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ASCEND

**The Women
of Merdeka**
pg.07

**Malaysia's Fashion
Through the Ages**
pg.20

**The Mangala
Resort & Spa**
pg.08

Malaysia:
**A Nation
Looking
Forward**





MALAYSIA:

A Nation Looking Forward

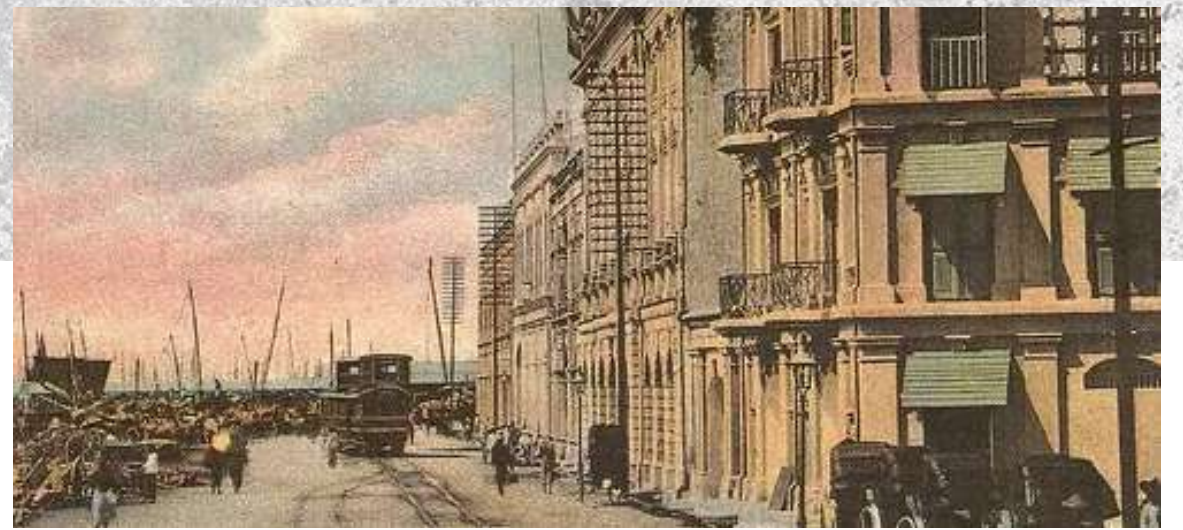
Life is slowly returning to normal for the world, and in Malaysia we are embracing these changing times with the strength, resilience, and tolerance our country is known for. In this issue, we explore the many facets of Malaysian life that we may have forgotten or put aside during the pandemic. Take a journey with your loved ones to a faraway resort to relax and recuperate or check out our latest car review on the new Mercedes C-Class for a speedy and luxurious experience this Merdeka. If you're looking to get back in touch with your roots by taking a stroll in the Klang Valley, have a read of our unique locations where you can find out about the history and culture of Malaysia.

2022 should serve as the year that we as a country look forward, while holding on tightly to our traditions, national identity, and our love for this nation.

MERDEKA: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF MALAYSIA



With all the progress our beloved nation has made over the past 65 years, it can be easy to forget the key moments in Malaysia's history that paved the way to our independence from colonial rule. Here, we take a brief look at key moments in the country's history and our journey to Merdeka.



1786

Colonial occupation by the British officially begins
• *The East India Company establishes a trading post on Penang Island*

1819

Sir Stamford Raffles creates a British settlement in Singapore

1830

The British Straits Settlements expands to include Melaka

1870

Sultans of smaller Malay states acquire British "advisers" who were essentially the real "rulers" of each state.

1896

The states of Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Selangor, and Pahang formed a federation, with its capital being Kuala Lumpur.
• *Chinese and Indian immigration was accelerated to supply labour for British rubber plantations and tin mines.*

1942

The Japanese fully invade Malaya in WW2 and take Singapore from the British

1945

Under Operation Jurist, Penang becomes the first state in Malaya to be liberated from Japanese rule; the British regain control of Malaya.

1948

The Federation of Malaya was created
• *The Federation was under British protection, but both British and Commonwealth troops would continue to fight against a new Communist insurrection that would last until the early 1950s*
• *To counter the Communists (who claimed to be fighting to free Malaya from British rule), both parties agreed that Malayan independence would be the best solution*

1955

The United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) wins a landslide victory in an election
• *Victory was achieved by placing Malay candidates in Malay-dominated areas, Chinese candidates in Chinese areas, and Indian candidates in Indian areas.*

1957

On 5 August, The Federation of Malaya Independence Agreement was signed by Malay rulers and British High Commissioner Sir Donald MacGillivray in Kuala Lumpur
• *The Agreement recognised that "beginning August 31, 1957, the Malay states and the Straits would form as one new Federation named the Federation of Malaya or in Malay as Persekutuan Tanah Melayu."*

BEING MALAYSIAN IN THE ENDEMIC

This year's Merdeka promises to be a festive one as the nation looks forward to life after the COVID-19 pandemic. As we go through the endemic, what are Malaysians' hopes and dreams for the future? We ask three people to share their thoughts.



JAIDEE CHE NOOR

Question 1

Alhamdulillah that we are at the tail end of the pandemic. My family and I created many memories together during this period, but entering the endemic has given us our lives back. We are still practising the SOPs given by the Malaysian government, especially when it comes to social distancing. We've come to adopt it as part of our lifestyle because we believe that prevention is better than a cure.

Question 2

Personally, I do trust that our economic situation will improve once our political situation stabilises and when our good name recovers from the bad press due to corruption matters.

Question 3

I travelled to the Middle East in December last year, right after the borders were opened. It was wonderful to have that moment again after two years of being caged on my own "land." I have already lined up a few other travel plans for this year to make up for lost time.

Question 4

Prior to the pandemic, I was involved in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza and Syrian refugees via NGOs. When the borders were closed, this aid was channelled to the "Bendera Putih" movement in my neighbourhood. Since restrictions have now been lifted, I have resumed my involvement in both charitable activities, InsyaAllah.

Question 5

The best achievements we have achieved as a nation which have had the greatest impact on my life is our determination to keep together during the pandemic and to grow together during this recovery period. These two elements are the key to success in developing our country. There is a Malay proverb which says "Berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing." I believe that we will "Merdeka" ourselves from this pandemic and we will gradually begin to experience successful economic growth in Malaysia.

THE 5 QUESTIONS

- 1 Malaysians are slowly returning to a life without the constant fear of COVID-19; how are you and your family finding the endemic so far and what precautions are you still taking when going out for a meal or shopping?
- 2 For many people, economic recovery is on the top of their minds when it comes to the endemic. Are you optimistic about our nation's progress during the endemic this Merdeka?
- 3 What are your plans for the end of this year given that all borders are now open? Will you be planning a vacation with family and/or friends?
- 4 What pre-COVID 19 experience have you had that you would like to repeat now, given that most restrictions have been lifted?
- 5 This year marks Malaysia's 65th Independence Day. What do you believe are some of the best achievements the nation has had in your life time?



MICHELLE LEONG

Question 1

We have adjusted well to the massive changes brought on by this pandemic. To ease our minds, we will self-test and share our results with each other before meeting for a meal or get-together. In terms of shopping, aside from groceries, we make most of our purchases online because of the lower cost and how convenient it is.

Question 2

This Merdeka, after awakening from two years of slumber due to COVID, I am confident that global demand will continue to strengthen and stabilise across all the economic sectors in accordance with the pace of their individual industries.

Question 3

Fortunately for me, the end of the year has always been a celebratory occasion because this is when we mark my birthday! In any case, together with the festivities for Christmas this year, we hope to continue having the spirit of giving and we are already discussing travel plans with each other.

Question 4

My family and I are definitely more stringent when following sanitary SOPs since the rules have been relaxed, and this applies to all types of activities, including dining, exercising, and travelling. We still maintain physical distancing, wear masks, and carry hand sanitiser

Question 5

In my opinion, the best achievement Malaysia has had during my lifetime is the completion of an automated and driverless rail system in the Klang Valley – the LRT, which was built to help with traffic congestion. Though the LRT isn't necessarily a new invention, it has certainly improved Malaysians' mobility and provides a cheaper transport option while also reducing our carbon footprint, which in turn helps the Earth.



MANOHARAN PALANIAPPAN

Question 1

Our daily life is returning to normalcy. In fact, the traffic jam during rush hour now seems heavier than during the pre-pandemic days! The mask is now an accessory that we and other Malaysians wear when we go out.

Question 2

It makes sense to remain optimistic and hopeful for a brighter future. Almost everyone regardless of their station in life wants to feel good sustainably in 6 key dimensions viz. spiritually, financially, emotionally, physically, mentally and socially. So the expectation is for leaders and those in positions of power to uphold 'Sincerity in Intention' and display 'Professionalism in Action'.

Question 3

Yes, indeed. However, we have yet to decide where to exactly and for how long. We need to be mindful of the cost of an overseas holiday now given the abnormal rise in airfares, exchange rates, accommodation, food, transport etc. Otherwise, we will have to be satisfied with "Cuti-cuti Malaysia" for now!

Question 4

Exercising freely outdoors without a mask on, travelling overseas and meeting family and friends without any restrictions.

Question 5

Malaysia has been able to build and develop physical infrastructure which we can all be proud of. Years ago, I was on a tour bus in New York passing by the Empire State building. The tour guide highlighted to the foreign tourists that the world's tallest building then was the Petronas Twin Towers. As a Malaysian, I naturally felt proud. People from overseas are also impressed by the many well maintained inter-connected highways in Malaysia. However, being blessed with many natural resources and diversity of people, culture and religions, more needs to be achieved in other dimensions of everyday life for every Malaysian if future generations are to enjoy a better quality of sustainable life in Malaysia.

Oh! Alam Tanah Airku

Sesekali kita lari daripada norma kehidupan, nikmati anugerah Tuhan, nikmati ketenangan.

Sesekali kita luaskan pandangan, selami keindahan dan keunikan, selami tanah air kita yang mengharum di mata dunia.

Sesekali, kita jelajah Malaysia, agar kurniaan yang ada semakin kita syukuri dan kita sayangi.



Taman Negara Gunung Gading, Sarawak

Magis alam menanti di sini! Taman ini merupakan perumah untuk khazanah warisan bunga terbesar di dunia, Rafflesia. Bunga terbesar di dunia dengan saiz hampir 1 meter! Selain terdapat 23 buah lokasi bunga Rafflesia di dalamnya, taman ini turut menyajikan pesona alam seperti bukit-bukau, air terjun dan periuk nera. Terletak berhampiran Bandar Lundu dengan jarak perjalanan selama 2 jam dari Kuching, taman negara ini mempunyai keluasan 4,196 hektar dengan ketinggian 906 meter.

Taman Negara, Pahang

Khazanah alam paling antik! Hutan simpan terbesar dan tertua di Malaysia ini berusia lebih 150 juta tahun dan mengandungi pelbagai khazanah flora dan fauna lama seperti usianya. Di sini anda boleh memerhati burung sehingga sehingga 497 spesies. Anda juga boleh meniti Titian Kanopi yang paling tinggi dan terpanjang di dunia dengan jarak kira-kira 500 meter dan ketinggian 45 meter dari tanah. Atau anda boleh bermalam di Bumbun iaitu pondok kecil untuk mengintai segala binatang di waktu malam. Aktiviti lain yang boleh anda lakukan adalah eksplorasi hutan, meneroka gua, melawat santuari ikan Kelah, memancing, menikmati hidangan ikan sungai yang popular di restoran-restoran terapung di sini, melawat perkampungan orang Asli, menikmati air terjun Lata Berkoh, mendaki Gunung Tahan dan berkhemah.



Pulau Redang, Terengganu

Pesona alam melambai sukma! Bukan sahaja pulau ini terkenal dengan khazanah lautnya yang menarik, tetapi airnya turut sejuk segar seperti air terjun walaupun disemarak cahaya matahari sepanjang hari. Air jernih membiru dengan persisiran pasir putih bersih menawarkan anda keseronokan untuk aktiviti snorkel, selam skuba, kayak, memancing, berenang dan melihat pemandangan matahari terbit dan terbenam yang memukau serta juga eksplorasi hutan.

THE *WOMEN* OF MERDEKA

In this new era of equality for all, Malaysians must not forget the struggles our country endured in the fight for independence. While many Malaysian men have been recognised for their outstanding contributions in our journey to Merdeka, here are the women everyone should remember for their own achievements and their dedication to our nation.

PG Lim

A lawyer and diplomat, Lim Phaik Gan earned her Master of Law qualification from Cambridge University and came back to Malaya to co-found the Labour Party of Malaya in 1952.

Throughout her life, PG fought for the formation of workers' unions and as a lawyer she took on prolific political cases including one where she defended a Communist guerrilla leader.

During the Malayan emergency of 1969, PG joined the National Consultative Council after Parliament was suspended and played a key role in developing Malaysia's New Economic Policy. Alongside this achievement, PG went on to become the first Malaysian woman to be our ambassador to the United Nations.



Devaki Krishnan

Devaki was the first Malaysian woman to win the local elections in Bangsar in 1952; she also went on to be the first Indian woman to compete in our general elections in 1959, and the first non-Malay woman to be awarded the title of Tan Sri in 1995.

In her long and storied life, Devaki continuously called for women to be involved in Malaysian politics, and she was recognised for her contributions with a number of awards including the Tokoh Wanita Award by NCWO.

During the May riots of 1969, Devaki was part of the medical team that provided aid to victims of the attacks and shielded the homeless; she was instrumental in ensuring the safety of Malaysians caught up in the conflict.

Khatijah Sidek

Originally from Indonesia, Khatijah first began her fight by joining an anti-colonial women's group in Sumatra. In 1946, she moved to Singapore and married a Malayan, and began her fight to help women gain political knowledge by participating in the Indonesian and Malay Women's Assembly. Her political activities were feared by the British administration, and she was imprisoned for two years in 1948.

Upon her release, Khatijah was exiled from Singapore and she moved to Malaya where she became a part of the United Malays National Organisation. She was well-recognised for being an advocate for gender equality, including the proposition of having more women members in congress; unfortunately, given the male-dominated state of our society at the time, Khatijah was often seen as a troublemaker and she was subsequently expelled from the party.

Despite this, Khatijah was able to garner support from nearly 10,000 Malaysian women for her movement, and today we have her to thank for female representation in Malayan and Malaysian politics.



SWEET
ESCAPES –

THE MANGALA RESORT AND SPA

 GAMBANG,
PAHANG

When planning a trip to the beautiful state of Pahang, many Malaysians consider either the beach or the hills, but what if you're searching for a different and ecologically-conscious vacation? Consider the Mangala Resort and Spa.

A HIDDEN GEM IN THE JUNGLE

Situated in the middle of a working palm oil plantation, the Mangala Resort and Spa sits on 60 acres of pristine jungle, a carefully rehabilitated ecosystem that was created by its owner, Franky Group managing director Datuk Franky Chua Goon Eng. He originally built one bungalow which served as a private family getaway, and subsequently decided to build the resort. The land itself was previously a tin and sand mining piece site, which has since been transformed into an eco-friendly haven, a labour of love for the environment which took 16 years to complete.

Driving into the resort, one is immediately immersed in the lush surroundings, full of palm trees and then rainforest flora before arriving at the luxuriously appointed lobby, which opens towards the back to the pool and one of two manmade lakes on the property. Cold tropical fruit punch accompanies you while you wait for a receptionist to check you in.



ACCOMMODATION: A ROOM FOR EVERYONE

Visitors to Mangala Resort (Mangala means “auspicious well-being” in Sanskrit) are spoilt for choice in terms of their accommodation. The resort has 5 different types of villas, each facing a different vantage point and offering a different experience.

■ Sara Villa

Situated facing the Mangala Wetland, the Sara Villa caters to nature lovers; guests in this villa will have the privilege of observing the many species of birds, fish, and even the occasional monitor lizard go about their day in the wetland.

Each villa is 55 square meters and is fitted with a king-sized bed, shower and whirlpool tub, pantry, and a living area with a spacious and private open-air balcony.

■ Jala Villa

The Jala Villa sits on the waters of Mangala Lake, the central feature of the resort. This accommodation is perched on stilts and provides perfect views of the sun rising and setting on this ecological sanctuary. Mangala Lake also has a naturally formed island in the middle of it, which plays hosts to various fauna that call the resort their home.

This villa is 50 square meters and is outfitted with a pantry, whirlpool tub, and a rain shower which sits under a natural skylight for those want to gaze at the stars while having a refreshing bath.

For travellers with families in mind, opt for the 2-bedroom Jala Villa which has a master bedroom with a king-sized bed and a guest room with 2 twin beds.

**■ Vana Villa**

A favourite amongst newlywed couples and families alike, each Vana Villa comes with its own private enclosure, allowing you to shut out the world and truly indulge in solitude. Be lulled by the gentle sounds of nature in the palm forest while enjoying your loved ones' company.

Vana Villas are 55 square metres and come fitted with a spacious king-sized bed, an outdoor rain shower and bathtub, as well as a pantry. For an upgrade, try the Vana Pool Villa, which also features a private pool on its premises.

Families or groups of friends can choose to upgrade to the 60-square metre Vana Villa, which has a separate all-glass panelled living room. This villa has two bedrooms, with the master featuring a king-sized bed and the guest room featuring two twin beds. Guests will also be able to enjoy double the private moments poolside as this villa has 2 plunge pools.

■ Amani Pool Villa

The latest range of villas to join Mangala's existing set of offerings, the Amani Pool Villas sit on terraced land that is built around a small orchard of mangoes and Musang King durian trees. The villas are semi-detached and have private saltwater plunge pools. Upon request, guests can get a villa that has interconnecting doors and/or a double bath tub.

Each Amani Pool Villa is 60 square metres and has a poolside balcony, as well as a spacious bathroom with a rain shower and bath tub.

If you're planning a group trip, consider the 2-bedroom Amani Pool Villas which have large built-up areas of over 170 square metres. The master bedroom has an extra-large king-sized bed and the guest room is fitted with 2 large queen-sized beds.



■ The Bungalow

For large parties or a trip with the extended family, guests can look no further than the Bungalow, a sprawling 2-storied house sitting on the very edge of the resort and surrounded by a perfectly manicured garden that is perfect for the little ones to play in.

With a built-up area of 1,208 square metres, the Bungalow has a parking lot for buggy cars, and a private pool with a sun deck, as well as a rooftop deck where guests can go to admire the stars. It has 6 bedrooms with 4 king-sized beds and 6 single beds, and can accommodate up to 12 adults and 5 children (under the age of 12 years old).

DINING: A FEAST AWAITS YOU AT THE LAKE

The resort has one restaurant on-site called the Lakeside Restaurant which provides an inviting and colourful dining experience throughout the day, with a buffet and an unlimited a la carte breakfast, lunch, and dinner options. Sample locally-sourced cuisine with vegetables that are grown on the property and indulge in some refreshing drinks before taking the plunge in the pool just outside the restaurant.

ACTIVITIES: FUN FOR ALL IN THE FAMILY

While many who visit Mangala seek solitude, peace of mind, and a place to relax, more active guests can choose to take part in any of the daily morning walks and hikes offered by the resort. There's also an option to rent a bicycle and for the more adventurous, kayaks and boats are available on the property's second lake. Children and adults alike can also indulge in an archery session with local guides on hand to provide lessons.

TREAT
YOURSELF
TO A
UNIQUE
GETAWAY
THIS
MERDEKA

Whatever your personal preferences when booking a vacation at Mangala, you're sure to come away with a sense of wonder at the natural ecosystem that surrounds these modern and yet quaint and charming villas; get ready to find your peace of mind and a new respect for the jungle and its many creatures and flora after a stay at this truly unique resort.



Dining Local & Dining Well

As a firm feather in our cap, Malaysian cuisine is delicious, unique, and varies from state to state. This Merdeka, we look at three restaurants from three different states that serve truly authentic and delicious local food.

SABAH

D'Place Kinabalu

Serving real Kadazandusun dishes, visitors to D'Place will be greeted by a large orangutan and a longhouse façade that sets the mood for a delicious adventure.

The Kadazandusun people use a lot of rice in their cooking, and as such, a recommended dish is Linopot, which consists of rice and mashed taro wrapped in doringin leaves. Condiments like Tuhau and Hinava complement this meal.

For those who love their sago, try Ambuyat, which is made of sago starch. While tasteless on its own, this food is usually dipped into a soup called Sup Pinasakan Bosungan. It is traditionally eaten with a two-pronged bamboo fork known as candas.

A vegetable dish to accompany your meal, Bavang Koubasanan has wild spring onions gathered from the Bornean rainforest, which is the only place they can be found. It is then fried with torch ginger, garlic chives, and rubber tree mushrooms.

The Kadazandusun people also have a noodle dish called the Asian Bambangan Noodle Curry; this is served with curry, bambangan (wild mango), and tofu puffs, as well as fish balls, fishcakes, and hard-boiled eggs.

D'Place is open for lunch deliveries and serves the above meals in a buffet every night. Guests of the buffet will also be treated to a performance of traditional dances from around the Sabahan state, and a blowpipe demonstration.

Located at:

2.01, Plaza Shell, Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman,
88000 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

Opening Hours:

11 AM – 7:30 PM

Telephone no.:

+6016-833-2381

[@dplace.kinabalu](https://www.instagram.com/dplace.kinabalu)





PENANG

Jawi House Café Gallery

Travellers to the island would be remiss if they don't visit this restaurant, which is located in an old building with plenty of Peranakan flourishes, architecture, and furniture, as well as a serene atmosphere. The establishment was created by the Karim family of Punjabi-Jawi-Peranakan ancestry, whose family have lived in George Town for six generations.

Blending Arabic, Malay, North Indian, Pakistani, and Levant food, Jawi House serves an array of dishes. Visitors can start with appetizers including the jawi hummous, which consists of homemade chickpeas with tahini and herbs laced with olive oil and served with toasted Benggali bread.

For mains, try the restaurant's creamy rose chicken, which is chicken braised in a reduction of onions, tomatoes, herbs, and spices, and subsequently topped off with milk and rose water. This dish is best paired with tomato rice, which can be ordered separately.

For a sweet end to the meal, try the Malay caramel pudding cakes, which are known throughout the country as "kuih gula hangus" or "kuih sarang semut"; the pudding has a fluffy, honeycomb like texture and tastes slightly bitter, which is then topped with a dark caramel flavour for the tastebuds and is served with homemade kaya sauce.

Jawi House accepts reservations on their website.

 [jawihouse](#)

Located at:
85 Lebuhr Armenian,
George Town, Penang

Opening Hours:
Wednesday to Monday,
11 AM to 9:30 PM

Telephone no:
+6042613680





NEGERI SEMBILAN

Cili Kampung Hartamas

For diners seeking a comforting local meal without the need to travel, Cili Kampung – which opened its first branch in Langkawi in 2017 – is located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur and serves real Malay cuisine in a delightful interior covered with foliage and kampung elements combined with modern flair.

The highly recommended Masak Lomak is a sliced smoked beef dish which comes in a light coconut milk gravy, tinged yellow by turmeric and made fragrant by lemongrass. Pair this meal with white rice and sambal cili padi to truly get tastebuds going.

Other must-try side dishes include the restaurant's terung goreng belacan which consists of fried eggplant with anchovies, and the telur dadar, a simple and fluffy omelette.

Cili Kampung Hartamas encourages reservations to ensure that they can accommodate parties of any size. Book a seat here:

<https://letsumai.com/widget/cili-kampung>

Located at:

V-02, Hartamas Walk,
Hartamas Shopping Centre,
Jalan Sri Hartamas 1,
Taman Sri Hartamas,
50480 Kuala Lumpur.

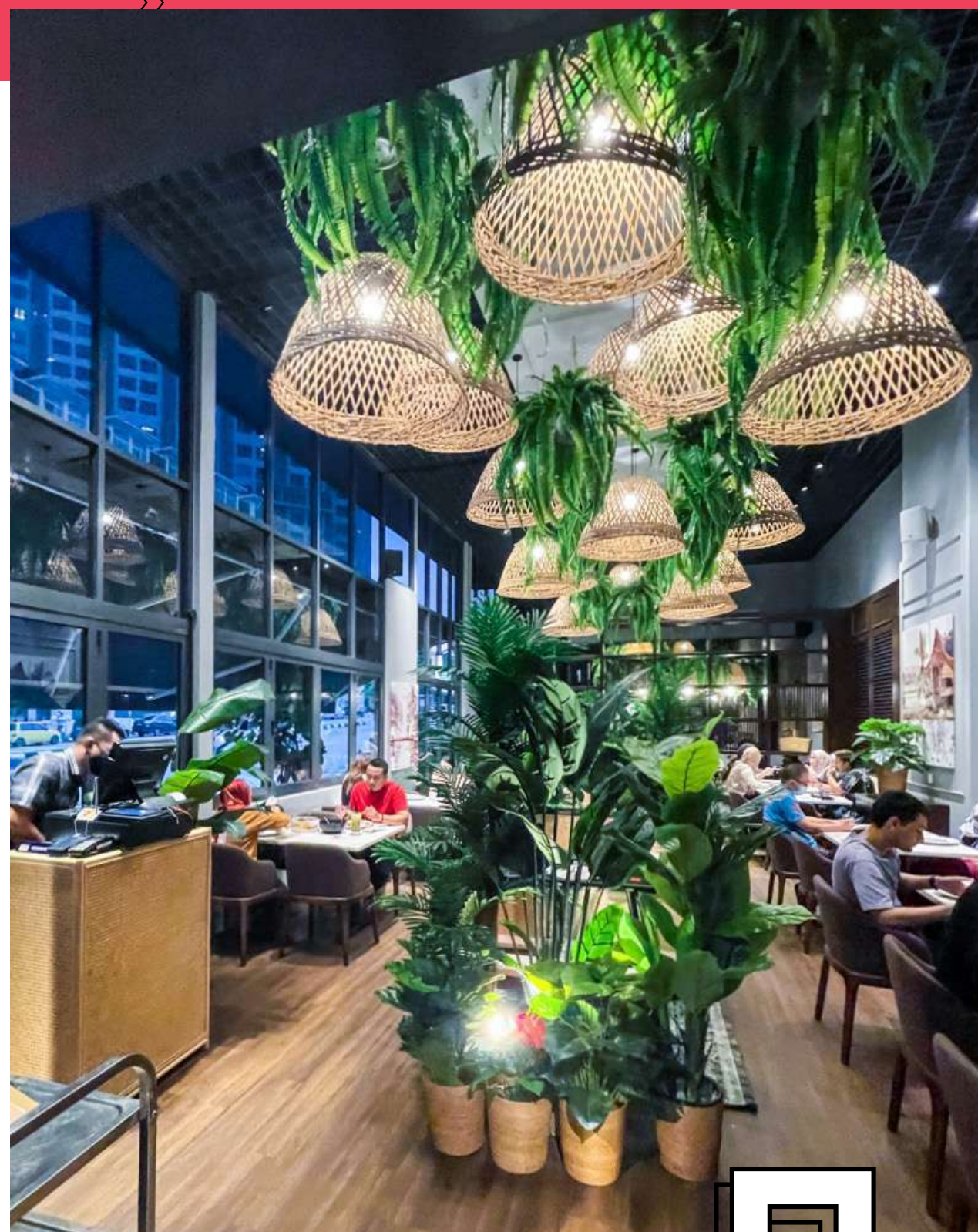
 [cilikampunghartamas](https://www.instagram.com/cilikampunghartamas)

Opening Hours:

Monday to Sunday,
12 PM to 3:30 PM,
6 PM to 10 PM

Telephone no:

014-965-6124



Merdeka Ria

with Gifts for All

Celebrate our Independence this year with some Made in Malaysia treats and services that are sure to light up your Merdeka holiday.



★ For him: Nocturne Watches

In the world of horology, Malaysian watchmakers have quietly made their mark in the ASEAN scene, and one of our truly standout brands is Nocturne. The name itself refers to the gentle musical pieces with several movements that are inspired by the night; similarly, Nocturne watches are crafted with the finest materials. Each watch runs on the very reliable Swiss Ronda movement, has lens made of scratch-resistant Sapphire Crystal Glass, and a casing made of 316L surgical grade stainless steel. The watch's straps (made of genuine Italian calf leather, tweed, or stainless-steel mesh) have a "Quick-Release" mechanism which allows the wearer to change straps for any occasion.

We recommend the Rose Gold Black with Grey Tweed watch straps, which also comes with a pair of complimentary watch straps of your choice.

Price: US\$149

★ For her: Claire Organics

Claire Organics is a pioneering organic local beauty brand that makes all-natural skincare products at reasonable prices to fit every Malaysian's budget. Each product is gentle enough to even be used for infants, and is Earth-friendly, featuring zero toxic chemicals. Only the freshest and best quality natural ingredients are used, such as essential oils, shea butter, olive oil, oatmeal, or goat milk.

We recommend the Gift of Love package, which has a rosehip whitening body scrub that exfoliates and moisturises the skin; a soother balm that restores vitality to the skin; and yummy lips, an intensive lips treatment that acts as a lip gloss during the day and makes a perfect lip mask at night, suitable for dry or sensitive lips. Included in the box is a wooden spatula for the body scrub, and Claire Organics will wrap the gift for free.

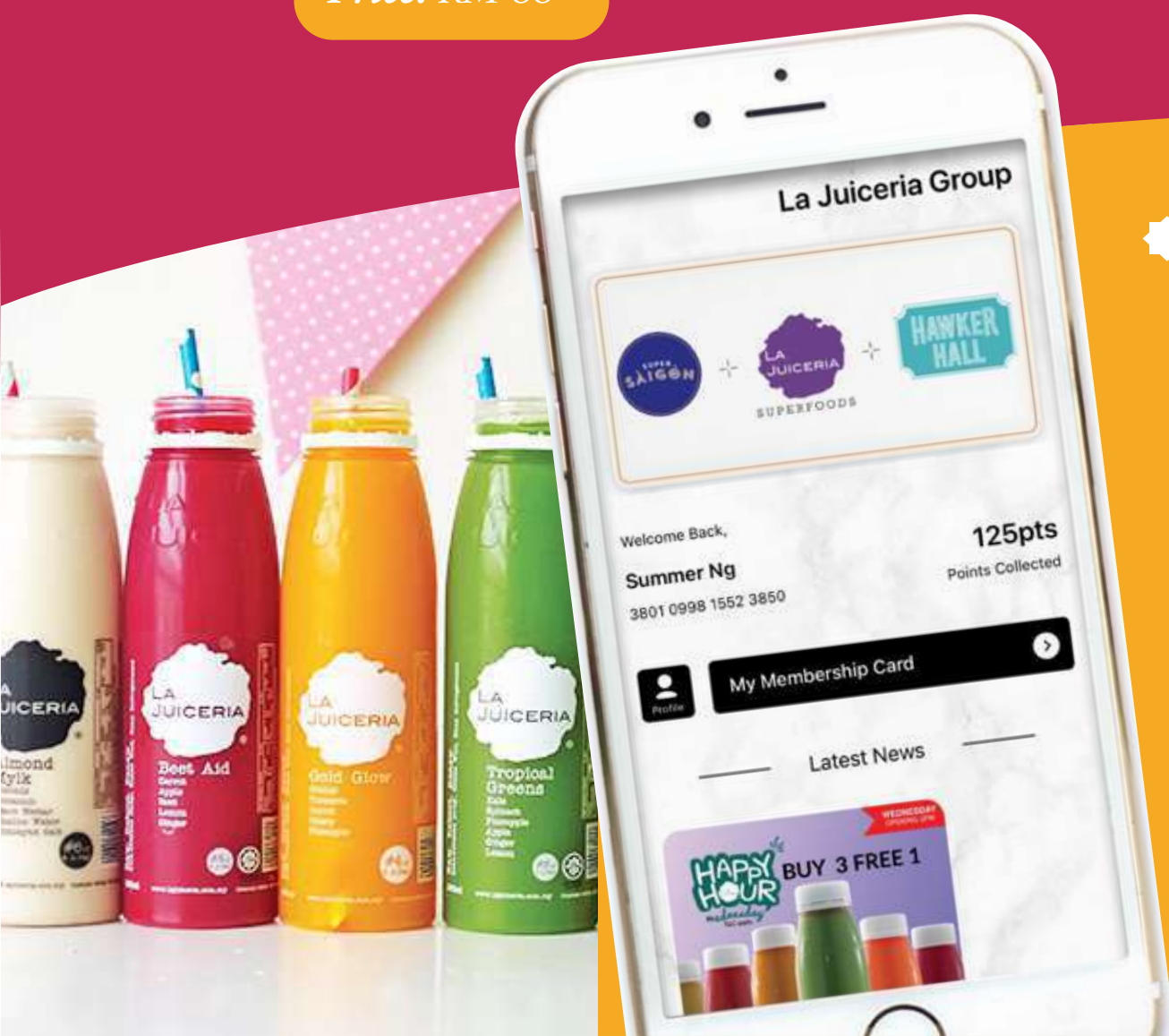
Price: RM 88



★ For Everyone: La Juiceria Mobile App

In 2013, La Juiceria was known for its quality cold-pressed juices which were sent via an online store to detox bars. Now, the homegrown Malaysian restaurant is a trusted place for people seeking healthier meal options, offering a variety of items such as organic coffee, gourmet salads, fresh charcoal soba, warm rice bowls, wholesome wraps, smoothie bowls, and desserts. The company even has its own app, which is a digitalised loyalty and membership platform where members can earn points, get cash rebates, redeem vouchers, and take advantage of member-only promotions. The app also has a store locator for those needing a La Juiceria fix on the go.

Get the La Juiceria Mobile App on Google Play Store or the Apple App Store.



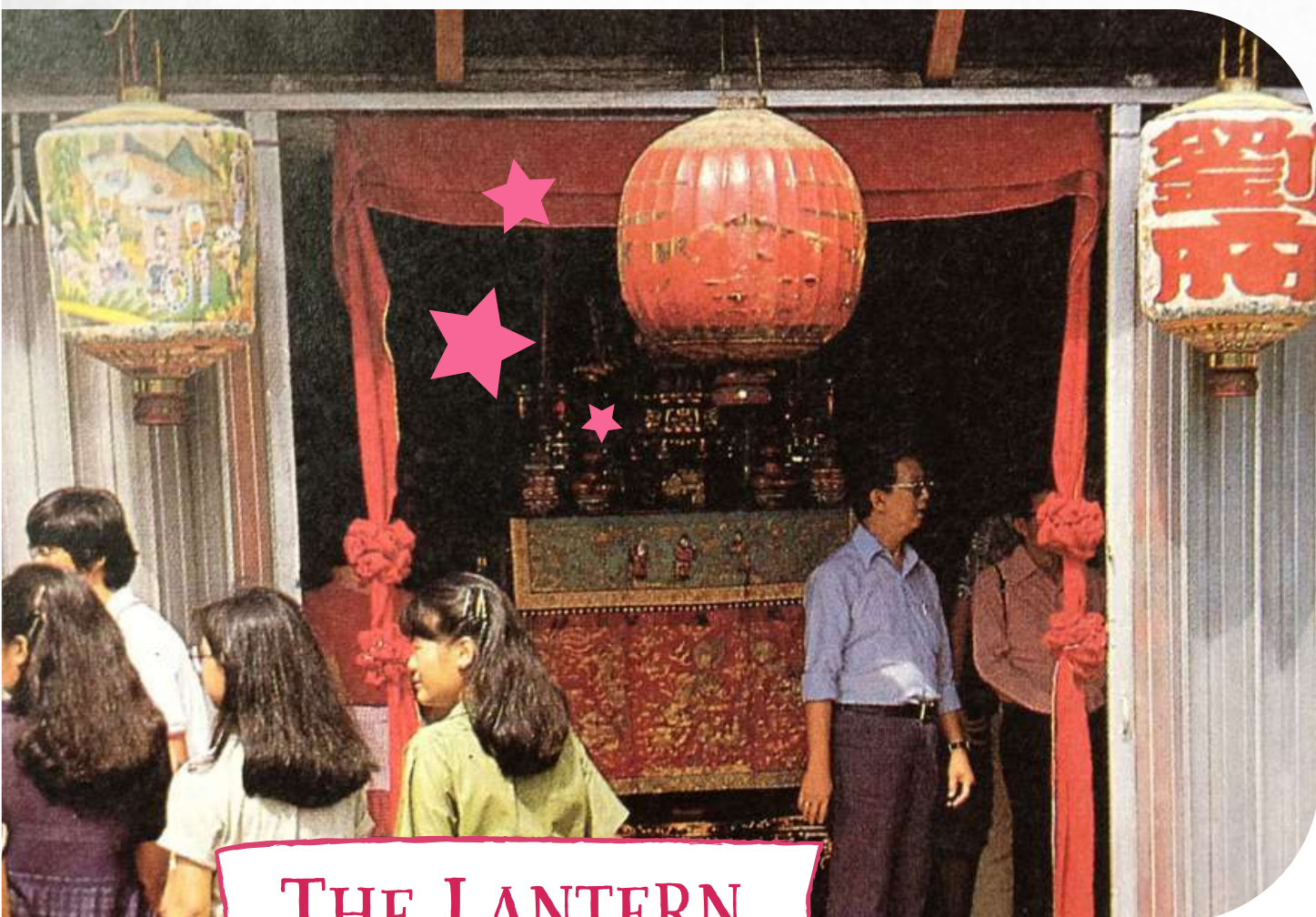
Malaysia's Handicraft History



THE KERONGSANG

Our nation is blessed to have a community that is a blend of cultures, traditions, and histories. Here, we share three handicraft items all Malaysians know of, and the story behind their origins.

A type of brooch that is used to pin together the baju kebaya, the kerongsang comes in sets of three, with a larger central brooch (ibu), and two smaller brooches (anak). Most kerongsang are made of silver or gold and decorated with rough-cut diamonds, diamonds which were believed to originate from mines in Banjarmasin in Southern Kalimantan. The diamonds were yellow in colour, a shade that was known as “warna air chempaka.” Eventually, in the late 19th century, brilliant cut diamonds – which were more readily available – were chosen to be inlaid on the kerongsang instead. In the old days, the kerongsang was seen as sign of status amongst well-to-do Malay folks because they were expensive to purchase and were used to complete formal attire.



THE LANTERN

A handicraft still greatly cherished by the Peranakan communities, lantern-making was introduced to Malaysia during the Tang Dynasty. More than just a vessel for light, lanterns symbolise good fortune and well-wishes, and are traditionally passed down from generation to generation. While most people associate lanterns with the Mid-Autumn festival, there are also traditional lanterns, which can be hung in doorways throughout the year. For many Chinese Malaysians, they are part of their childhood and continue to be an important component of their culture throughout their lives.



THE FLOWER GARLAND

Fragrant, colourful, and intricately made, flower garlands symbolise spirituality, prosperity, and honour, and are an important part of worship. They are also believed to ward off bad spirits. In the Malaysian Indian community, garland making is a time-honoured tradition, and a myriad of designs can be seen during festive celebrations as well as religious occasions. This craft originated in the Indian subcontinent, and arrived at our shores as early as the 14th century.



While Malaysia makes her push towards a brighter future, handicrafts and the old traditions of our cultures cannot be forgotten. As such, a trip to Petaling Street or any handicraft market to see these items in real life and learn their history is highly recommended for all Malaysians.

Celebrate 65 Years of Independence in **CLASS**



MERCEDES-BENZ
C300 AMG LINE

After 65 years of independence many Malaysians can now afford the finer things in life. After its global debut in early 2021, the all-new iteration of the C-Class model (W206) from Mercedes-Benz arrived in Malaysia this past February; almost exactly a year after the global announcement. Given the evergreen popularity and renowned reputation of the name, this release has been highly anticipated by so many across the nation.

** The reviewer was provided with the C200 Avantgarde model. The latest generation currently comes in two trims: C200 Avantgarde & C300 AMG Line. Both are fully imported CBU models although Mercedes-Benz Malaysia reports locally built CKD models can be expected later in the year.*

Not Just a Pretty Face

In keeping with the latest design language from the German manufacturer, the new C-Class bears striking and recognizable features which can be found across some of their other latest models including the flagship S-Class. What fantastic value this offers in a more compact package.

The new generation continues the tradition of combining elegant and sporty design that the automaker is so famously known for. However, unlike previous generations where the headlamps differed based on the trim, the W206 is assembled with the same configuration for both trims. Among the many notable design cues are the fierce L-shaped Daytime Running Lights which adorn the thin, focused LED headlights with high beam assist. The taillights are also distinctly angular continuing the sharp, sporty theme around the back. Rolling up in either trim immediately conjures a lasting impression. The Avantgarde model comes with two rows of vertical slats interrupted by the iconic tri-pointed star in the middle while the AMG Line features a single slat with integrated Mercedes-Benz Star with a striking diamond pattern. Both come with a distinguished chrome finish that further exude distinction.

Choose from eight brilliant paints, including:

POLAR WHITE
GRAPHITE GREY
SELENITE GREY
HIGH-TECH SILVER
CAVANSITE BLUE
SPECTRAL BLUE
OBSIDIAN BLACK



..without additional cost. At an added expense there is also a bright Manufaktur shade called **HYACINTH RED** on option.

Class Leading Safety and Convenience for All

Upon stepping into the car, those familiar with Mercedes-Benz interiors will be greeted with a familiar sight; a sumptuously designed cabin paired with the very best of the latest tech and creature comforts.

Seats have been expertly crafted using the durable and easy to clean Artico man-made leather. This is a marvel in sustainability as it doesn't compromise on the feel, look, and touch of natural leather. The upholstery is available in all black but we would recommend a combination of sienna brown and black for a truly classy feel.



A vast 11.9" central display elegantly sits as a centrepiece; easily reachable by both driver and passenger. Beneath this screen is a wireless charger so you can keep your compatible smartphone charged at all times. Accompanying the central display is a 12.3" Driver display that is widely customizable with three styles (Discreet, Sporty, and Classic) and modes (Navigation, Assistance, and Service) to suit any mood and purpose.

When it comes to navigation, drivers are spoiled with options. Android and Apple users can seamlessly cast their phones onto the central display via Android Auto and Apple Carplay. This is not only useful for navigating but also the safest way to DJ and receive messages or take calls all on the go thanks to MBUX voice commands. Apart from the smartphone options, the built-in navigation system is a breeze to use complete with a perfectly detailed 3D map. Drivers can even choose to display the navigation just between the tachometer and speedometer so you can drive confidently on the right path just by peeking through the steering wheel.

A suite of safety features is included as standard: seven airbags, lane keep assist, blind spot assist, a tire pressure monitoring system, and autonomous emergency braking. The active parking assist effortlessly detects open parking spaces and eases into the space for you. For those who prefer to do the parking themselves, the C200 comes with a crisp and clear reverse camera unit while the C300 comes with a very handy 360-degree camera. Comfortably load up groceries or luggage with the sufficient 455 L of boot space. That's even enough for two medium sized check in bags.



Effortless Performance

Whether on a long road trip to Kota Bharu or a drive through Johor Bharu, enjoy the journey as much as the destination this Merdeka with exceptional driving comfort and dynamics.

	C200 Avantgarde	C300 AMG Line
Engine	Turbocharged 1.5 L	Turbocharged 2.0 L
Horsepower	204 hp @ 5,800 to 6,100 rpm + 20 hp from the 48v electric motor	258 hp @ 5,800 rpm
Torque	300 Nm @ 1,800 to 4,000 rpm + 200 Nm from the 48v electric motor	400 Nm @ 5,800 rpm
0-100 km/h	7.3 seconds	6 seconds

The C200 comes fitted with the popular and sustainable EQ Boost system, otherwise known as a Mild Hybrid system. This system works to reduce both fuel consumption and emissions all while intelligently giving the engine an extra boost of horsepower and torque whenever needed!

In either model, speeding up or overtaking is sure to be thrilling yet graceful. For added driving joy, kick into sport mode and relish in the unbridled power (please drive responsibly). Alternatively, waft and glide down busy roads in comfort mode or be efficient and make the most of your last refuelling in eco mode. Wherever you are headed and whichever driving style you prefer, the C-Class is sure to keep a smile on you and your passengers faces.

This brings us to the question; who buys the C-Class? Mercedes-Benz Malaysia reports that the car is mainly popular among single people and small families. We reckon the car is suitable to many others owed in no small part to its versatility, driving pleasure, and beautiful design. Pricing for the C200 is RM 299,888 and the C300 is RM 344,888 on the road without insurance.



For more information on Hire Purchase Financing, please contact your nearest AFFIN BANK/AFFIN ISLAMIC Branch, or visit our website at <https://www.affinalways.com/en/affin-bank-vehicle-loan>

10 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OUR NATION

As you join the festivities this year for Merdeka, why not read these interesting facts about our nation so you can spark a great conversation on the country that we all love:



1 One of the oldest names for the Malaysian peninsula was Aurea Chersonesus or the “Peninsula of Gold”. Greco-Roman geographer Ptolemy coined the name in his book *Geographia*, which was written circa 150 AD.

2 Our national currency, Ringgit, means “jagged” in Malay and refers to the serrated edges of the Spanish silver dollars we used as currency back in the 16th and 17th centuries.

3

The Kedah Sultanate is recognised as one of the oldest sultanates in the world, having been established in 1136 AD.



4

The Bingator tree which is unique to the rainforests of Sarawak, has properties that some believe could cure AIDS.



5

We are home to one of the world’s largest populations of king cobras





6

The word “Ketchup” is believed to have come from the Hokkien word “ke-tsiap”, which is used to describe fermented sauce. This sauce was brought to Melaka by Chinese traders, and this is where Westerners first encountered it.



7

New-born babies in Sarawak are called “ulat” until they receive their names. Furthermore, the baby must be named after a deceased relative, because they believe that naming a baby after a living relative could shorten their life.



8

The seafloor of the Straits of Melaka plays home to one of the richest unrecovered treasure troves in the world, from a sunken Portuguese ship called the Flora de la mar, which went down into the depths in December 1511.

9

Malaysia’s jungles has one of the tallest tropical trees globally; called the Tualang, it has a base diameter of over 3 meters and can grow up to a height of 72 meters.



10

We have four UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites, including Gunung Mulu National Park, Kinabalu Park, Melaka, George Town, and the Lenggong Valley, an important archaeological heritage site.

Malaysia's FASHION

Through the Ages

The Malaysian fashion scene is one undoubtedly influenced by the West; jeans, t-shirts, slacks, tight dresses, and high-end sneakers have all been a staple part of our wardrobe for several decades now. While this fact in of itself is not uncommon throughout Asia, Malaysians should also be able to recall our fashion inclinations of the past. This Merdeka, we take a look at women's fashion in our country throughout five decades.

The 1940s and 50s

- Post-War Changes and our Merdeka Breakthrough

As Malaysia underwent rapid change in our politics and governance, so too did our fashion. When the Second World War ended and the British returned to our shores, administrative changes were made throughout the country and we became exposed to foreign influences, including movies and fashion magazines. Malay women in particular became inspired to simplify the way they dress, shortening the hem of the baju kurung to just below the knee, and by the time 1950 rolled around, the hem was shortened even further to a few inches above the knee. The kain kelubung, a shroud used to cover the head, was replaced by the selendang in the late 1950s. Our independence in 1957 also opened more doors to these women, who began to earn income and thus switched from making their own baju to going to professional tailors for their garments because they could afford it.



The 1960s - Movie Magic

One cannot talk about fashion in Malaysia in the post-independence period without furthering emphasising the role films began to have on us. This decade was the heyday of the Malaysian film industry with several movies being produced per year and all featuring curvy and model-esque women that spurred regular women to be daring and try more form-fitting clothes, such as introducing the peplum cut to their baju kurung outfits. Women also began wearing more baju kebaya during this period in time due to the plethora of scenes in these movies that showcased how the garment can slim the body and create an alluring silhouette. In fact, this can be said to be the decade when the baju kebaya made its comeback into mainstream Malaysian fashion.



The 1970s - Jazzing it Up

Harking to the screen sirens of the West during this decade as well as the disco scene which was becoming very popular on our shores, Malaysian women turned to heavier fabrics and stiffer outlines during the 1970s. In addition, they began adding accessories such as hair scarves and chokers to complete the look. On the society front, women were less pressured to dress conservatively, and as such, not only did hemlines for baju kurung grow shorter, but shorts became a popular staple for everyday wear and skirts were considered the height of fashion as well. Taking a cue from Western magazines, Malaysian women also began to experiment with bright colours and slitted bottoms to showcase their gams.



The 1980s - That Power Shoulder

Globally, the 80s saw women taking on more corporate jobs and speaking out for themselves, and this was very obvious in the fashion that Malaysian women took on too. The baju kurung got an upgrade with shoulder pads and even brighter colours and batik patterns to emphasise the wearer's boldness, and pastel pantsuits became all the rage for working women. Big hair was also a big deal, while the rise of rock and roll (which was gradually picking up pace in Malaysia from the 60s onwards), saw women experimenting with skinny jeans and rocker jackets as well.

There can be no doubt that our Merdeka in the 50s and the subsequent political and societal movements that occurred since have had a big impact on what we wear and how; moving forward, while we continue to allow Western ideas and culture influence our clothing, let us not forget that we Malaysians have some truly great fashion sense that is all our own.



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