a lower cost, I will never compromise by using any other option and will only use fish from Sabah," he said.

Taste of Sarawak

Opening a Sarawakian restaurant has been one of Venice Lai's biggest achievements, as she recounts the difficulties she had to face to get to where she is today.

As the owner of Fatty Kampua Sarawakian House in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, while balancing the commitments of her beauty salon business, it is clear that Lai is a very determined woman.

Originally from Miri in Sarawak, the 46-year-old came to the Malaysian capital to further her studies.

Lai remembered that when she first arrived, she was bombarded with questions regarding her upbringing in the Land of the Hornbills.

"People would ask me about where I stayed and how I travelled to school.

"It was also a struggle for me to secure a job in the beginning," she said.

In 2018, Lai was inspired to start a restaurant with a business partner, serving authentic Sarawakian food focusing on dishes originating from Sibu, Miri and Kuching.

However, they decided to part ways a year later, which left her with a menu of recipes that she was unfamiliar with.

"I had to start from scratch, redesigned the entire menu and took it



Lai showing some of the Foochow dishes served in Fatty Kampua Sarawakian House, Setapak.— Photos: IZZRAFIQ ALIAS, LOW BOON TAT and SHAARI CHEMAT/The Star

upon myself to study every single recipe, familiarising myself with ingredients and methods of preparation," Lai recalled.

"It was not easy, going through it one by one. Every spare moment I had away from work was spent redesigning the menu.

"The Covid-19 pandemic was another challenge for me, but here we are," she said.

Despite not being involved in the physical cooking, Lai keeps a watchful eye on the kitchen.

She makes weekly checks to ensure the taste and quality of the food served.

"I don't cook because the iron wok is too heavy for me to lift," she joked.

Describing her restaurant's menu, Lai said: "There are 52 different dishes and nearly 80% of them are of Foochow origin."

Chief among them is the *kampua mee* dish which is light and springy noodles mixed in soy sauce (or chili if the customer prefers it) with various toppings.

Lai has retained the names of food the way they are known in Fuzhou, China, such as *pien nik* which is a translation of the word *wantan* (mini dumplings).

She notes that many of her Sarawakian customers are of Iban heritage.

"They are working here and often drop by on weekends to enjoy authentic Sarawakian food, just like what I envisioned when I opened the restaurant," she said.

Lai also makes it a point to hire the disadvantaged and those who have been discriminated against.

She then takes it upon herself to train and guide them in their jobs, many of whom she considers family.

Upholding parents' legacy

Seafood has always been a highlight when one travels to Sabah.

Fortunately for us in the Klang Valley, there is authentic Sabah-style *ikan bakar* (grilled fish) to be found in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur.

Restoran Ikan Bakar Semporna, owned by Fatimah Salleh, has been serving the freshest seafood for the past four years.

As its name suggests, the seafood is brought in from Semporna, which is Fatimah's birthplace.

"My parents had their own *ikan bakar* restaurant in Semporna, so I

learned the trade and this helped me when opening my restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.

"After my mother passed away, my father felt it was time to close their restaurant as it was too much for him to handle on his own," she recalled.

Growing up as the second oldest in a family of nine, Fatimah felt it was her duty to continue her family's business rather than let it end with her parents.

"I started my own *ikan bakar* business by operating a small stall in front of the flats where I stayed, and did that for more than a year-and-a-half.

"It was actually my father who suggested that I open a stall as it was his wish that one of his children would continue the family business," she said.

It was just over a year later that her father passed away too.

Fatimah felt a personal responsibility to fulfil her father's wish.

Three years later, she expanded her stall business by moving into two shoplots in Metro Prima Kepong, where she continues to serve a variety of dishes that highlight the culinary identity of Sabah.

She said that in her home state, seafood is grilled plain with only a light honey glaze on top.

"In Sabah, we don't marinate our seafood with any chili or *sambal* like how it is often done here.

"We just add a bit of honey and grill the seafood for 10 minutes."

Fatimah also highlighted that it is common for Sabahans to eat the dishes with *ubi kayu* (cassava) instead of rice.

She said her customers were pleased with the variety of seafood and vegetables available at her restaurant, such as *ikan belawis* and *latok* (a type of algae) which are usually only found in Sabah.

"We have a *latok* farm in Sabah, and we are proud to be one of the first people to own one.

"*Latok* is normally found wild in the ocean but through our farm, we are able to maintain the freshness and quality of the *latok*.

"We can clean it properly to remove the sand that often gets stuck in it.

"We also supply *latok* in the peninsula.

"Even the squid we use, known as *sotong katak*, is bigger than the common *sotong panjang*," Fatimah added.



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Wish All Malaysians
Selamat Hari Malaysia

The KLK marching contingent during Perak's state-level National Day parade at Ipoh Padang on 31 August 2022.



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Saying ‘I do’ to love beyond borders

Union of Malaysians from different races, states weave nation’s colourful tapestry



Raja Hanani from Melaka and Jaimin from Sabah have chosen Selangor as their home.

By MEGAT SYAHAR
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WHEN it is destined and fated, you will meet your love match no matter where you are and where they are from.

Interracial and “interstate” marriages knit an ever tighter and stronger weave in the fabric of Malaysian society. Here are their stories.

London calling

Little did Raja Hanani Raja Mushahar know that she would meet her future husband when she sat down for a meal in Malaysia Hall London, United Kingdom.

It was 1983 and the then 19-year-old from Peringit in Melaka had unknowingly sat at the table cus-

tomarily occupied by students from Sabah.

She and Sabahan Jaimin Kamin, then 22, struck up a conversation and subsequently, a friendship.

He made his interest clear by giving Raja Hanani a greeting card decorated with hearts on the corners and containing his phone number when she moved out of the place.

The couple, now aged 56 and 59 respectively, were both in the UK for further studies — she did English and he read Law.

Upon returning to Malaysia, they married in 1985 and for the first six years, Raja Hanani taught English at a secondary school in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

While Jaimin’s parents, who live in Kampung Kilimu, Ranau, welcomed the bride to the family with

open arms, she had trouble fully comprehending what they were saying because of their thick accent.

“I was able to adapt to my students’ accent but I could not understand the Dusun accent of the elderly people, so I would just sit there and smile,” she said, adding that she had no problem conversing with Jaimin because they always spoke in English.

The couple would travel back and forth between Sabah and Melaka early in their marriage.

Jaimin is no stranger to the people of the peninsula and their speech patterns as well as their food.

“In primary school, I had been taught by teachers from the peninsula, so the language and accent were familiar to me.”

He first met Raja Hanani’s parents when he came to Kuala Lumpur to sit for his Bar examination.

She said her parents liked Jaimin because they could see that he was kind and sincere.

“He loved my mother’s cooking, which motivated her to cook even more,” she added.

Raja Hanani smiled at the memory of her younger self thinking of Sabah as a faraway place.

“This was because in those days, the newscasters on television would say *‘waktu semenanjung’* (peninsula time) and *‘waktu Sabah dan Sarawak’* (Sabah and Sarawak time).”

In Raja Hanani’s opinion, to best understand another’s culture, one has to live in that community.

The couple, parents to five

‘Different backgrounds serve to strengthen bond’

children, have chosen to settle in a “neutral” state — Selangor.

While Jaimin is the chief executive officer of an insurance company, his wife has retired from teaching.

He said: “My relatives are always asking me, ‘When are you coming home?’

“I thought about it, and I do not have much in Sabah except for my relatives.

“Everything I own is here, I consider Selangor my home now.

“Home is where the heart is,” Jaimin said while pointing to Raja Hanani.

Meet in the middle

Negri Sembilan native Mohd Fadzillah Abd Rahman first saw Kuching-born Nur Aisyah Amenda Jennis at an event organised by the Axia Car Club in Kuala Lumpur.

That common factor of both owning cars of the same make became the starting point that got them talking and then exchanging cellphone numbers.

“I knew she was single and although we were friends only, I decided to invite her to my sister’s engagement ceremony in my hometown,” said Mohd Fadzillah, 36.

Nur Aisyah chipped in, describing that memorable first trip to Jempol.

“His parents and siblings assumed we were in a relationship.

“But we did grow closer, more so since his parents liked me.



Mohd Fadzillah with Nur Aisyah in her traditional Bidayuh attire.

“After that visit, we started going out together as a couple.”

They have been married for three years and have a toddler son.

“One of the happiest moments of my life that I will never forget is Oct 29, 2020.

“It was during my wife’s birthday and she surprised me with a pregnancy test and an ultrasound scan indicating she was pregnant.

“That news made me shed tears for the very first time in our marriage,” said Mohd Fadzillah.

Their different backgrounds

only served to deepen the bond early on in their relationship as they made the effort to learn about each other’s cultures and understand one another better.

Nur Aisyah was already well-versed with a lot of things in the peninsula because of her many friends from there, whom she questioned whenever she was unsure about some customs and practices.

On the other hand, Mohd Fadzillah learned many things during his trips to Sarawak.

“I asked my wife many ques-

tions regarding the culture in her home state.

“I learned that Sarawak has many ethnic groups and they are respectful of each other,” he said.

Nur Aisyah fondly recalled how he had excitedly snapped pictures with her in the Bidayuh traditional attire, and shared it on social media.

Being of mixed parentage, it was not surprising that her family warmly welcomed Mohd Fadzillah, an information technology assistant chief.

He explained, “Her mother is Bidayuh and her father is Indian. There are other members of her extended family who are also in mixed marriages, so they are very understanding.”

Nur Aisyah added: “I was nervous at first about them meeting. But since my husband could chat with almost anyone, he was able to win my family over.

“When they started talking the first time they met, it was like they had known each other for years.”

Even though she came from a Christian family, religion had never been a barrier in the couple’s relationship.

“I became a Muslim in 2015, it was my own intention and not because of anyone else,” said Nur Aisyah, 31, adding that after their marriage, Fadzillah’s parents also guided her in Islam.

Neither is food an issue.

“My husband loves Sarawakian food and my relatives would invite us over to their house and prepare halal food,” said Nur Aisyah, who

is a nurse.

Her husband agreed, “I love food. I always try food from different cultures whenever I visit somewhere new. One dish in Sarawak that is a must-have for me is *mi kolok*.”

Nur Aisyah revealed that there is one type of traditional food her husband stays away from — sago worms.

“I showed him the worms and I could see the revulsion on his face, but he eventually touched it after much persuasion,” she said, laughing at the recollection.

What was a hurdle, at least on his part, was the language used when they visit his wife’s family in Sarawak.

Nur Aisyah explained, “When in Sarawak, I would speak in Bidayuh and every time I look over at my husband during the conversation, I could see in his face that he was clueless about what I was saying.

“But his grasp of the language has improved over the years.”

Looking ahead, Nur Aisyah admitted that she would like to retire in Sarawak if given the chance.

She quoted a Malay proverb *“Hujan emas di negeri orang, hujan batu di negeri sendiri, lebih baik di negeri sendiri”* which means “It may rain gold in someone else’s country and hailstones in your country, yet it is best to be in one’s own country.”

At the end of the day, though, Nur Aisyah said she would follow her husband wherever he goes, as “he is the head of the family.”

Taking the plunge to embrace cultural diversity



By CS NATHAN
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RETIRED police sergeant Inder Singh’s face lights up at the mention of Sarawak.

The state holds cherished memories for Inder, who was based there for a decade, and his family.

The Land of the Hornbills was where the 69-year-old met and married his wife, Harbans Kaur, 68, and where the couple’s two boys were born.

Inder, from Seremban in Negri Sembilan, arrived on Sarawak’s shores in mid-1973.

Fresh out of a three-month field force training stint in Ulu Kinta, Perak, the then 20-year-old cadet was deployed to Kuching.

Upon arrival, Inder and his fellow policemen underwent a one-month orientation programme.

From Kuching, Inder was sent to Sibü — some 400km away — to guard against communist insurgents in the Rajang river area.

As part of the Rajang Area Security Command (Rascom) headquartered in Sibü, regular patrol duties often took Inder deep into the jungle on both sides of the river.

“We would patrol the river by boat and our duties would also take us deep into the jungle where in the course of our work, we got better acquainted with the locals and stayed in longhouses,” said Inder.

Two years after his arrival, Inder tied the knot with Harbans Kaur,



(From left) Dr Tang and Judith with his parents during the traditional Chinese tea ceremony to mark the couple’s nuptials.

open house concept long before us in the peninsula and visitors were always welcomed with genuine hospitality,” said Inder.

He added that visitors were treated as honoured guests and invited to partake in rounds of *tuak* (rice wine) toasts with the *tuai rumah* (longhouse head) on such visits.

Harbans fondly remembers the multireligious close-knit community of the police barracks in Sibü, something she misses.

Her children learnt to converse in Iban while the family was stationed in Sarawak.

“I learnt to make Sarawakian food like *kek lapis* from my neighbours.

“In the months preceding Gawai, my friends and I would take a boat across the Rajang river to join in the *padi* planting and when it came to harvest time, we would all celebrate together, regardless of our faiths,” she said.

The couple left Sarawak with their two young sons in 1983, when Inder was transferred to Triang, Pahang, where he served for 20 years before settling in Seremban.

Thanks to technology, they are still in touch with some of their old friends on social media and have made several visits to Sarawak since relocating.

They hope to return to Sibü in 2028 for the centenary of the *gurdwara* they married in.

Finding common ground

For young couple Dr Tang Jeat Thong and his Sabahan Dusun wife Judith Quentine, bridging the cultural divide in their relationship took patience and some adjusting.

Common ground that brought this couple closer was their passion for saving lives — both are medical professionals whose paths crossed while serving in Kota Kinabalu’s Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 2015.

Although Dr Tang never imagined he would one day marry a Sabahan, Cupid struck and the 36-year-old Buddhist from Seremban fell in love with Judith, 31, a nurse of Christian faith.

Dr Tang said it was Judith’s beauty, grace, kindness and dedication to her patients that sealed the deal for him.

“After working side by side with Sabahans for almost 10 years, I have come to admire their hard work and dedication, which are traits my wife possesses too.

“Sabahans are very caring people and that is one of the reasons my wife makes such an incredible nurse,” he said.

Coming from different backgrounds and cultures, both Dr Tang and Judith learnt the fine art of give and take would go a long way in ensuring a successful union.

“It was not easy to adjust at first but I believe we have learnt from each other’s cultures and this appreciation and respect is something we hope to pass on to our children,”

said Dr Tang.

The couple who are based in Kota Kinabalu have three children — a girl and two boys — aged between two and six years.

Their wedding involved a blessing by a Christian pastor in Sabah as well as a traditional Chinese tea ceremony followed by a wedding banquet in Negri Sembilan.

There is no shortage of festivals for them and their families to celebrate, from Chinese New Year and Kaamatan or the Harvest Festival to Christmas.

“I am so glad that I met Judith and that our children are ‘hybrids’ who are truly Malaysian.

“Malaysia Day reminds me that as Malaysians, we are free to practise our own faiths and cultural traditions freely,” said Dr Tang.

For Judith, who hails from Papar, the diversity in a union of two people from different cultures also makes for a stronger bond.

“Because we come from different cultural backgrounds, I feel we work harder to understand each other and compromise more.

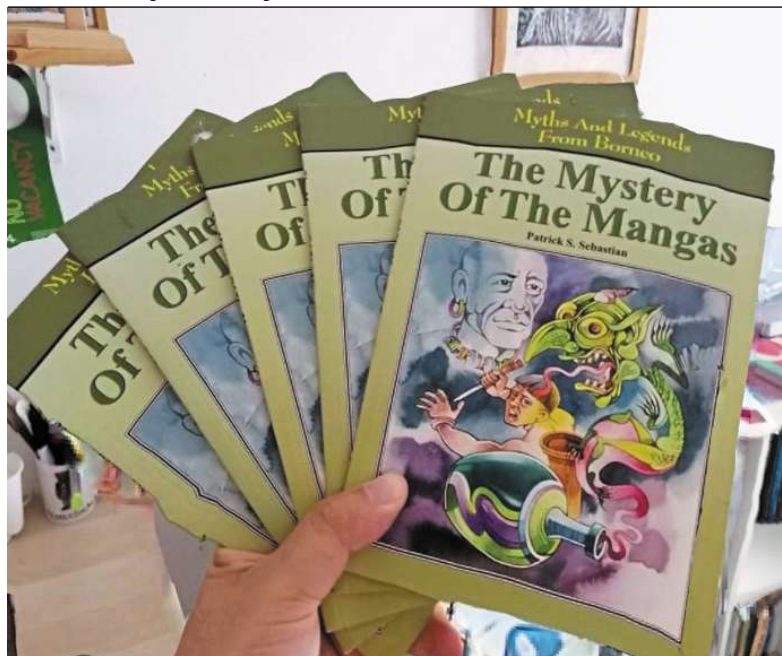
“The key to sustaining a happy cross-cultural home is mutual respect,” she said.

Judith’s parting quote is also one that should serve as a reminder to all Malaysians as we celebrate Malaysia Day: “It is time we embraced and respected our different cultures and traditions — whatever they may be — for a better Malaysia.”

Happy Malaysia Day 2022

Let us continue to work together to strengthen the bonds of unity and preserve our environment for generations to come.





For Jesse, Bundusan Books is a platform to get readers from all over Malaysia to pick up books from Sabah and Sarawak.



Jesse enjoys introducing books from Borneo to the public at his pop-up bookshops. – Photo courtesy of JESSE JOY

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Bookseller offers niche collection that promotes greater understanding

By **DINESH KUMAR MAGANATHAN**
metro@thestar.com.my

SABAHAN embroidery artist and cultural researcher Jesse Joy is passionate about collecting books.

When he started making *Finding Bundusan*, his short documentary about *bundusan* grass (grey sedge) and Kadazandusun culture, he realised that books and journals, particularly from Sabah and Sarawak, are not widely accessible.

Jesse, who is of Kadazandusun and Indian heritage, knew he had to do something.

The avid reader, who lives in Kuala Lumpur, started by posting on “Borneo Buuk Bank”, an Instagram page he created this year to list down these “rare” books.

When his online followers started showing interest, Jesse set up Bundusan Books, an independent outfit that sells new, used and collectable books about Borneo, indigenous issues, heritage and culture.

He said there’s a gap that needed to be filled to make books about and from Borneo available to a wider audience.

“Not many know about them, even those from Sabah and Sarawak.

“I wish to fill that gap by selling them through Bundusan Books; not only by bringing books from Borneo here, but the other way round too,” said Jesse, who works as a graphic designer in a publishing company.

His love for art and storytelling can be seen in the way he carefully tracks down titles for Bundusan Books.

From Sabahan artist Benedict S. Chong’s *Tales Of Borneo* to Iban author Golda Mowe’s *Fairy Con*, Bundusan Books carries a good mix of fiction and non-fiction titles.

The Kota Kinabalu-raised Jesse also sources for titles that are hard to come by such as Reggie Tersan’s *Myths And Legends From The Land Of The Hornbill* and Felix Tongkul’s *Traditional Systems Of Indigenous Peoples Of Sabah, Malaysia*.

Life On Two Islands, a biogra-

phy of Sabah art pioneer Tina Rimmer, is also a recommended read.

For Jesse, the book trade can be approached differently, especially through extra care put into curation.

He launched the Bundusan Books pop-up shop at the *Atas/Not Atas* art bazaar at Ilham Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, in June.

Initially, he wasn’t sure how the Kuala Lumpur crowd would react to his niche selections.

“Some of the people I met to acquire these books kept saying that no one would want to buy these titles.

“They thought the subject matter would make it even harder to sell,” recalled Jesse, who is trained in broadcasting and film.

He soon realised that people wanted to learn more about Borneo after he sold all but one of his books at Ilham Gallery.

He now knows there is keen interest in books from Borneo among both young and older readers.

He also wants to turn the spotlight on titles that are obscure or not widely distributed, including ghost story books from Sabah.

Bundusan Books is online but he has made stops at Hin Market at Penang’s Hin Bus Depot creative hub and Kota Kinabalu’s Jesselton Artisan Market.

Jesse’s collection may not be all that extensive but Bundusan Books’ inventory is slowly growing, with nearly 100 titles.

Where curation is concerned, Jesse often connects with non-governmental organisations such as The Sabah Society and Kadazan Language Foundation.

He also buys books from specialist bookstores in Sabah and Sarawak and hopes to one day open an outlet in Kota Kinabalu to continue highlighting books from Borneo.

Next on his agenda is writing a book about *bundusan* grass.

He also wants to visit Terengganu, where *bundusan* is called *kercut*.

From books to documentary films, Jesse’s diverse projects serve to underline his passion to strengthen bonds between the peninsula and Borneo.



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A volunteer of Ananda Cares Charity handing out provisions to elderly women in front of Sai Ananda Centre in Kampung Laksamana, Batu Caves.



Seso Malaysia provides free meals to the homeless at Medan Tuanku in Kuala Lumpur.

Giving back to society

A few individuals and groups find small acts of kindness can make a big difference, foster better understanding

By SHATHANA KASINATHAN
metro@thestar.com.my

MALAYSIA Day, which marks when Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak became one country on Sept 16, is a reminder of how a new nation was formed to give better opportunities to all.

Although there are still pockets of society in great need, ordinary Malaysians have stepped up and come together to help all, regardless of colour and creed.

Often, new perspectives and ways of delivering aid are needed to ensure no one is left behind,

Here are some individuals and organisations who strive to lend a helping hand in various ways to those in need.



SJK (T) Taman Sentosa, Klang, pupils playing hockey as part of the Fun in Learning Programme.

Comrades in charity

In April 2021, Hamidi Mookaiyah Abdullah, 63, wanted to help needy families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"All I did was ask for RM20 from each of my friends and within 10 days, I managed to collect RM9,000.

"At that time, I knew only a few families who needed help but with the extra money, there was more that could be done so that's when I reached out to friends and families from other states," he said.

He spent the extra money on monthly food baskets for poor families.

Hamidi's Comrades in Charity (HCIC) has not stopped helping people since then.

Hamidi said that in the past 15 months, he and his team had helped more than 80 families with monthly food baskets.

The non-profit group struggled to get groceries and deliver them to families during the movement control order, so HCIC bought RM50 and RM100 supermarket cash vouchers for the families instead.

They also provided aid to those who needed medical supplies.

Hamidi, a part-time lecturer at Universiti Malaya, said he had always been transparent about the contributions he received.

"Every Tuesday, I post the collection amount on the HCIC group and on the last Tuesday of every month, I post the expenses and the balance brought forward to the next month," he said.

HCIC also embarked on a new initiative to help B40 students with school essentials such as uniforms and shoes.

The group distributed school uniforms and shoes to 70 primary and secondary school students.

Hamidi also brought together 16 retired teachers and started the "Foundation in Literacy Project".

As part of the project, the volunteers organised a Fun in Learning Programme at SJK (T) Simpang Lima and SJK (T) Taman Sentosa in Klang to improve pupils' conversational skills and motivate them to set long-term goals.

Under the pilot project, 40 underprivileged pupils were chosen to participate in the programme.

"We also provide a platform for these children to play sports such as hockey, where they get free breakfast and lunch too.

"We are planning to expand it to other schools in the future, provided we have enough resources," said Hamidi.

Saving and serving food

Seso, an acronym for Save Environment, Save Ourselves, is a non-profit enterprise which was founded in 2017 to reduce food waste and poverty in the country.

The organisation "rescues" food that would have otherwise gone to waste, and turns them into a nutritious three-course meal.

Its volunteers collect food such as canned goods from supermarkets on an *ad hoc* basis.

Even before the pandemic, Tan Shi Wen, 35, who founded Seso Malaysia, and fellow volunteers would gather at a spot in Jalan Tun HS Lee, Kuala Lumpur near the Bangkok Bank area, and set up a booth to serve food to the homeless.

"We cook in the Seso kitchen and set the place up like a pop-up *mamak* stall.

"We bring tables and chairs and go to the street and eat with the homeless.

"Eating together is a great way to bond with others.

"Sometimes, all they need is someone to talk with," said Tan who is a lawyer.

However, during the pandemic, she had to change her approach to feeding the homeless and B40 group to comply with the standard operating procedure.

She had to collaborate with third-party transporters to send the food to those who needed it.

Seso Malaysia also gives out "Boxes of Kindness" comprising groceries that can last up to two weeks, depending on the size of the family, to those in the B40 group and refugees as part of its Covid-19 Recovery Programme.

Seso has helped more than 20 welfare homes, 5,000 Malaysian families and 250 refugee families over four years.

Tan said her desire to work with the homeless community sparked when she was studying law in the United Kingdom.

"Like most students, I remember throwing house parties and we would order a lot of pizza but there was always food that did not get eaten," she said.

One day, when she was throwing out leftovers from the night before, she saw a homeless man picking up discarded food from the rubbish bin.

"It was winter and he was not wearing a jacket but I noticed that his dog had one on, presumably his.

"To my surprise, when he found the leftover pizza, he fed his dog first.



Hamidi (right) giving aid to an elderly man under the charity's monthly donations to needy families.



Underprivileged children learning to play dhol (North Indian drum) from a volunteer at Ananda Cares Charity in Kampung Laksamana, Batu Caves.

"I thought when a person with so little could do so much for something he cared for, I could do the same to help society," she recounted.

The incident prompted Tan to volunteer at non-governmental organisations and dialysis centres, orphanages, old folks homes and a Down Syndrome school.

By the time she returned home in 2011, the seeds of volunteerism had already sprouted, eventually leading to Seso.

Caring for the community

A non-profit voluntary-based welfare organisation, Ananda Cares Charity helps senior citizens, children and refugees.

Despite being a full-time research officer in Forest Research Institute Malaysia, Dr Vimala Subramaniam, 54, and her architect husband give most of their free time to the charity.

Ananda Cares was founded by Vimala's husband Ayavoo Arumugam, 60, in 1992.

"We began as a small human values class for underprivileged students, which was held weekly in a dilapidated temple in Kampung Laksamana, Batu Caves in Selangor.

"We wanted to serve the needy, especially the B40 group in that area.

"We never thought it would

grow into a full-fledged charity," said Vimala.

Today, Ananda Cares has a kitchen, bakery, food packaging operation, medical and dialysis centre as well as a children's education centre.

More than 100 children aged four to 12 go to the education centre, including refugee children.

"We have a lot of activities for them such as *dhol* (North Indian drum), *bharatanatyam* (Indian classical dance), computer and human values classes.

We also have kindergarten classes and tuition for primary school pupils," said Vimala.

"These classes are run by volunteers as well as full-time teachers.

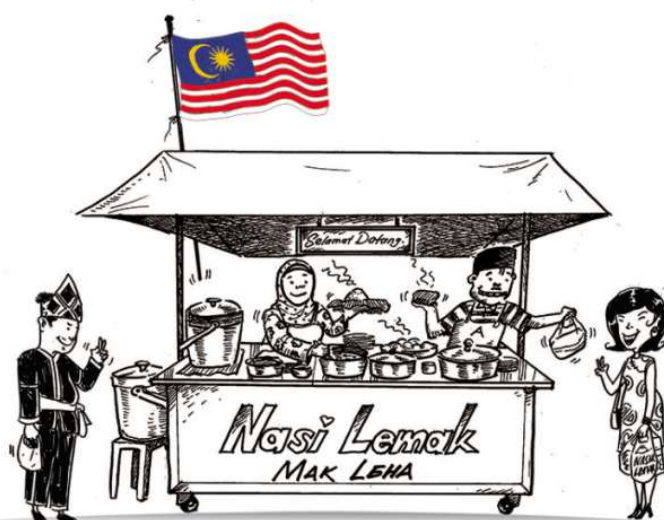
"Volunteers come in on Saturdays for the computer classes while the full-time teachers give tuition from Monday to Friday.

"We also provide breakfast, lunch and tea for all the students, teachers, volunteers and staff here."

She said meals were prepared by the underprivileged, including senior citizens and single mothers, at the Ananda Cares kitchen.

The charity also offers free dental care at its clinic as well as free check-ups and dialysis treatment at their haemodialysis centre for the B40 group and refugees.

Ananda Cares provides an allowance and monthly provisions to its part-time and full-time staff.

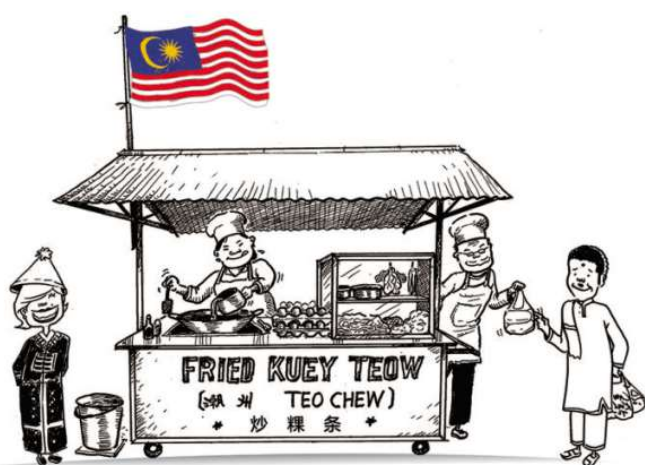
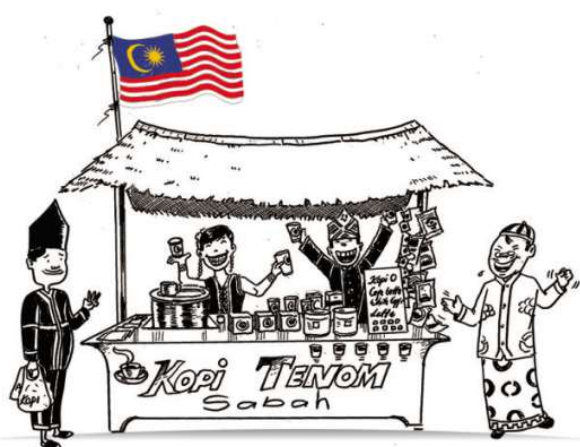


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Peddalling their way to gold medal

Sabah cycling coach and team to prove their mettle at this year's Sukma



Sabah racing team cyclists (from left) Lim, Bong Yong Xian, Chika Cherryca Chia, Chee and Darren Chong are hoping to bring glory to the state to celebrate Malaysia Day.



Pang is proud to see Sabah having a strong team capable of challenging others in the state's second Sukma campaign.

By LIM TEIK HUAT
metro@thestar.com.my

MALAYSIA Day this year will be a meaningful one for Sabah's cycling coach Louis Pang as he hopes to mark it with a milestone achievement for the state.

He is aiming to celebrate the occasion by guiding Sabah cyclists, especially Waldron Chee and Lim Chun Kiat, to their first win at the Malaysia Games (Sukma), which begins today in Kuala Lumpur.

Chee is one of the contenders for the scratch event while Lim will go in as the favourite in the individual pursuit following his national title win at the National Velodrome in Nilai, Negri Sembilan, in May. Lim also came close to becoming the first Malaysian to make the podium in the individual pursuit at the Asian Track Cycling Championships in New Delhi, India, in June when he made the play-off for bronze before losing to India's Vishwajit Singh.

Chee surprised many by bagging bronze in the junior ranks of the Asian Cycling Championships in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2019, especially since it was his first international competition.

It is quite an accomplishment considering Sabah does not have a velodrome and cyclists must switch base to Nilai to hone their riding skills.

"Sabah has never won a cycling gold medal and it would mean a lot if we can pull this off to celebrate Malaysia Day," said Pang. "We have come a long way since we started building this team from scratch a few years ago."

"I am proud that Sabah has a strong team capable of challenging others in only our second Sukma campaign."

He said Malaysia Day had always been an occasion for Sabahans and Sarawakians to bond with their friends from Peninsular Malaysia.

"It is also a time to appreciate our differences."



Chee in action in the National Road Cycling Championships in Melaka.

"We may come from a different culture and ethnicity but we are all Malaysians," he added.

Pang highlighted that Lim and Chee had represented the country at the Asian championships even though they were not in the national training programme.

"But when we do well, we represent Malaysia and I think this is true for all sports, whether it is badminton, hockey or swimming."

"We may come from different states but we wear the Malaysian flag on our shirts," said Pang, who was born and bred in Sabah.

An avid photographer who turned into a cycling enthusiast, he said it was important for Sabah to produce results in international competitions.

"The support from the state sports council is also important."

"Our sports stakeholders have given us solid backing and we are grateful for their continuous assistance although we lost some sponsors along the way."

"Home is where our heart is but when Sabah athletes do well in a sport that is relatively new to them, it encourages other youngsters to see there is a similar pathway open to them too," he said.

Pang hopes to see Sabah having its own cycling track one day.

"I am not sure whether that is going to happen anytime soon."

"Building a velodrome does not need a big budget as a basic track will do," he pointed out.



Chee celebrating after winning the boys junior individual time trial event in the National Road Cycling Championships in Melaka.

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Get to know Sabah

Marvel at nature's wonders and soak in state's rich cultural heritage

By REBEKAH TEO
metro@thestar.com.my

SABAH is a top draw for tourists, thanks to its easily accessible mountain ranges, beaches and islands.

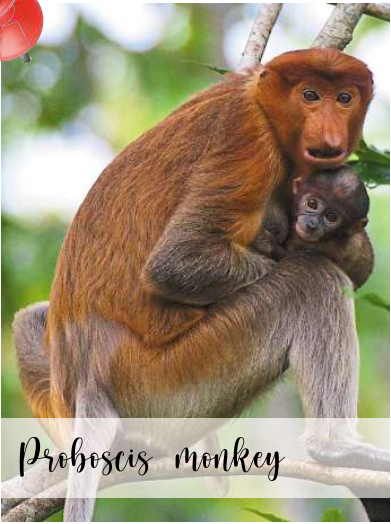
The Land Below the Wind is definitely a paradise for nature lovers.

There has been positive growth in the number of domestic and foreign visitors, with preliminary figures showing an estimated 408,530 arrivals between January and April this year.

The overall figure includes 392,968 domestic tourists and 15,562 international visitors.

This represents a 412% increase over the same period last year, said Sabah Tourism Board.

Here are some things to look out for on your next trip to the state.



Proboscis monkey

The proboscis monkey is easily recognisable by its long, protruding nose and golden brown colour.

The primate is native to Borneo and typically inhabits mangrove swamps.

They have webbed hands and feet, and are reputed to be among the most skilled swimmers of all primate species.

All of these make it easier for the proboscis monkeys to flee from predators like crocodiles.

Visitors can learn more about them at the Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary in Sandakan.



Tip of the island

In Simping Mengayau, Kudat, is a popular tourist spot called the Tip of Borneo.

Dive operators estimate that Sabah's northern tip contains many shipwrecks.

The wrecks are deemed to have historical significance because some are said to date from the 10th century.

The Tip of Borneo has also become well-known for surfing.



Orchid haven

Sabah is home to the most number of orchid species in Malaysia.

The state offers the perfect condition for orchid cultivation due to its topography and climate.

The Crocker Range National Park in Tambunan has thousands of tropical wild orchids.

The Slipper Orchid (*Paphiopedilum rothschildianum*), also known as the Sumazau Orchid, is one of the rarest species in the world.

Its petals, which are spread out, resemble hand gestures made in the traditional Sumazau dance of the Kadazandusun community.



Fibrous fruit

Bambangan is a local fruit from the mango family. When it's rough, dark brown skin is peeled, its flesh has a distinct flavour of mango.

Extremely fibrous with a sweet and sour taste, it is often pickled and enjoyed as an appetiser.

The fruit is also used to make a popular Kadazandusun dish, *noonsom bambangan* (fruit pickle).

Its flesh is sliced and seed dried for three days before the *bambangan* fruit is grated.

The fruit is then preserved by storing its flesh, grated seed and salt in a jar for a week.

It can be served with finely chopped red chillies and onions or as an addition to *sadanon-soom*, which is a stewed fish dish.

Signal from afar

Signal Hill in Kota Kinabalu is home to an observatory tower, forest trail and eco farm.

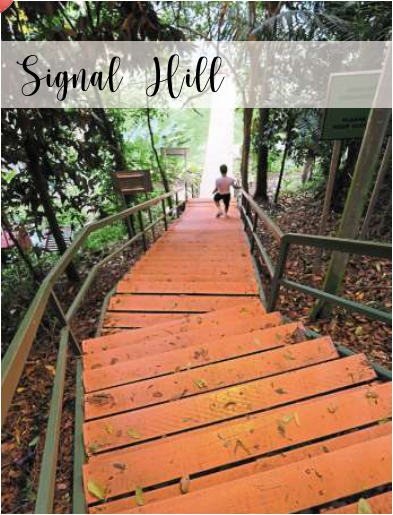
The observatory tower provides a great view of Kota Kinabalu, Tanjung Aru and the Likas Bay areas.

Signal Hill is also popular among hikers for the mesmerising sunrise and sunset views.

The eco farm, meanwhile, has hens, ducks and a fish pond in addition to plants.

The restaurant there also serves farm-to-table dishes.

The tower is currently closed for renovation.



Caves of gold

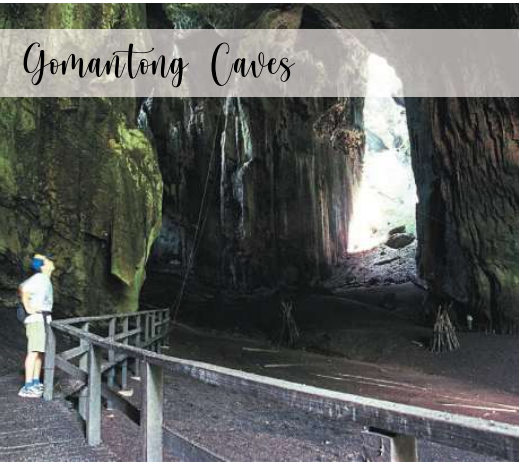
Gomantong Caves in Kinabatangan, Sabah, is home to the multi-million-ringgit bird's nest industry.

The limestone cave is made up of two cave complexes: Black Cave (Simud Hitam), where black swiftlet nests are found, and White Cave (Simud Putih) with an abundance of white swiftlet nests.

These nests are extracted two to three times a year in March/April, August/September and December by locals who are licensed to do so.

Gomantong's bird's nest can be sold for between RM1,500 and RM2,500 per kilogramme.

Bird's nest soup is a prized delicacy.



Highland climate

Kokol Hill, a highland region with a mild climate, is the perfect place to watch sunrises with Mount Kinabalu in the background and sunsets with Kota Kinabalu in the foreground.

It is located between Kota Kinabalu's Menggatal and Inanam sub-districts, about 25km north of the city.

The Kokol Hobbiton Forest is a popular getaway among Kota Kinabalu's denizens as it is a short distance from the state capital.

Its main summit, which is 800m above sea level, provides views of the surrounding valleys, city and islands of Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park.

Paragliding is a popular activity at Kokol Hill.

There are several lodging facilities, including resorts, chalets and farmstays, on the hill.

Kadazandusun culture

Just outside Kota Kinabalu in the Penampang district is the Monsopiad Village, highlighting Kadazandusun culture.

Legend has it that Monsopiad was a Kadazan warrior who belonged to a tribe that lived in the area hundreds of years ago.

It is said he became a head-hunter to drive out people raiding his village.

But Monsopiad became power-hungry and the villagers banded together to get rid of him.

After Monsopiad's death, they showed forgiveness by erecting a statue and renaming the entire village after him.

Today, Monsopiad Heritage Village is situated where the legendary village was said to have stood.

Some "trophies" are exhibited in the village's House of Skulls.

Visitors can also learn more about the Kadazandusun community's lifestyle, sample Sabah food and try their hand at traditional games at the heritage village.

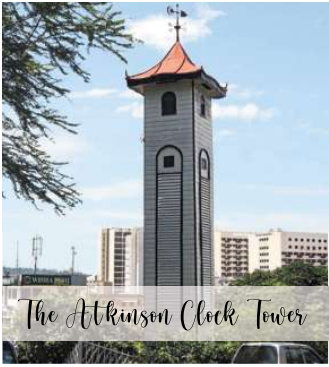
Historical tower

The Atkinson Clock Tower is Kota Kinabalu's oldest standing structure.

It was constructed entirely from wood and without any nails, put up in memory of Kota Kinabalu's first district officer.

The 15.2m tower was built in 1905 by Mary Edith Atkinson who wanted to honour her son, Francis George Atkinson. The latter died of malaria at the age of 28.

It survived bombing during World War Two, and is one of the few remaining wooden clock towers in existence.



Diving paradise

Mabul and Sipadan islands in Semporna, Sabah, are rich with coral reefs, considered to be some of the world's rarest.

Tourists come from all around the world to scuba dive and appreciate the rich marine life.

Around Sipadan, two underwater caves called Turtle Cavern and Turtle Tomb can only be explored by licensed cavern divers led by a professional cave diving guide familiar with the area.

The caves have numerous tunnels with no exits and many turtle skeletons, hence their names.

Semporna's jetty has many chalets, seafood restaurants, souvenir stores and watersports providers to complement its reputation as a diving paradise.



Creative Orang Ulu

Northeastern Sarawak is home to various ethnic groups such as the Kayan, Kenyah, Lun Bawang and Kelabit, who are collectively known as Orang Ulu. They all have distinct cultures and speak different languages. Orang Ulu literally means “upriver people” and they usually can be found in remote parts of Sarawak. They are very creative and their longhouses are usually adorned with murals and wood carvings. Orang Ulu are also renowned for

their elaborate beadwork as well as other tribal crafts. Beads used to be regarded as status symbols before. Nowadays, they not only adorn traditional items such as necklaces, baby carriers and sun hats but also modern accessories including purses and handbags.

Mount Santubong

The stunning 810m-high Mount Santubong provides a perfect backdrop to the state's most popular tourist attraction, the Sarawak Cultural Village. The area is also the venue for the annual Rainforest World Music Festival. Santubong National Park, located in the Damai peninsula, is a perfect holiday destination with its sandy beaches overlooking the South China Sea and lush tropical rainforest. The mountain is also popular with hikers but the trek is not for the faint-hearted.

Experience Sarawak

The state offers a mix of natural wonders and diverse cultures for visitors to explore

By REBEKAH TEO
metro@thestar.com.my

THE largest state in Malaysia is targetting 1.2 million tourist arrivals this year. If you plan to be one of them, why not coincide your visit with the What About Kuching Festival?

It is a community-driven event showcasing the arts, culture and lifestyle of the people of Kuching as well as Sarawak and will take place throughout October. Meanwhile, here are some other things to look out for during a trip to the Land of the Hornbills.



Sago's worldwide reach

Sarawak is the largest sago exporter worldwide and in 2021, the state exported 37,884 tonnes of sago, worth RM78.3mil. Sago palm trunks are usually transported by floating them down the river. There are numerous uses for sago, which is a form of starch, in both food and non-food applications. Sago pearls, fish balls, noodles and biscuits can all be made with it. Sago starch is also used as a thickener, binder and filler in a variety of products. *Tebaloi* is a Melanau snack made from sago flour, eggs, desiccated coconut and sugar.



Mighty river

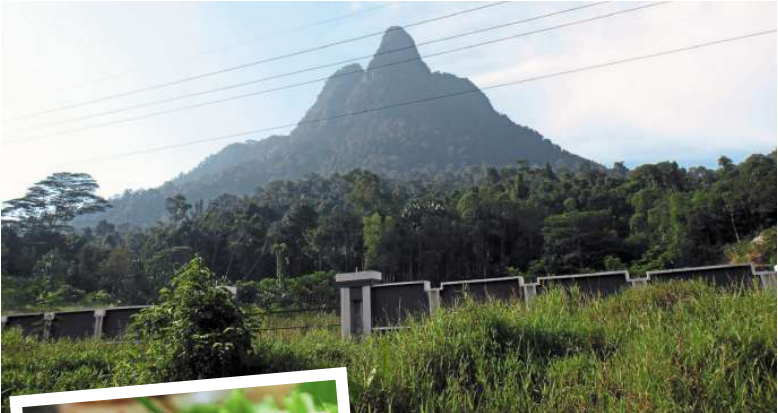
The Rajang river is the longest in Malaysia and flows through Sibu, a riverine town in Sarawak. It is 563km in length, and the 1.9km Durin bridge has been built across it. Logging, oil palm plantations, and hydropower developments are a few of the activities in the upstream regions, while a deep

port is being built besides sizable aquaculture farms downstream. The river is truly life-giving to the people who live nearby as it provides food and water as well as services like transportation, power generation, leisure activities and jobs. The Irrawaddy dolphin is one of the many inhabitants of the river, not forgetting the much feared saltwater crocodiles.



Rhinoceros hornbill

Rhinoceros hornbills, Sarawak's state bird, is found in the dense jungles of Borneo. A golden-yellow and red horn resting on top of its beak, known as a casque, is its most noticeable characteristic. These species of hornbills are marked by their white tail feathers and black torso and wings. Additionally, they are distinguished by their loud calls. The Dayak community of Borneo believe that the hornbill symbolises the spirit of god.



Manok pansoh

Manok pansoh is a chicken dish that's slow cooked in bamboo with ginger, lemongrass, garlic and torch ginger flower over an open fire, similar to how *lemang* is prepared. This cooking method gives the dish its distinctive taste and unique fragrance while producing soft, silky chunks of chicken. It also helps lock in the flavours, making for a succulent dish.

Jungle produce

Midin (*stenochlaena palustris*) is a young bracken fern that grows in the jungle and curls at the top-end. It is commonly found in peat swamps and bush forests of Sarawak. The tasty and nutritious fern is usually stir-fried with anchovies and *belacan* and served as a side dish, especially during the harvest festival of Hari Gawai.



Longhouse culture

Nothing is more important than the longhouse in bringing the Iban community together. The large number of Iban from cities and towns returning home to their longhouses is a testament to their commitment to stay true to their culture. Longhouses continue to be the Iban community's source of solidarity.



Chronicles of White Rajahs

Fort Margherita is a fortress perched on a hilltop across the Sarawak river from Kuching's shoreline. Charles Brooke constructed it in 1879 and it is named after Margaret Alice Lili de Windt, his wife. In 1971, it was turned into a police museum, which exhibited memorabilia from Sarawak's

early police history. The fort was returned to the state government in 2000. The Brooke Trust, a British charity, along with the state's Museum Department and the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry collaborated on the Brooke Gallery, which is now a permanent display that chronicles Sarawak's history from 1841 to 1946, during the rule of the White Rajahs.

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