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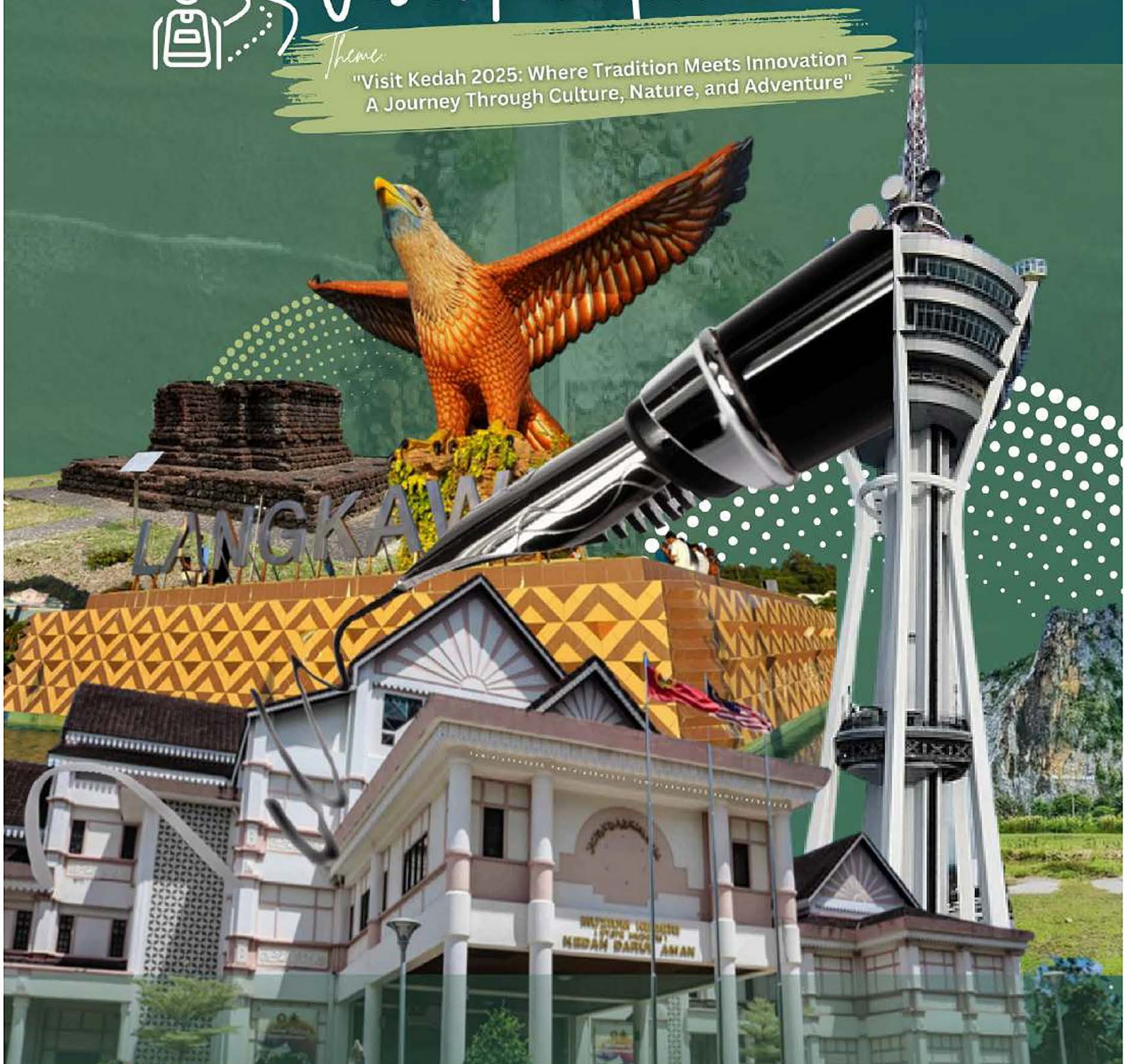


APB Kedah (e-magazine)

SPECIAL ISSUE EPITOME

Visit Kedah 2025

Theme:
"Visit Kedah 2025: Where Tradition Meets Innovation –
A Journey Through Culture, Nature, and Adventure"





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Synopsis

The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah, is excited to present the special issue of its e-magazine, *The Epitome – Visit Kedah 2025*. This special publication, produced in conjunction with Visit Kedah 2025, represents our steady dedication to cultivating creativity in language and literature while highlighting Kedah's unique blend of culture, nature, and innovation through diverse written expressions.

The primary objective of *The Epitome – Visit Kedah 2025* is to join in the celebration of Visit Kedah 2025, especially as our branch is located in the heart of the state. This special edition invites writers to share their Kedah-inspired stories and experiences through personal essays and short stories, with the aim of embracing diverse linguistic expressions. Contributions are presented in two languages: English and Bahasa Melayu.

face of Kedah

Mr. Azlan Abdul Rahman
Head of Faculty
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa (APB)
UiTM Kedah Branch

Welcome to this special edition of Epitome, where we embark on an exciting journey through the rich heritage, stunning landscapes, and vibrant culture of Kedah – one of Malaysia's most beloved and fascinating states.

As we look ahead to Visit Kedah 2025, this issue invites you to explore the treasures that await in this beautiful destination. From the serene beauty of Langkawi's beaches to the historical charm of Alor Setar, Kedah offers something for every traveller. Whether you are an adventure seeker, a history enthusiast, or someone simply in search of tranquillity, Kedah has it all.

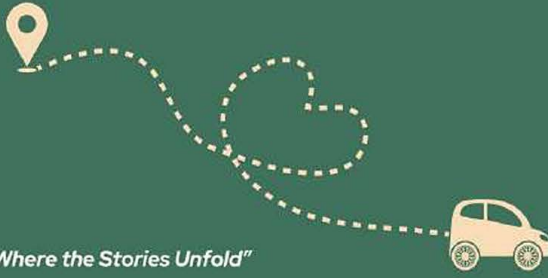
In the pages ahead, we delve into the many faces of Kedah, capturing the essence of its natural wonders, cultural landmarks, and unique experiences that define the state. Our stories, articles, and photographs will transport you to places where the past and present come together in perfect harmony – where lush green paddy fields stretch as far as the eye can see, and the rich flavours of local cuisine tantalize the senses.

Visit Kedah 2025 isn't just a campaign; it's an invitation to connect with the heart of Malaysia. It's an invitation to discover the unforgettable experiences that make Kedah a must-visit destination for travellers from around the world. In this edition, we hope to inspire you to plan your own journey to Kedah, whether it's to explore its breath-taking landscapes, immerse in its cultural heritage, or simply take in the warm hospitality of its people.

As you turn these pages, may you feel the spirit of Kedah calling to you – the call to discover, explore, and experience all that this incredible state has to offer.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting adventure. We hope to see you in Kedah in 2025!





Kedah, Where the Stories Unfold"

As the Chief Editor of Epitome, it gives me great pleasure to present this special edition in celebration of Visit Kedah Year 2025—an ode to a land where history, heritage, and heart live in every corner.

Nestled in the warm embrace of the northern Peninsula, Kedah is more than just Malaysia's rice bowl. It is a living canvas where time whispers through the ancient stones of Bujang Valley, dances across the rippling paddy fields, and echoes through the melodic drawl of the Kedahan dialect. Each tale we share in this issue draws its breath from Kedah's unique rhythm—where old meets new, tradition hugs the modern, and culture is not just remembered but lived.

From the misty peaks of Gunung Jerai, which once guided ancient mariners, to the shimmering flow of Sungai Merbok, where history quietly flows, Kedah's ecological richness is a story waiting to be told. Its mountains are guardians of myths; its rivers, keepers of memory. The lush rainforests, secret waterfalls, and wild orchids—all are pieces of a vibrant narrative woven by nature itself.

Yet, it is Kedah's people who breathe soul into this land. The warmth of pasar malam banter, the flavours of authentic laksa Kedah, the grace of traditional dance, and the way elders tell stories in that soft, endearing dialect—it all becomes poetry in motion. And in this special issue, we invite you to read, feel, and immerse yourself in the charm, wit, and wonder of Old Kedah and New Kedah alike.

Through creative fiction, heartfelt essays, and evocative poetry, Epitome brings together voices that sing of Kedah's mountains, rivers, food, language, and legacy. We hope this edition will not only inspire a visit but stir something deeper—a connection to the essence of a land that has long cradled Malaysia's earliest civilizations and continues to nurture its cultural heart.

Let the pages transport you to Kedah Darul Aman—a realm of peace, a sanctuary of stories.

Warmly,

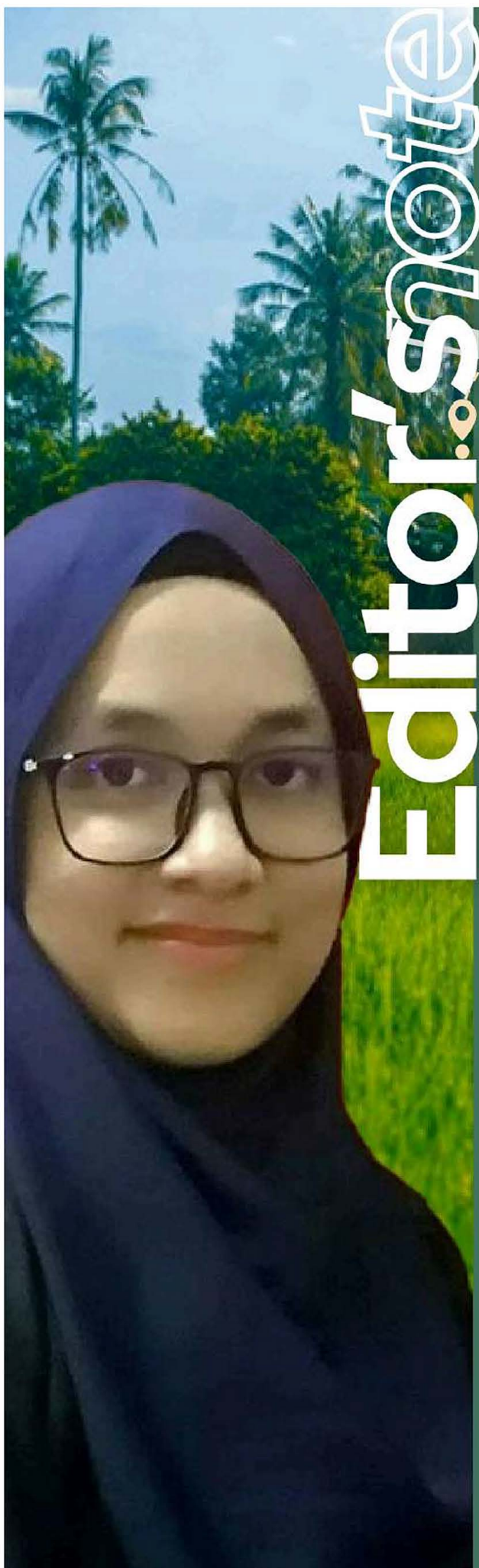
Razanawati Nordin

Chief Editor

THE EPITOME 2025

Editor's note





Editor's Note



It is with great pleasure that I present to you this special issue of The Epitome in conjunction with Visit Kedah 2025. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Head of Department for initiating this wonderful idea. As a proud Kedahan working in Kedah, I instantly agreed to be part of this project, knowing how close it is to my heart.

Reading the personal essays and short stories submitted by our contributors has been a truly enjoyable experience. I found myself smiling, reminiscing, and even imagining familiar places through their words. What makes this issue even more exciting is that some contributors are not originally from Kedah, yet they have beautifully shared their own reflections and experiences related to this charming state. Their fresh perspectives reminded me of the beauty I sometimes take for granted, having been born and bred in Kedah.

To all our contributors: thank you for your creativity, your voice, and for allowing us to travel through your narratives. Your stories have added soul and colour to this edition, and I hope our readers enjoy the journey through Kedah just as much as I did.

With appreciation,

Dr. Nur Syazwanie Mansor

Chief Editor, The Epitome
A Proud Kedahan

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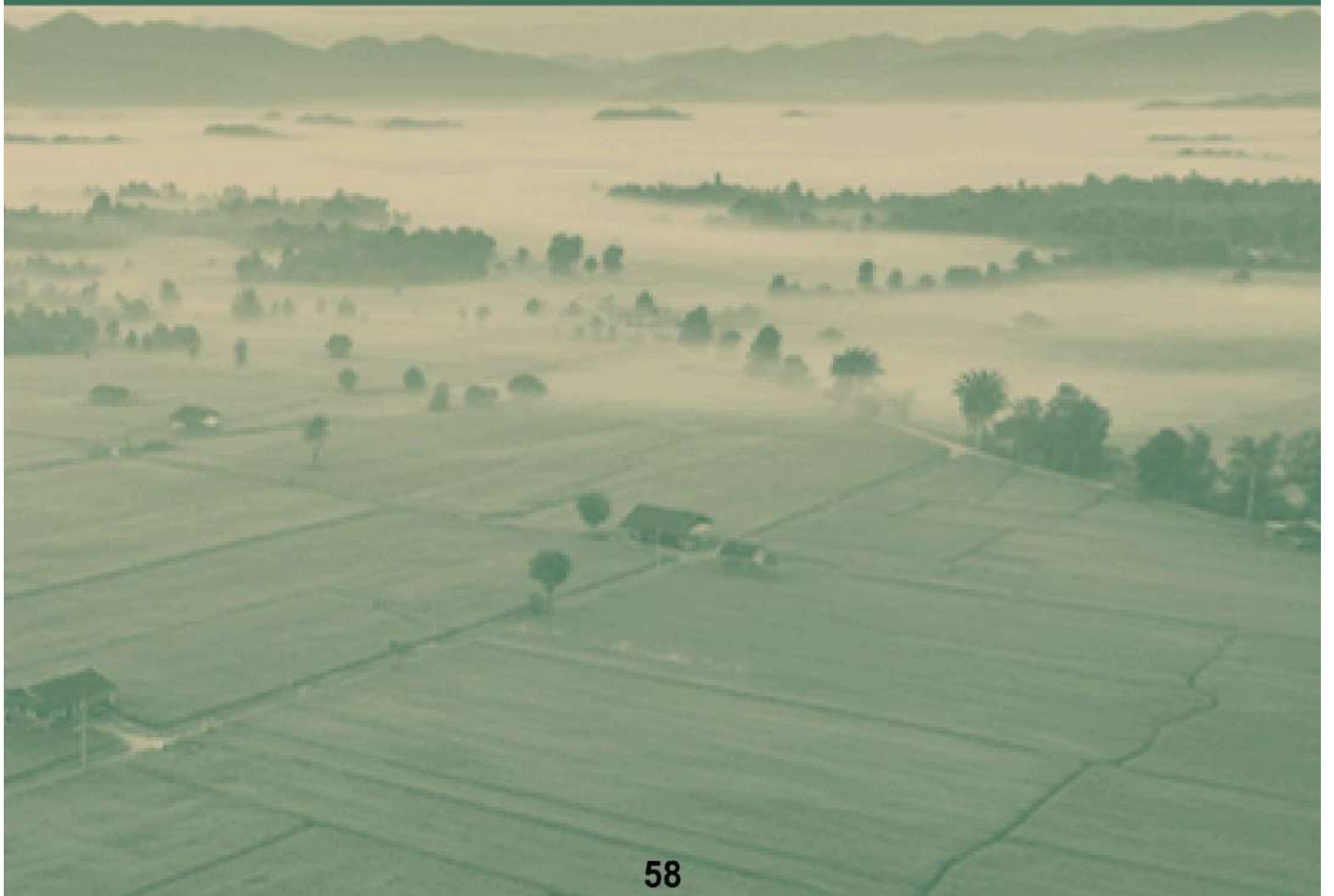
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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM & ECO-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES







The pre-war shophouses on Jalan Pengkalan Kapal, Alor Setar, Kedah. No. 22 is the third shop from the right.

My Mai Pengkalan Kapal

Chuah Bee Peng

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Jalan Pengkalan Kapal, better known as Hai Thao K'i (海墘街) among the Kedah locals, is a street that faces the Kedah River and perpendicular to Pekan Melayu and Pekan Cina, with the famed Dataran Tanjung Chali (Tanjung Chali Square) that was once the food haven among the Gen X, me included, at its tip, with a stunning view of the cape that is landscaped by the confluence of Kedah River and Anak Bukit River.

Perhaps it is just another place to visit when you are in Alor Setar, Kedah, either for its historical significance as the port where the Chinese merchants traded their goods, and later settled down, built their businesses, and made it their permanent home, just like my late grandfather who made his way from Jinjiang, Fujian Province of China; or for its cultural significance as the Chinatown of Alor Setar, to me it is home, a home that I left in 1996 but a home that has never left me, even when it is no longer accessible to me.

Since I was born, I grew up in No. 22, Pengkalan Kapal, Alor Setar, Kedah, a pre-war double-storey shophouse that stared face to face at a 130-year-old Nato Gong, or Datuk Gong (a deity that is widely worshipped by overseas Chinese community in Malaysia, Singapore, and parts of Indonesia) temple which was located right by the river before it was permanently relocated in 1993 to make way for the local council's decision to convert the entire riverfront into a promenade. My late grandfather built his transport service company, besides investing in rice mills and rubber plantations, running the business and raising his Malayan family at this very premise.

Most of our neighbours had the similar immigrant diasporic experience as that of my grandfather's. They left their homelands for different reasons, but all settled down on this street for the same purpose – to make a living, and then to build themselves a home in this foreign land called Malaya. It was then very common to have three generations living together in the same shop, sometimes even the workers. We used to have an old employee whose family was in Butterworth living in our shop until his last breath, occupying just a foldable canvas bed that he would set up in the living area downstairs, keeping the mosquitoes away with a mosquito net hung on the bed. We called him Milo Pek or Uncle Milo as he drank this cocoa drink every single day.

There were a few things that children of Jalan Pengkalan Kapal would never be deprived of – food, and I mean fantastic food, playmates, and fun. We were surrounded by a huge variety of food from morning till midnight, to our left, right, and the back of our house. During the pre-foodpanda and grabfood days, such convenience and choices right at our doorstep were indeed a privilege. The morning market right at the back of my house used to have the best local breakfast spread, from noodles to Nyonya kuihs (cakes). Coming back from school, if we found my mom's cooking for the day was not too much to our liking, we would stealthily went to buy our favourite chicken rice from the lady who always wore a lot of make-up and never had a hair out of place. Around 3 to 4pm, we would wait eagerly for the Pasembur (local spicy salad) peddler carrying a long bamboo pole on his shoulder, on one end holding the pot of hot gravy, and the other a basket containing the ingredients and all his plates and utensils. Another favourite teatime delight among the dwellers was the assam laksa (noodles in sour and spicy fish gravy) by Laksa Leng who came peddling on his tricycle cart. And our day usually ended with the nightly ritual of a round of supper at the al fresco food court at the square at the end of the street, by the river, and where the watchtower is now, with more than ten different food stalls to choose from.

Growing up before the birth of Netflix and League of Legends, the concept of loneliness and boredom was peculiar to the children of Jalan Pengkalan Kapal. We made friends with children our age on the same street, very often we went to the same school. The popular afterschool activities were sneaking out to the Chuan Hong sundry shop to try our luck over a round of paper "Tikam" (gamble) game, or trying to scare each other at the spooky back alley of the Kedah Kwangtung & Tengchow Association just two doors to the right of my house, or jumping on the empty wooden stalls of the wet market at the back, totally oblivious of the nauseating stench from clogged drain and dead fish and rotten vegetables. When the tide was high, the children would gather in front of the shop to trap the poor catfish that were washed from the river into the monsoon drain. After dinner, the women, my mom included, would bring out their own rattan chair, a bamboo fan, lighting a mosquito coil, and sat at the kaki lima (sidewalk) in front of the shops, sharing family tales and the latest gossips. The children would be in their handmade pyjamas, face caked with bedak sejuk (a homemade powder made of fermented rice, believe to have cooling effect), either eavesdropping the conversations among the adults, or shrieking and cheering over a round of Eagle and Chicks with their friends before bed.

During Chinese New Year, my cousin informed us that our shophouse will be rented out soon. With the removal of the century-old wooden signboard on which the family history is written with invisible ink, and the antique office furniture that still smells of the cigar of Zai Hoo Pek (the old cantankerous Hainanese worker who managed the company's account), the free cups from Darlie toothpaste and free plates from Dumex baby formula that my mother collected and proudly displayed in the vintage kitchen cabinet, our existence in No. 22, Jalan Pengkalan Kapal, and our deep connections with the premise, will be completely erased. With the installation of a new padlock on the greasy metal grill gate, the key inaccessible to me, I will be permanently locked out of my home.

“When you visit Alor Setar, “mai” (means ‘come to’ in the Kedah dialect) Pengkalan Kapal, before going to Caffe Diem at Jalan Penjara Lama for coffee and cakes. Do spend a few minutes at shop No. 22, and try to connect its present façade with its rich distant past, and take home my nostalgia and longing for home as a token of remembrance of this part of Kedah.”

The promenade in front of the shophouses in Jalan Pengkalan Kapal, with the Muhibbah Bridge as background. This was the exact site of the 130-year-old Nato Gong, or Datuk Gong (a deity that is widely worshipped by overseas Chinese communities in Malaysia, Singapore, and parts of Indonesia) temple before it was relocated in 1993.



Chuah Bee Peng, Jacqueline, seeks pleasure in creative writing to leave her digital footprints on social media. She dabbles in free verses and haikus, mostly for creating contents on her social media, never really on a serious note. She holds an M.A. (Linguistics & English Language Studies), Universiti Sains Malaysia, and is still at the crossroads of contemplating to pursue her Ph.D. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch.



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