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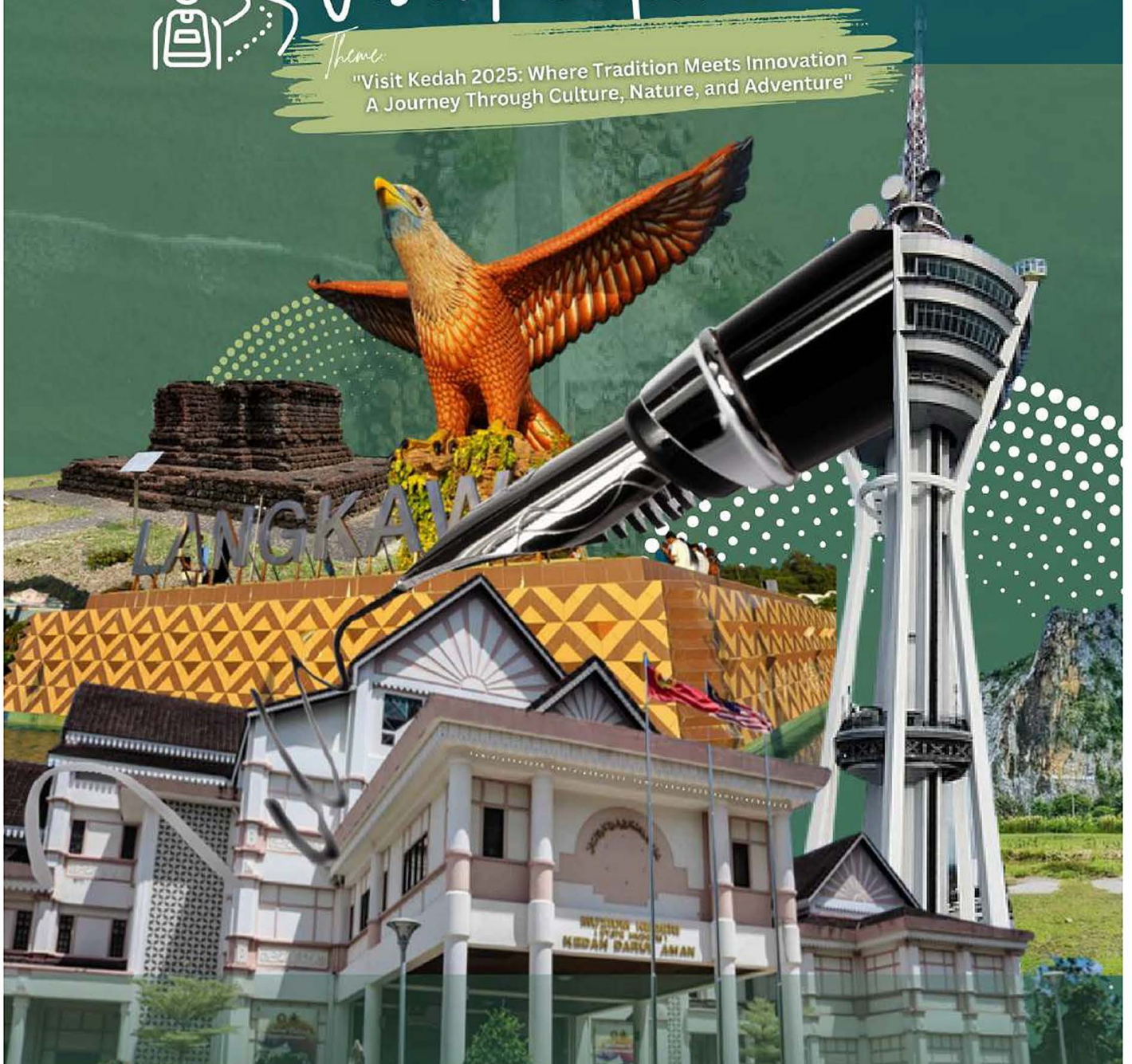


APB Kedah (e-magazine)

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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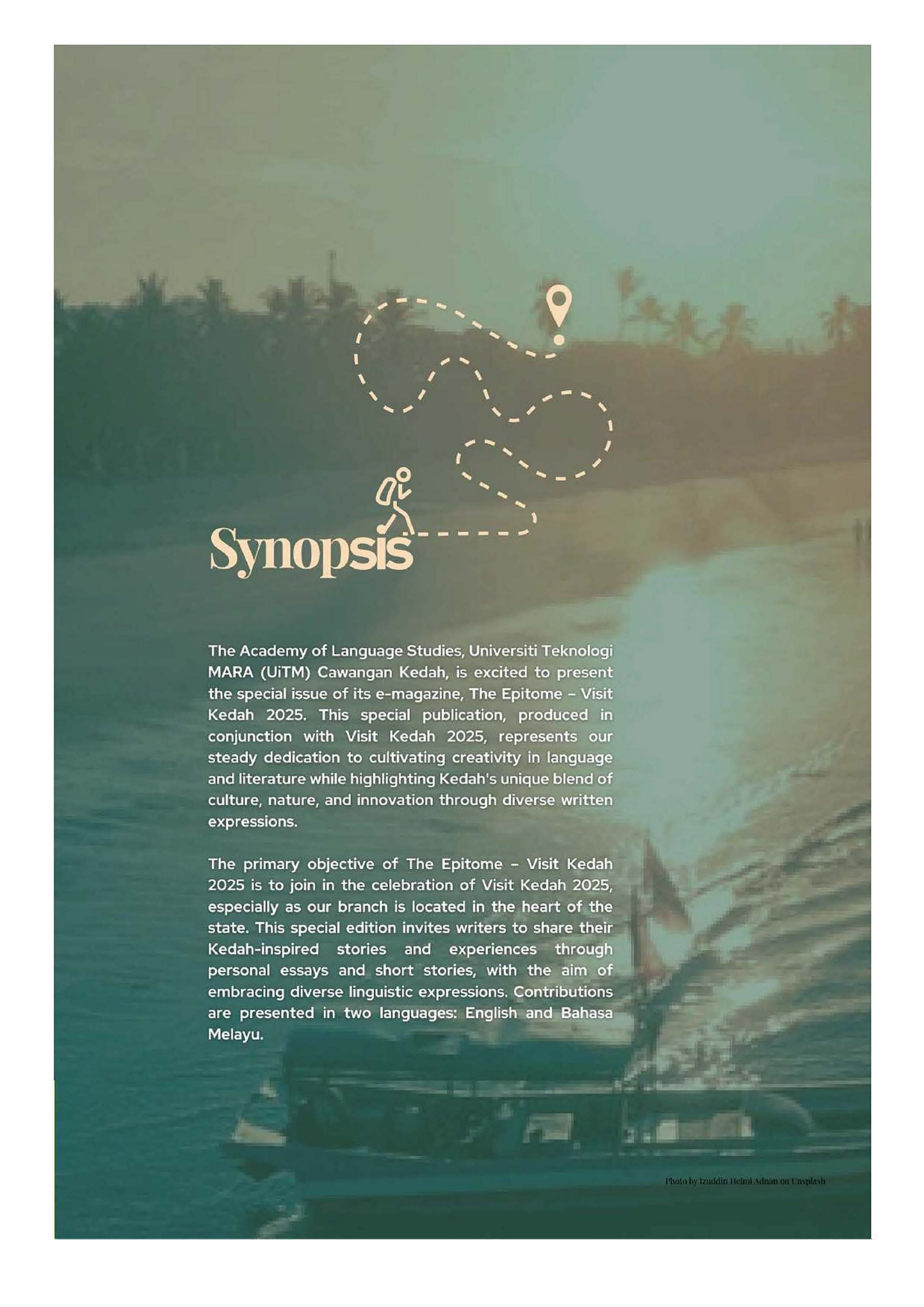
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Synopsis

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.

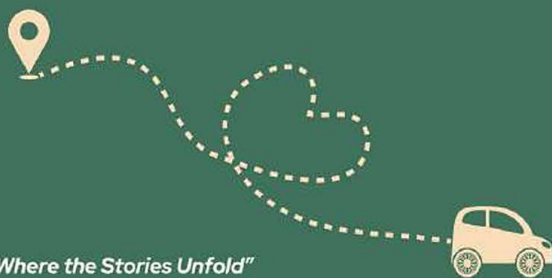
In the pages ahead, we delve into the many faces of Kedah, capturing the essence of its natural wonders, cultural landmarks, and unique experiences that define the state. Our stories, articles, and photographs will transport you to places where the past and present come together in perfect harmony – 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.

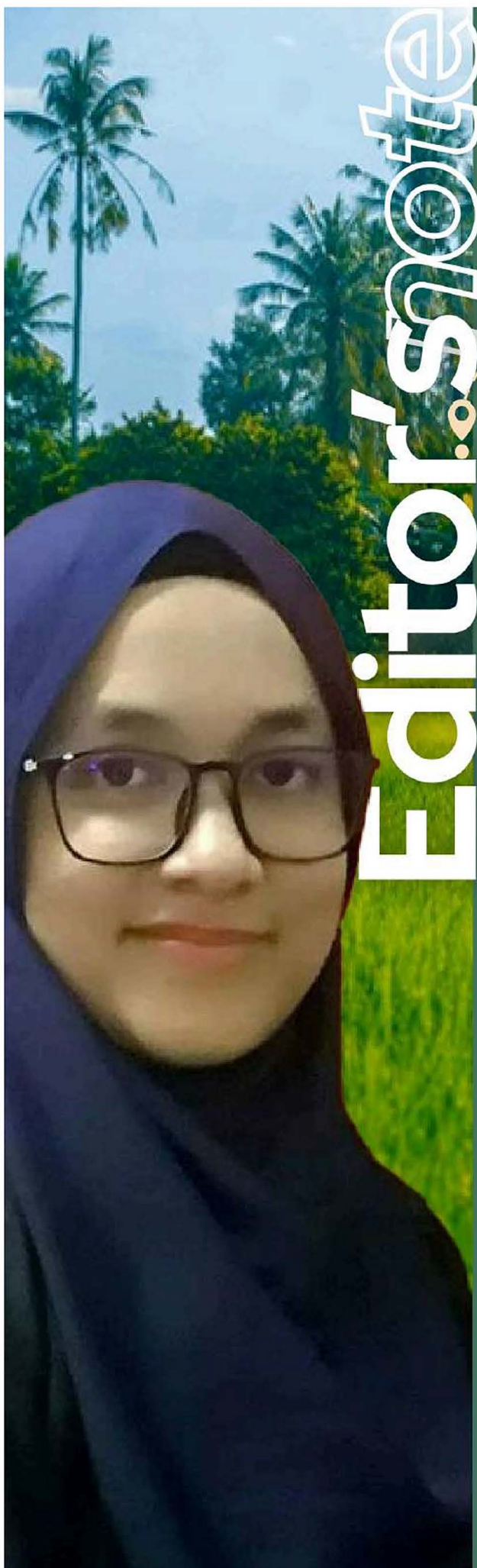
Warmly,

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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HISTORICAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE





My Encounter with Communists

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The word "communist" may not stir strong emotions in the younger generation today. For many, it is a term encountered in history classes in school. It is often viewed as a concept from a bygone era. In the past, communism evoked fear whether through personal stories passed down through families or media propaganda. The story I am about to share comes from an interview I conducted with my co-writer, Rashidi, which is to be narrated in the first person narrative:

I was 10 years old when the incident happened in early 1981. As the first child of the family, I was very close to my father, Mohd Pakri as well as with my grandfather, Haji Musa and our houses were attached to each other in Kampung 15, Legong, Baling Kedah. The kampong was called Kampung 15 because there were only 15 houses on the area of land which was separated by a river and patch of paddy fields from the rest of kampung called Kampung Ulu Legong. The two kampongs were connected to the main road (still a dirt road leading to Kampung Lalang, the nearest township) by a suspension bridge which many children like myself always used as our playground, jumping down to the river below. In fact, that same river was used by my kampung people to bathe and wash their clothes (and not to mention, we used it as our toilet too!) My daily activities as a child of ten revolved around my kampong which was practically surrounded by thick jungle. After coming back from school which was located in Kampung Lalang (Sekolah Kebangsaan Siong), (which I went with my father in his old Honda Cub), my life after school was more fun (I was not fancy of schooling back then!). I usually went to the river and caught fish using our own man-made harpoon, played with my friends (especially jumping into the river from the suspension bridge) or helped my parents at the paddy-fields. When it came to hunting season, I usually followed my grandfather to the jungle, accompanying him to check on the traps he had prepared to catch moussedeers or if we were lucky, we got deers as our meat.

On one fateful evening, and I remembered it was close to dawn, my father was called by one of his neighbours to our neighbour's compound and as a son, I followed him to Pak Din's house (his house was located about 100-150 metres away from our house) towards another route to the river on the northeast side of kampong. As my kampong was surrounded by the river, we had our own bathing areas, which were different from that of the same river where the suspension bridge was built. And these bathing areas were adjacent to the paths to the jungle which would lead to the Thai border. These paths were also used by my kampong people to the jungle to collect jungle produce such as petai and durian. These paths were also used to take them to their rubber plantation areas because most of them were rubber-tappers and paddy-field farmers. On top of cultivating paddy-fields using the fields with water (tapak sawah), the villagers in Kampung Legong also planted the hill-paddy in the land areas of the jungle which they cleared for this purpose. This type of paddy requires about a year to mature and yield the paddy. So this being the case, the same jungle paths served as 'the highways' for the villagers to their 'Huma' (the name we called to the areas where hill-paddy were planted), the Malaysian army to patrol our Malaysian border and the Communists to pay the visit to our kampong that fateful evening.

Abang Din and Kak Biah (she was originally from my kampong) rented a house (this old house was built on stilt and it belonged to one of my uncles, my father's eldest brother, Hussein) that was located the nearest to this jungle path (which made my house the second, following the same path) and it was in front of Abang Din's house that my father and I met with Abang Din and a few of the Communists (if I could recall correctly, there were five of them). One of them came closer to me and asked me about my age and which school I went to. I answered him accordingly. A word of caution here—as a ten-year-old boy, I did know that these people were Communists at that moment. My father and Abang Din were having the 'talk' with the other Communists and in about a few minutes, my father instructed me to go home, and I obliged to his instruction.

As soon as I reached the front door of my house, my mother quickly opened the door and asked me my father's whereabouts and I said he was still at Abang Din's compound! My mother, who just learned that this group of people who just entered our kampong were Communists from my grandfather, Haji Musa because he came to my house a few minutes before my return to ask for the shot-gun (senapang patah) which belonged to him but it was in my father's keeping. My mother surrendered the gun to her father-in-law immediately and informed her about the arrival of the Communists in our kampong. At that very moment as I entered the house, I heard the sound of the guns coming from Abang Din's house.

To our great relief, my father managed to escape the shooting and saved himself from the ambush by the Malaysian army. As soon as he arrived at home, all of us ran outside the house and used the path towards the suspension bridge in order to save ourselves. In fact, we did not care whether there were any Communists along our path at all and the path was almost invisible. About 10 minutes later, we reached Haji Ahmad's house (we called him Chey Cermin, literally, the grandfather with the glasses) and this was the place we stayed for the night. Less than one hour later, after our arrival at Haji Ahmad's house, probably around 9pm, the body of Kak Biah was brought into the same house. Because most of the villagers from Kampung 15 sought refuge at Haji Ahmad's house that night, we had to sleep close to each other. And in my case, inevitably, I was sleeping next to the body of Kak Biah, who lay dead, with her head cracked and the blood still fresh on the Batik cloth used to contain her body.

By the middle of that night, I learned from my parents and those in Haji Ahmad's house that Kak Biah was probably hit by a stray bullet fired by the Malaysian Army which was tasked to take down the Communists who came to our kampong. It was by sheer accident that in their attempts to kill those bandits, the stray bullet must have reached the upper part of Abang Din's house (the Communists and my father and Abang Din were in the compound of the house) and hit her head. Kak Biah had lived there with her husband, Abang Din and their newborn daughter. In their attempt to escape from the ambush, those Communists didn't have the opportunity to engage in firing back—in fact, two of them died during the ambush.

The following months after this incident, the villagers of Kampung Legong were not allowed to go to the jungle, and were restricted to move around their kampong as far as going to the paddy-fields and the rubber plantations, but mostly were afraid to do so because of the earlier incident that killed their own people. They lived on the rations provided by the government—and survived mostly on sardines, salted fish and rice. A few months later, in October 1981, the Communists retaliated by killing 10 Malaysian Soldiers (7 in an ambush) and another 3 at the Tactical Camp near Ulu Legong's Hot Spring.

The two incidents which involved the death of the villager and the retaliation by the Communists which claimed ten of our Patriots have forced the Government to intervene into the affairs of the life of the people in Kampung Ulu Legong. The new housing scheme, almost similar to the action taken by the Colonial Government under the Briggs Plan during the Insurgency period, was now implemented in Ulu Legong. This new housing scheme, which consisted of 67 houses, was to house all the villagers of Kampung Legong in one confined area, so that they could be easily guarded from the unwanted arrival of the Communists. In 1986, fortunately, the Communists finally surrendered and signed the Surrender Agreement in a treaty in Hatyai, Thailand. Thus, the people in Kampung Legong continue to live their lives in a more organised housing estate, never imagined by the previous generation. The name Kampung 15 is no longer known to the present generation, lest the incident that led to the tragic death of Kak Biah be avoided.



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