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# TERANG



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Oleh: M. A. Sourjah

# MALAYSIA

People, languages, way of life, clothing and religion

Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia. It consists of two regions about 650 kilometers apart, which are separated by the South China Sea. The regions are Penins–ular (formerly West) Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah (formerly East Malaysia) on the northern part of the island of Borneo. Peninsular Malaysia borders on the north with Thailand.

Malaysia is a tropical land, much of which is covered with dense rainforests. It is the world's largest producer of natural rubber, tin and palm oil (vegetable oil from palm tree nuts). Malays and Chinese people make up most of the country's population. Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's

capital and largest city.

The nation of Malaysia was formed in 1963, when Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore united. Malaya was an independent nation that occupied what is now Peninsular Malaysia. Sarawak and Sabah were separate British colonies that covered what is now the Malaysian region of Sarwak and Sabah. Singapore was British colony, south of Malaya. Singapore withdrew from Malaysia in 1965.

**PEOPLE** – Population and ethnic groups – Malaysia has a population of about 17 million. About three-fifths of the people live in rural areas. More than 80 percent of the

people live in Peninsular Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital and largest city, has about 940,000 people.

Malaysia's largest population groups are, in order of size, the Malays about 50%, Chinese 35% and Indians about 10%. The largest groups who chiefly live in Sarawak and Sabah are the Dyaks and Kadazans.

Malaysia's separate ethnic groups speak separate languages or dialects, and, in many areas, have different ways of life and hold different religious beliefs. Malays make up the most powerful group in Malaysian politics, but the Chinese control

Correspondence and Inquiries to:

AL HAJ. NIZAM SAMATH (EDITOR)

NO. 7/1, JAMBUGAHAPITIYA ROAD, KATUGASTOTA - 20800, SRI LANKA. TEL: 074 - 479051

much of the nation's economy. Despite differences between the major ethnic groups which have led to friction and, sometimes, violence, Malaysia is a model of racial harmony.

LANGUAGES – Bahasa Malaysia, the Malay language, is used by the Malay people and Malaysians generally in everyday life. It is the country's official language. Most Chinese speak the Chinese language, and most Indians speak Tamil. Many Malaysians understand English, which is wiaely used in business.

WAYS OF LIFE – Peninsular Malaysia includes many crowded cities as well as large rural regions. Sarawak and Sabah have several large towns along the coast and rivers, but the interior is chiefly a rural area.

The majority of the country's Malays live in rural areas on the peninsula. Most of them work as farmers and live in settlements known as kampungs. Many houses in rural areas are made of wood. Most have thatched roofs, but some have roofs made of tiles. Some houses are raised above the ground on stillts. Most Malays who live in cities, work in industry or in government jobs.

Most of Malaysia's Chinese people live in cities. Large number of them work in shops, business offices, and factories. Chinese people own a large proportion of Malaysia's businesses.

Wealthy and middle class Chinese live in suburban homes or high-rise blocks or flats in central city areas. In the cities, some low-income groups of Chinese and Malays as well as Indians live in crowded, run-down areas. Large number of Malaysia's Indians work on rubber plantations. Many others hold city jobs.

Most people of Sarwak and Sabah live in settlements in rural areas. Several families live together in long-houses along rivers. Many of these families struggle to produce enough food for their use.

**CLOTHING-** Traditional costumes are not often worn in the towns and cities. The men tend to wear shirts and trousers outside their homes. adding ties and coats for official functions. Bush jackets are also worn by government officials. For casual wear, Western styles are preferred, particularly by young people. Few Chinese women wear the chongsam, a traditional high collard, tightly fitting dress with slits at the sides. Older women prefer the more comfortable samfoo, which consists of a jacket and trousers. Many Indian women like to wear sarees.

Malay traditional dress for men consists of a baju round-necked or high-collard long-sleeved shirt. They also wear seluar (trousers) with a sarong wrapped smartly around the waist and hips, and a black songok (boat-shaped velvet cap) or a

tanjak (elegant cloth headdress) for special occasions. Some Malay men wear sarongs to the mosque, and instead of songkoks they may wear ketayaps (white skull cap) for such occasions. Many men who have been on a pilgrimage to Mecca wear serban haji (pilgrim's turban).

For Malay women, the traditional costumes most widely worn are the sarong, the baju kurung, and the baju kebaya. The baju kurung is like the baju for men. It is tied with gathers on one side, and the outfit is completed with a selendang (shawl) or tudung (scarf) around the shoulders or on the head. Some Malay women who have been on pilgrimage to Mecca wear special headdresses similar to those worn by male counterparts.

FOOD - Multicultural Malaysia has a variety of delicious cuisines (styles of cooking). Malay dishes are prepared with chillies, coconut milk, onions, spices and tamarind. Popular dishes from different states include the asam pedas (fish with hot chillies and sourish gravy) of Johor, ayam percik and the (chicken in thick coconut milk gravy) of Kelantan. One Malay appetizer is ulamshoots, leaves, or fruit dipped in or eaten with sambal (pounded chillies and shrimp paste). Rice, after being boiled, is often fried with chillies, onions and ikan bilis (anchovies) to make nasi gorena (fried rice). Other variations on

to he contd.,

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### RADEN SALEH - an artist torn between two worlds

Raden Saleh was probably the first Indonesian to experience something in the nature of culture shock: The prince from Java lived and painted at the courts of German princes.

A street in the heart of Jakarta bears his name. In the part of the city called CIKINI there is a hospital that keeps the memory of Raden Saleh alive. Visitors inquiring about Raden Saleh at the porter's office are given helpful information before being shown into the hospital's spacious grounds. There stands a strange two-storied building that has an unconventional, fairytale and exotic look about it. As white as snow, Gothic windows, pointed towers at the sides and pointed gables at the front. Part wedding-cake style, part Disneyland. part Church, part backdrop - but a backdrop for what?

The longer one looks at the building, whether up close or from a distance, the more it seems to project an air of seriousness, which outweighs all the stylistic ironies and incongruities, ultimately allowing it to be seen as it had originally been conceived 1852, namely as a synthesis of styles. Whose brainchild was it? And who used to live here? The name of the street proves us with the answer - Raden Saleh. That he belonged to the upper class in Java that he was an artist and that he had lived in Europe is all still quite well known in Indonesia. But the details of Raden Saleh's life. which began around 1814 in Semaranag and ended on April 23rd 1880 in Buitenzorg, present-day Bogor, can only be found in archives. They are also the object of scholarly research, to which Dr. Werner Kraus of Passau University in Germany has made outstanding contributions. It is to him that we owe a clearer understanding of that exceptional man and his unique edifice.

Raden Saleh, the son of a Javanese regent, was sent to Holland when he was 15 to be given instruction in drawing and painting. The Dutch government funded Saleh's studies with a scholarship, which was completely unheard of in 1829. This was to be a turning point in the young man's life, because he did not just stay in Europe for a few months, as had been initially planned, but 22 years. And he returned once again to live there from 1875 to 1878.

Arden Saleh spent four years in Dresden alone, Towards Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Coburg he felt a deep attachment, which, as his correspondence shows. was to last a lifetime. He worked as an artist, filling his canvas with motifs that nurtured visions of the Orient - e.g.: lion hunts, fights between wild animals, horses, tigers, snow-storms and romantic landscapes. The art academicians, too, acknowledged that Arden Saleh was highly talented. He must be generally well-liked, being able to enjoy an intellectual freedom in Europe that would have been closed to him back home in Java on account of social conventions, tradition and Dutch colonial

Raden Saleh learned European languages: he was the first Indonesian to speak German fluently. The crowned heads of Europe showered him with decorations and tokens of their affection. "I came to Europe as a Javanese and have returned thoroughly German," Arden Saleh wrote on March 1st 1873 from Java to his friend Duke Ernst II. The price for his involvement in Western culture was existential: alienation from his roots and the bitter realization that in the final analysis he was no longer at home in either world. Raden Saleh was the first Indonesian to become caught up in the East-West conflict that many of his compatriots have since had to cope with. And often failure has been caused by loss of identity. Culture shock is a phrase known to every student who comes from Asia to study in Germany.

The palace in CIKINI is the architectural expression of this inner conflict and the attempt by the artist Raden Saleh to provide solace for the pain caused by that feeling of homelessness. Prior to that, around 1855/1856, he had got married, which was probably in keeping with his desire to live into two worlds simultaneously. His wife, Constancia van Mansfeldt, in her early thirties, was presumably an Indo, a halfcaste of German extraction. She was a wealthy widow, a businesswoman and

very independent, all very unusual at that time in Batavia's close knit white society. Constancia financed his building project -Raden Saleh's dream.

The palace caused many of his contemporaries to shake their heads. It was called Gothic, Byzantine and Moorish. But where were its models to be found? In France, Holland, North Africa? More precise answers have been provided by photographs. Cikini is a detailed replica of Callenberg Castle near Coburg and also of Reinhardsbrunn castle near Gotha

Today the middle gable of the building is surmounted by a cross. The palace serves as the main building of the catholic hospital, having been incorporated into that institution in 1897 Nearby were the first zoological gardens in Indonesia, which had already been laid out in 1857. And it was there that the cultural center TIM was founded in the sixties of the present century. There is an air of tranquillity surrounding the house of Raden Saleh's dreams. It is not difficult to picture deer grazing here up until a few years ago. Right in the middle of Jakarta.

Raden Saleh's pictures are thought of very highly today. Two belong to the Indonesian president's collection. Most of the paintings are privately owned. When one of them is put up for auction, lively interest is displayed by wealthy collectors. In 1995 at an auction in Singapore the painting "An Indonesian landscape with people working in a sawa by a river" changed hands for the record price of 580,000 Singapore Dollars. The novel depicting the life of Raden Saleh, who sought to unite Europe and Asia in his artist's heart and soul, has yet to be written. The architectural memorial, however, that gives expression to this longing, can be visited today in Jakarta.

(courtesy – Deutschland Journal -Oct. 1996)

#### INNI SIAPA

SAUDARA T.J.P AHAMAT

Saudara TUAN JUNAIDEEN PACKEERONE AHAMAT, son of retired Police Sergeant P.H. Ahamat of Amiradhapura, was born on 01st June 1921 at Kurunegala. He was a member of the Editorial Board associated with Saudara Mohamed Farook Thaliph, then of Kurunegala Malay Association, in the publication of the now well acclaimed "Terang" English Quarterly of the Malays, since almost its inception in 1987 till Kandy Malay Association took over in 1997.

During the World War II, after his secondary education at St. Joseph's College. Anuradhapura, he joined the Royal Engineer's Office there as a Civilian Clerk. On 1st May 1944, he joined the Health Department as a Clerk, and rose to the position of a Hospital Secretary, retiring on 1st June 1979 with 35 years government service. After a year's stint at the Lake House, he was a reporter to the "Times of Ceylon", "The Island", and the Far Eastern News Magazine "Asiaweek". a sister publication of the prestigious "Readers Digest". He was also a fre-

News".

As one of the Hony, Joint Secretaries of the Ruhunu Malay Association. Hambantota, he had a good fortune of reactivating it (after a long period of inactivity) and playing an important role in forming the present umbrella Association - SLAMAC, which was responsible for organizing the Second Dunia Melayu Symposium that was successfully held in Colombo in 1985. In fact, it was this Symposium that gave the Kurunegala Malay Association the impetus to commence the 'TERANG'. now popular in Sri Lanka and abroad. He was also an active member of the Symposium Organizing Committee and the Symposium Souvenir Editorial Board He also had the distinction of hosting nearly 100 Foreign and local distinguished Delegates at Hambantota. in his capacity as one of the Hony. Joint Secretaries of the Ruhunu Malay Association and even covering the entire proceedings for the 'ASIAWEEK' which report appeared in the issue of 20th September, 1985, all of which won him the high appreciation of the Organizers, the

quent writer to the "Ceylon Daily Delegates and others associated with the Symposium. Indeed it was the first occasion such a large number of Malay distinguished foreign Delegates had ever been hosted in this Malay Town in the South Eastern part of Sri Lanka, thus doing proud to this Malay Town, to his community in particular and his country in general.

> He is presently a Justice of the Peace. one of the Patrons of the Ruhunu Malay Association, and President of the Hambantota Ratepavers' Association. He is the eldest brother of Saudara T.Z. P. Ahamat also a Justice of the Peace and presently President of the Kolonnawa Electorate Malay Association, that has had friendly relationship with members of the Ruhunu Malay Association

> Haplessly, Saudara T.J.P.Ahamat is now compelled to keep a low profile, being laid up with a heart-ailment, at his home at No. 12/3, Galwala. Hambantota.

> May Almighty Allah help him to regain his normal health, to resume his socioreligious activities, and other community - EDITOR service.

#### CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES OF THE LESS KNOWN MALAYSIAN ETHNIC OLEH: M. A. SOURJAH GROUPS

It is not possible to dwell here on all the Malaysian ethnic groups with their various socio-cultural customs and practices. However, let us start with a few ethnic groups: THE IBANS, BIDAYUH, MALANAU and KAYAN or KENYAH. They are all natives of the State of Sarawak and are settled groups. It is hoped that Malaysians of all walks of life, wherever they may be, will understand and respect each other's way of life.

#### **IBANS**

The Ibans are found fairly wide spread all over the State of Sarawak, with a population of approximately 350,000. They are generally agriculturists. Many still plant padi on the hill sides in remote areas.

In some areas, they call themselves Dayak, Balau and Undup. In Saribas, for example, they call themselves Dayak. The British called them Sea-Dayaks to differentiate them from Land dayaks, who are locally known as Dayak Bidayuh. These sub-groups, however, speak the same language except for a few words, which may have the opposite meaning, e.g.: baka `which means a small basket for the Saribas, is a big basket for the Bintulu of Rumah Datuk Temenggong Abok ak. Jalin.

Their beliefs are similar but their observances may differ a little. These have been passed down from generation to gen-

eration by word of mouth in their respective areas. It is not surprising that what is written in here may not be applicable in certain areas. Gawai Kenyalang is the biggest festival of Batang Ai and Gawai Antu is the most important for those living in Saribas and Kalaka districts.

Visits

Visiting relatives and friends are common and are encouraged. The ordinary visitor, upon his arrival at the door steps of the long house must ask the the people within, 'Jadi Rumah Kita?' ('Are there any prohibitions against us visiting?') The visitor would then be answered, 'Jadi, Niki Meh!' ('You are very welcome, come in!').

The visitor goes strait to the ruai (Verandah) of the family visited. He takes off whatever he is carrying and places them at the appropriate place. He is invited to be seated and of- companied with the beat- bersanding (wedding) ceremony fered the betel' nut and ing of gongs and drums. takes place in the girl's (smoking boxes.),

He will then be asked whether he has taken food and is invited for the meal.

When he indicates his intention to remain for the night, he will not be questioned as to the purpose of his visit. Later that evening, he will tell the people in the long house the purpose of his visit. They will talk late into the night. The members of the longhouse are expected to gather with the visitor at the ruai (verandah) of the family visited. Tuak (ricewine) may be served during their randau ruai (conversation) and then followed by the performance of the ngajat (traditional dance) to entertain the visitors. ....

A lady visitor, however, goes straight to the family room of the host. Lady members of the longhouse would gather to greet her there. I bans do Drinks are offered before not have any specific day or food is served. time for visiting.

#### **MARRIAGE CEREMONIES**

Wedding or Melah Pinang is of special importance to the Iban. It is the occasion when a couple is declared man and wife. No certificate is required to legalese the marriage except that the Melah Pinang Ceremony be witnessed by a Ketua Masyarakat (Community Leader ) and a few other elders.

The young man's parents, with the consent of the young man, either themselves, or through a go between, would ask for the hand of a lady of their choice. When the proposal is accepted by both the parents and the girl, the couple will be engaged and the wedding day is set.

On the wedding day, the members of the bridegroom's longhouse and relatives go to the bride's longhouse ac-

accompanied with the beat- night or the following day. ing of gongs and drums. Guns are fired several During the bersanding cerhouse.

The bridegroom's party is led by the welcoming group to proceed through the full length of the longhouse and it then returns to the ruai (verandah) of the bride. During the procession while passing through each family door, the guests are offered tuak (rice-wine): The men sit at the ruai (verandah) and the women proceed to the bilik or family room of the bride.

Immediately after food is served, elders discuss the appropriateness of the marriage, by reciting the genealogies of both parties. When all the problems pertaining to the marriage are discussed and completed, a lady of high standing would take a selok or a small basket, with some betel-nuts inside to the ruai (verandah). A betel-nut would then be split according to the number of visits to be made by the couple to that family, either the bride's or the groom's family that they have decided not to stay with.

The bridegroom does not accompany the party if the bride is to live with him in his family. He does so, if otherwise.

If the bridegroom accompanies the party,

enggau sarang insan Upon arrival on the door- longhouse. If the girl is to steps of the longhouse, live with his family, the they are met with a pro- bersanding takes place upon cession led by the elders the arrival of the bride that

> times. The leader of the emony, the young man sits bridegroom's party would with a male companion, and be asked to thrust a spear the girl with a female comthrough the throat of a panion on separate big gongs, pig tied' up at the foot side by side. Here, biau of the steps to the long (cockerel) is waved over them by an expert, who asks the blessing of God for a successful married life. He also announces the couple are legally married in accordance with the Adat Iban (Iban custom).

#### CHILDBIRTH

During pregnancies, Iban parents are forbidden to do several things in order to bring normal delivery of the child. A local midwife does the delivery, using ginger and entemu (a herb). The mother then sits next to a bekindu (fireplace) for a period of thirty days. The wood used for the fire must be of hard wood or any other type i.e Kayu Manding or Kayu Leban / Empapa or Kayu Malam.

Like the Malays, visitors would say the opposite meaning to describe the baby, like 'Naka ga penyai anak tu deh, wai'('What a bad' looking baby').

The baby is named after one of the ancestors of the parents considered appropriate. Visiting by relatives and friends are encouraged.

At a later stage several ceremonies are performed. The child is taken out to the tanju (outer verandah) to look at the sun and to taste salt for the first time. A sampi (prayer) is said here for the good health of the child. The last ceremony is the mari mandi (bathing) of the child when it is about a month old, in the river, the common bating place for the

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members of the longhouse. Prayers to God for His blessing to enable the baby to grow well into adulthood are offered. Details of the ceremonies differ from place to place.

#### DEATH

The Ibans treat a deceased person with great respect and honour. All relatives and friends are expected to attend the funeral.

As soon as the person breathes his last, the mouth and the eyes are properly closed by one of the relatives. He is bathed, properly combed and dressed in his best. The two main entrances to the lenghouse is barred with two alu (wooden pestle use for pounding padi) to prevent the spirits of the dead taking the deceased soul back to the longhouse. The body is taken out to the middle of the ruai (verandah) inside a sapat (enclosure) of pua kumbu (woven clothes). All the baya (materials) to be taken by the deceased to the next world for his use are taken out immediately. The body must never be left by itself. Several ladies keep vigil around the enclosure.

A lady expert sings sabak (verse of invocation) in which she imagines taking the soul of the deceased to the realms of Paradise so that he dose not meet any mishap on his journey. She sings the sabak (verses) until the coffin leaves the longhouse before the break of dawn. The expert is paid a token sum of money and given various articles necessary to strengthen her soul against any mishap in life.

On the night before the day of burial, the elders discuss the length of the mourning period and other taboos.

When the body is placed in in the morning or late in the coffin it is given food. The plate used is broken, and then thrown to the ground through the floor of the longhouse.

The coffin is usually made locally by local carpenters. It should be properly made of the best quality timber and usually carved ukir (local designs)

Not all the members of the longhouse go for the burial. The number is never limited, but in most cases a large number of the guests return after a night of vigil. Before the earth is dug to bury the dead, a chicken is slaughtered over the grave area a means of ensalem tanah (compensating the land). No green leaves or grass is allowed to enter the grave. It is believed that if this happens, the soul of the dead may disturb the human beings still alive.

A small wooden hut is constructed to cover the grave from the weather. The deceased's personal property called baya is placed inside.

After burial, the mourning period begins. For the family of the dead person, the period may last as long as three months and for others in the longhouse it is a month. During this period no form of merry-making is allowed. The members of the family of the dead must not adorn gold or any colourful clothes. They refrain from going to places of entertainments. For any violation of this mourning period, a fine must be paid to the deceased's family.

To mark the end of mourning, a respected elder is invited to perform the ngetas ulit. This ceremony is usually done either early

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the evening.

At a later stage the ceremony of besarara bunga (separation of the living from the dead) would be held. This is to enable the soul of the dead to live in peace away from the souls of the living. A manang (priest ) would sing throughout the night asking the help of the supernatural to separate the soul of the dead from the living. The final separation, it is believed, is attained by performing the Gawai Antu (Festival of the Dead) .

#### **RELIGIOUS PRACTICES & FESTIVE OCCASIONS**

Festivals of the I bans are ' periods of worship in which requests are made to God (Petara ).

The observance of each festival differs. The only nonreligious festival is the Gawai Dayak which is celebrated on the 1st of June every year and is something new to the I bans. It is celebrated as a mixture of the other festivals.

#### **GAWAI BATU** (WHETSTONE FESTIVAL)

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#### **GAWAI BATU** (WHETSTONE FESTIVAL)

Before the observance of any other festival in a new longhouse, the Whetstone Festival must first be celebrated.. The festival is to bless the whetstone, which is placed on every individual family farm for the coming season. Prayers are specially made to sempulang, the padi God, for a bountiful harvest. This Whetstone is kept carefully at the end of very season, for it is the object that is blessed by the God for a successful year. Usually this festival is held after a year of poor harvest.

The celebration is as follows:

First a man goes from door to door collecting any form of food for the Spirit of Extravagance (Antu Rua). The whole foodstuff would be thrown away as a means of pacifying that spirit and of blessing the members of the longhouse with more rice.

Secondly, offering is made on the area to be farmed to cleanse it from all forms of diseases and pests.

Thirdly, procession in the middle part of the verandah to welcome the good Gods and spirits to the festival (ngatu Petara).

Fourthly, welcoming the padi-God, Sempulang Gana, with the chanting of mengap (verses) requesting His blessings.

Fifthly, the killing of a pig and the reading of its liver to forecast whether the coming season would be successful or otherwise.

Lastly, the taking of the Whetstone to the farmland in the morning.

With a good harvest, the longhouse may plan to hold the Gawai Kanyalang/Gawai Burong (Bird's Festival), the Gawai Antu (Festival of the Dead) and other festivals.

### GAWAI KENYALANG / GAWAI BURONG (THE BIRD'S FESTIVAL)

In this celebration, the prayer is made to the God of the Brave (or the Brave God) called Aki Lang Sengalang Burong the eldest brother of Sempulang Gana. It is the belief that all Iban warriors who lead successful war expeditions have his blessing.

The celebration is performed in the Tanju (outer part of the lenghouse). The participants are men who are known to be brave and have archived great success in life. They sit around the tiang ranyai (ranyai pole) where they eat half 'cooked meat, drinking the blood of pigs and chickens with rice' wine. The God of the Brave is perceived to be doing this daily.

#### GAWAI ANTU (THE FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD)

The festival is to commemorate the final partings of the dead from the living. There are three main stages. Firstly, the weaving stage (Ngayam). The guests invited are relatives and weaving expets.

Secondly, the beban, the period of preparing for the construction of a beautifully carved small wooden house, usually of belian wood. Finally, the festival itself, and ends with the erection of the small wooden house in each family grave yard.

#### GAWAI DAYAK

This is the occasions during which other races are expected to visit the homes of Ibans. This new festival is celebrated in similar manner as other known festivals in urban areas.

Like the Ibans, the Melanau,

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Kayan / Kenyahs, the Land Dayaks and other sub-groups celebrate many festivals as a form of worship. Each Kampong celebration theirs festivals at its own convenience, Other villagers also invited to join in the celebration of the festivals. The time of celebration is agreed by the village elders at the initiation of the Tua Kampong (Village Headman).

Their beliefs are similar among the ethnic groups but their observances may differ a little according to the areas in which they are observed.

A Malay Chief oleh: M.A.Sourjah

Maharaja Lela was the Malay Chief who organized the assassina of the first British resident (government representative) appointed to the state of Perak in Malaya.

In 1874, Perak chiefs bowed to British pressure and accepted Rajah Abdullah as Sultan of Perak. A British resident J.W.W. Birch, was appointed to advice the Sultan. Birch, who knew hardly any Malay and cared little for the feelings of the Chiefs, began to curb their powers. As a result, the Chiefs under Sultan Abdullah plotted to kill the resident. One of them, Maharaja Lela, volunteered to have him stabbed.

Birch ignored warnings and on November 01, 1875, moored his boat close to Maharaja's village. As he was taking a batch in the bathhouse alongside his boat, Maharaja' Lela's men stabbed him to death. Maharaja Lela escaped, but surrendered after eight months on the run. He was tried and hanged on Januar 20, 1877.

(Source: 'The World Book En-

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