



Spotlight

PUCUK REBUNG ROYAL GALLERY-MUSEUM

LEARNING ABOUT OUR RICH HISTORY

Historical artefacts tell an interesting tale of Malaya's progress through the years, **SARAH RAHIM** writes

REMINISCING on history and the country's struggle for independence can give the youth a better perspective on our forefathers' fight to govern the country themselves.

Besides reading textbooks and watching documentaries, there are many other avenues to gather information and relive history.

They include collecting and studying historical items, such as artefacts, handicraft, handwritten letters and old photographs.

"These historical items give us a sense of appreciation on the life of various races in the country, and the spirit of independence widely felt by the people of Malaya, who had long been under the rule of colonialists," said Pucuk Rebung Royal Gallery-Museum art historian and curator Henry Bong.

Bong said the people, be it Malays, who were foremost in championing the nationalist movement towards independence, Malayan Siamese, Orang Asli, Indians and other subcontinental groups; Eurasians like



A British food warmer where piping-hot water was poured into the bowl to heat up food during the early colonial era in Malaya.

the Portuguese descendants; Peranakan and Chinese, all played a role in wanting freedom and self-rule after World War 2.

"From a patriotic and logical perspective, independence or Merdeka Day is the conception, while the formation of Malaysia is the birth of this beloved nation that we call home today," he said.

The Pucuk Rebung Royal Gallery-Museum has been actively involved in amassing and curating historical items.

The items include historical and cultural treasures from pre-Malaysia era in Sarawak and Sabah — from the early days to the Brunei empire, to the Brooke Dynasty, the British Crown Colony, Independence Day and right through to the formation of Malaysia with Malaya and Singapore.

Its royal patron is Raja Perempuan Kelantan Tengku Anis Tengku Abdul Hamid, the mother

of Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V.

The gallery-museum is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

It houses a precious collection of artefacts that depicts the long association of Malayan communities with the outside world through trade.

"If we look carefully, there are items ranging from Jawi calligraphic art to wooden block prints and steel engravings. Others comprise fashion designs as well as photographs, all of which can help us relive our independence period," Bong said.

"To the uninitiated, some items also give a glimpse of life before independence, especially those introduced by the colonialists."

Bong hoped the youth would learn to embrace the country's history and be encouraged by the older generation to appreciate it.

"I noticed that even at the gallery, the youngsters are quite hesitant to closely inspect the historical items for fear of damaging them," he said.

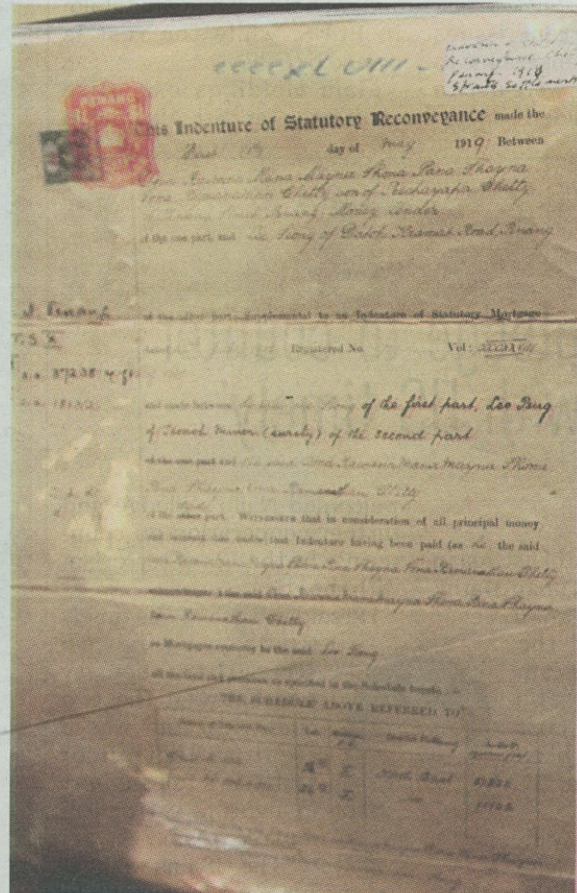
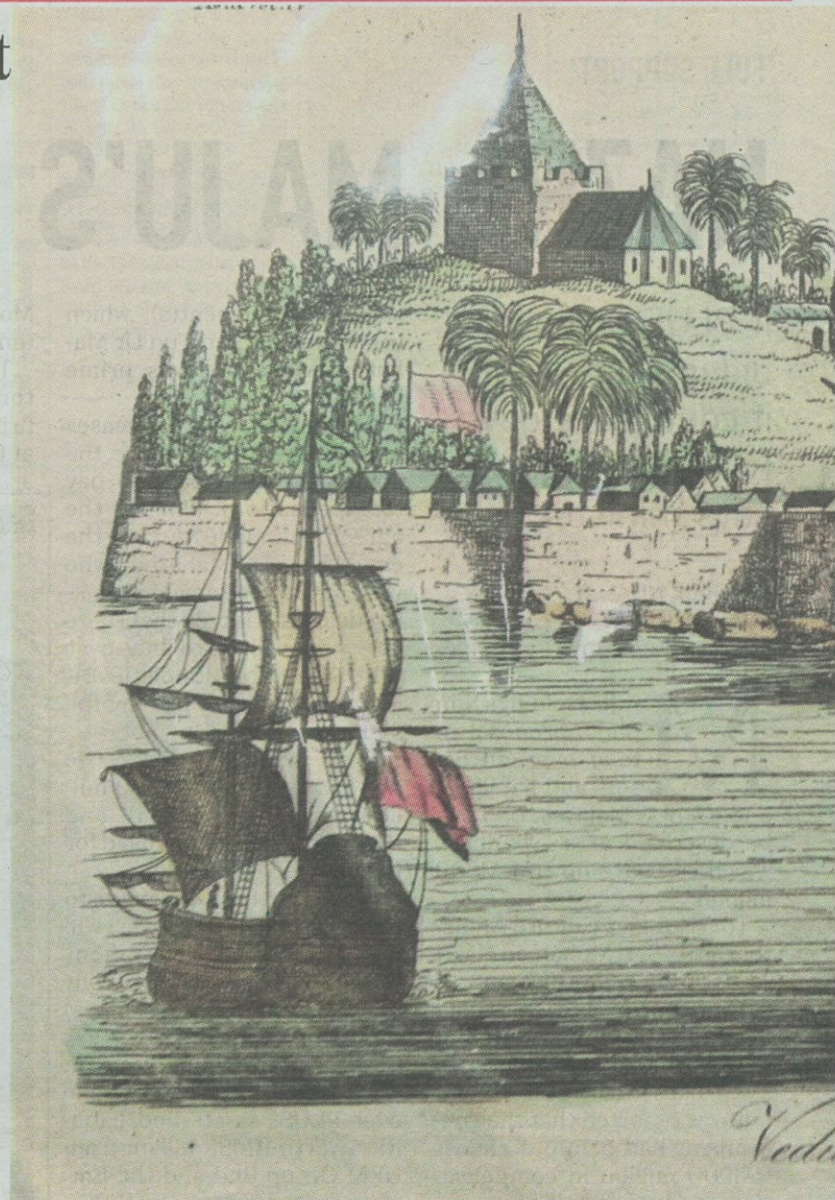
The gallery is located in Lucky Garden, Bangsar, and all are welcome to visit.

"We hope to bring history and art closer to the people."

Bong said youths could learn a lot from the artworks that were crafted with finesse.

Besides instilling a sense of appreciation for our rich history, Bong said, the artefacts also brought a sense of enjoyment for art admirers, and were a source of inspiration for entrepreneurs.

All artefacts featured are from the permanent collection of the Pucuk Rebung Gallery-Museum



The establishment of the Straits Settlement of Malacca, Penang and Singapore saw the initial attempts by the British to colonise the Malay peninsula. This early 20th-century Chitty indenture document is testimony to the legal aspects established by the British in the business sphere then.



A British steel engraving map of Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago. This artefact points to the British colonialists' wider interest and control of the maritime trade in the East Indies.

The Straits of Malacca is a strategic route for maritime trade. To control the lucrative spice trade, the Portuguese took control of the straits with the conquest of Malacca in 1511. This is an early 18th-century print of the city of Malacca viewed from the sea (laterally inverted).



The formation of Malaysia has created many beautiful moments in our collective memory. The items include popular kebaya in ladies fashion, then referred to as 'baju Malaysia'. Here, the late Raja Perempuan Zainab of Kelantan, wearing a kebaya, is seen seated beneath a portrait of her husband, Almarhum Sultan Yahya Petra.



England was the preferred destination for higher education among the Malayan elite. This 1949 photograph shows a farewell gathering for the late Sultan of Kedah Almarhum Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah prior to his departure for England.



(Left) The art of setting a table during the British colonial era.



(Right) The vestiges of the Japanese Occupation and earlier trade items. A close-up of Japanese ceramics from the 19th century to early 20th century.



Dutch trade ceramics attest to its subsequent colonisation and control of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641.