

RISING STARS

Malaysia: Enchanting Paradise

The Camouflage of Nature

I went to Malaysia at the age of one and a half years and from then on enjoyed every day of my stay there. It has a population of more than fourteen million friendly and hospitable people. Malaysia is a beautiful country with terrific scenery at all kinds of weather. In general the weather is a bit hot and sticky — as it is situated just above the equator — but I just used to it after a few months. After being put into a school I began to get my first glimpse of the people of Malaysia.

On my first day I was very nervous and frightened but the teachers received me so openheartedly that I soon forgot that I was among people unknown to me. Soon I learnt a bit of all the languages of Malaysia, namely Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil, although the school was an English medium one. Sometimes when I got angry I used speak all the five languages at once, to the dismay and amusement of my parents! When I was about five to six years old I used to bike around exploring our neighbourhood and soon made many friends. When I was a bit older I travelled a lot with my parents and I began to know more and more about the places in Malaysia.

Malaysia has very nice roads and highways and travelling is a comfort let alone a trouble. All the highways, were lined with miles and miles of rubber and palm plantations. Even in the villages there are very good roads and every part is accessible.

The national parks in Malaysia are with freely roaming wild animals. Once we went to an open air safari and a tiger walked passed our car, I became very frightened also fascinated.

Malaysia has some very dense forests and many people go there to hike and camp. Also there are beautiful waterfalls and streams and in the holidays hordes of people go there for picnics.

We went to a waterfall in a place called Frazer's Hill. There are also wild elephants and tigers in the valley below Frazer's Hill but I fortunately did not get to meet them! The waterfall at Frazer's Hill comes from very high in the mountains and the water is ice cold and refreshing. Another waterfall we went to was the Chamang Waterfalls near Kuala Lumpur

by A M M Adeb



King's Palace in Kuala Lumpur

situated in a forest in the mountains. Here the water is torrential and dangerously fast with threatening rocks all over the place.

Another great thing in Malaysia are its resorts and rest houses. I think there are one of the best in Asia. When we motored all over the country, we stopped at many hotels and rest houses but I liked the rest houses best. I felt just like at home in these rest houses. There are spotlessly clean and decorated very nicely. And the people who receive you are very cordial. Then there are the sea resorts.

What Hawaii is to the West I think the Malaysian sea beaches is to the East. The beaches have clear blue water, a bit like the beaches in the Maldives. Holiday-goers and picnickers who want to get out of town often go in large numbers to a beach called Port



Batu cave, worshipped in Malaysia.

Dickson. Here you can hire a speed boat and do surfing, or just a sail boat. We came here many times during our stay and I enjoyed it every time we came. Also facing the sea are many stalls specializing in Chinese, Malay and Indian food, there are also souvenir shops, with varieties of handicrafts and the prices are also reasonable, considering the complicated and beautiful products. There are also four or five-star hotels near by, for those who want to make an over-night halt.

Another beach resort like Port Dickson is in Kuantan. Here the water of the Pacific Ocean is blue and perfectly clear and the sea stretches out as far as the eye can see. There are also a few islands scattered around like tiny dots far out in the sea. At dusk the sea breeze is chilling and the air is filled with the gentle splashes of the waves. But the sea beach re-

sorts I liked best was the Terengganu beach resort. Here the accommodations are excellent and the view is superb. There are cottages, like in the villages along the coast for tourists and visitors. The inside of the cottage was very modern and I was specially fascinated with the bathroom. I could not imagine there could be a bathroom, this modern in a cottage like this. The cottage had been perfectly disguised from the outside just as if it was a village cottage. I also learned later that there was a card, like a voucher, that could be used to buy anything inside the sea beach grounds including food, souvenirs from shops and hiring boats and surf boards.

Now for some of the places in Malaysia that attract tourists every year and that should not be missed when one comes to Malaysia for a visit.

Penang, this island is located



200 years old residential area in Melacca, Malaysia.



The rail station

up north from Kuala Lumpur. Tourists come here very often because of its beautiful scenery and eye-catching sites. From Penang Hill the view is very beautiful and the whole of Penang town, The Straits of Malacca and the Andaman Sea can be seen. There is also a sloping train service to get to Penang Hill.

Another tourist attraction is the snake temple. Live snakes slither about freely in this temple on the statues and in the branches of plants.

But now for the site that Penang is famous for — The Penang Bridge, a structure of fine architecture and fifteen kilometres long. It connects the island to the mainland Butterworth. Its tall cables loom up many feet above the bridge and can be seen from many miles.

Kota Baru is situated on the east coast of the peninsula. For hiking and camping or simply climbing one of the highest mountains in Malaysia one has to cross the China Sea and go to East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). The peak Kota Kinabalu, 14,000 feet above sea level is the highest in SE Asia. Sometimes fog surrounds the top of the mountain.

Johor Baru is a town that lies in the south of Malaysia, bordering Singapore (across the Causeway). It also has a striking two storied bridge that connects Johor Baru to Singapore. There is a place called Mini Malaysia where the model of the cultures of all the states are depicted including the model of the houses in the different states.

Malaysia has a variety of cuisines ranging from Chinese to Tamil and Moghul style. There are also local Malay food, some of which are very delicious. One of the Malay specialties is the *roti chaman*. This is a kind of spongy *chapati*, something like our *paratas*, eaten with a thick gravy — the typical breakfast for many. Another appetizer is the *sataw*. These are sticks of cooked or fried pieces of beef, mutton or chicken also eaten with a thick gravy, similar to the *shish kebab*. As a thirst quencher there is the mouth watering *cendol* (pronounced *chendon*), an ice-cold drink with various nuts in it, except that they are green in colour.

So if you are planning to visit Malaysia these places and food are not to be missed.

MOST of the colour that floods the world seems to have no purpose at all. It is sheer, delightful superabundance of life's energy. But for countless animals colour is a master weapon in the great game of survival. The camouflage of nature is better than any other man has ever devised, when animals, blend with their backgrounds, they are both safe and alert to attack their own prey.

A toad looks like a lump of the earth he squats on. A frog is as green on top as the scum of the pond where he floats, but underneath he is pale as light seen through water. The polar bear and the snowy owl are white as the arctic waters. Brilliant tropical fish hide amid the bright-coloured coral of the reef.

Some creatures camouflage themselves with material from their surroundings. One larva uses lichen, another dead ants. Masking crabs have horny bristles on which they hang disguises of algae or sponge. The sponge crab cuts out a colorful sponge mask, just the right size to fit, and holds it in place over its back with a special pair of legs. As for the squid, it can eject a small cloud of ink, roughly the shape and size of itself; then it slips away while the enemy is distracted by the ink cloud.

Quaint and curious are some of the efforts to avoid detection. Certain tropical mantises are coloured like the flowers of their favourite tree. In South America the glass winged butterfly is so transparent you can see through its wings — and so perhaps not see it at all. And the dead-leaf butterfly resembles a bit of old foliage not only

by Qazi Munirul Alam

in colour but in delicate venation and ragged outline. Even its slow, swirling flight is like that of a falling leaf.

A moth marked like a dead leaf will orient its position so that its markings coincide with those of the leaf on which it settles. Certain tropical insects gather together, with heads all in one way, to form a pattern resembling the flowers of the tree on which they rest.

The bright plumage of a male bird may well appeal to his lady. But it also serves to attract attention away from the female's quieter garb thus keeping her the safer. A male bird may also display some brilliant coloration to frighten a rival, as in the case of the Chinese ring-necked pheasant. On the side of his neck the male carries startling red pouches, which he can puff out in an encounter with another male. This immediately reduces a challenger's confidence; he may even sulk away without a fight.

But far more astonishing colour changes are found among fish, frogs, squid, crabs and shrimp. A young prawn can change colour completely, sometimes in a few minutes,

and has a wonderful repertoire of tints: green when in seaweed; violet, brown, red or blue-green as it moves along coloured algae; transparent blue at night. Many plants also depend on their brightly coloured flowers to attract insects for pollination to take place.

These devices, and thousands like them, are not casual happenstance. They are an irreplaceable part of nature's grand strategy for the game of life.



"Fraternal Pranks"

by Mushfiqur Rahman

TARIQ was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. "Man, oh, man! Am I in a big mess! That fell a pulled a tough gag on me this time. You know, when I thought that the rhyme's silly, frantically I started to enter names of people. I entered the names of Roy's girl friends and the screen displayed: "..... — la-la-la". When I entered the names of my girl friends the screen showed: "Fat chance, playboy!" I even tried my luck with the name of the nutty writer of this story and result is

"Visibly chaotic," Adnan finished Tariq's sentence. "Yes, it was chaotic. Because the screen displayed: "G! get!, 420 420 420, You're doomed."

"Seems like Roy carries a grudge against him," said Tariq. "And my feelings are some. He's the one responsible for my life. He's the one who made me look like a fool in this story. Wait! I get my hands on him." "Simmer down, pal! Be thankful to him that he had created a witty character like me."

And for your information, I

got the puny riddle solved," said Adnan. "No kidding? Adnan went on with the details:

"With my glorious talents ... blah ... blah ... blah ... I had no problem ... blah ... blah ... blah ... You see, Tariq! Unlike you, Roy isn't a Phillistine. He has an interest in literature, especially English literature. And being an intelligent young man he decided to play an intellectual prank on you. The rhyme that he mentioned as the 'hint' is not an ordinary rhyme. But it's a 'limerick'. So, with my innate talents, blah ... blah ... I figured the password. It's 'limerick'!"

Tariq entered the password and instantly the 'slang words' disappeared from the screen. "Congrats, Adnan! I knew you could do it. Tariq owes you a treat at 'kintuki' now. You thoroughly deserve it!"

"Roy?" Tariq entered the password and the last laugh. He had played another prank successfully. Tariq was compelled to treat Adnan at the 'kintuki' and it drained of his allowance and left him flat broke for the rest of the week!

The Story of Athens

by Tanzeen I Ali

LONG ago, when the earth was very young, giants ruled the world. These giants lived high above the earth on top of huge mountains.

One day, the giants thought it would be a fine idea to build a great city on the earth and Poseidon one of the giants said, "After we build it, I should rule it. After all, I am the strongest."

"No, said Athena. "I should rule the city. After all, I am the wisest."

A wise old giant spoke up. "It doesn't matter who is the strongest or who is the wisest," he said. "What matters is who can do the most for the new city. Let Athena and Poseidon show us what they will do."

Poseidon pointed his finger at the earth and a stream of bright yellow sparks flowed out. When the sparks hit the earth, the earth split open.

"There!" boomed Poseidon, pointing to the deep crack he had made.

"That is what I will give to the people of the new city."

The giants mouths fell open in wonder as they started down into the crack. At the bottom was a mighty ocean. Hue ships with golden sails floating in the water. Waves washed on the beach. White sea birds flew above the shore.

"If I rule the city, then my people will rule the seas," boasted Poseidon. "Their ships will bring wealth to their shore. The city will grow into a great empire.

"Athena is very wise," one giant said "But she will have to do something special to top Poseidon's sea."

Athena was not worried. She knew that she was not as strong as Poseidon. But she knew that she was wiser.

While the others watched, Athena picked up a handful of dirt and let it fall. The dirt hit the ground with a puff of smoke. When the smoke cleared, everyone saw a tiny gray plant where the handful of dirt had fallen. Athena lifted her arms, and the plant began to grow. In no time at all, it had become tall tree, covered with small green fruit.

"This tree and others like it is what I will give

to the new city," said Athena. Poseidon laughed so hard that the mountain shook. "I have made the wind howl and the waves crash. I have made great sailing ships. Is a tiny tree the best you can do, wise Athena?"

Once more, Poseidon threw back his head and laughed. "I ask the judges to let me rule the new city," he said. "It is clear that Athena has nothing to give the people."

"The judges were about to say that Poseidon was the ruler, when Athena waved her hand. "Wait" she said. "Hear what I have to say. Only then can you say who should rule."

"Speak, said, Poseidon. Tell us about your little tree."

"This is not just any tree," said Athena. "This is an olive tree. There is wealth locked inside its fruit. The olive tree will make the new city the richest place on earth."

"How can a tree do that?" asked one of the judges.

From this one tree, the people can get many things," said Athena. "They can get olives to eat, and they can get olive oil. One cupful of oil will light their homes and cook their food. The people of the new city can become traders. Before long the new city and its people will be very rich."

"This tree is indeed special," said one judge. "The oil locked inside its fruits will bring the people great wealth and power"

"Then am I to be ruler of the new city?" asked Athena.

"Yes," answered the judges. "You have proved that you can do more for the city than Poseidon can."

With Athena's help, the people soon found there was indeed great wealth hidden in even one cupful of olive oil. The traders of the new city found people near and far who wanted to use the oil. In just a few years, the new city was rich beyond anyone's dreams. To show their thanks, the people named their city Athens, after Athena. Many people say it was once the finest city in all the world.

Adapted from "The new city" & "Turning corners."

Life

by Trishna

"DIPESH, I have to talk to you," she whispered.

Then she sat down, staring at me for a while. She hesitated to spear up. I gathered her courage and she finally lifted up her lowered face and in a trembling voice she murmured, "Dipesh, your father is marrying again!"

Uttering those distressful words, my aunt left silently, leaving my heart overflowing with pain. My brain turned numb; it refused to function at that moment. I could feel tears rolling down my eyes, and the very moment I closed them, I remembered my father's face, saying what he had said when I had asked him about remarriage, seven years earlier. Then again, I thought that he was advancing towards the right path. How long could a person stay alone? But did that mean he had forgotten my mother? Then why did he say that it would be impossible? I did not know how to think or react. I stayed there, still, for a long while, until something struck my mind like an arrow. I remembered how Reesha always praised my father for his everlasting love for my mother. How would she take this? How could I tell her now? The right went by, keeping me sleepless. My head ached in worries. Would I lose Reesha?

I called up Reesha in the morning. I told her I had to say something important. She could guess that I was in an uncomfortable situation, and she agreed to meet immediately.

I waited on the footpath beside the main road. I was preparing myself for the forthcoming situation. My heart throbbed, as if, it would shoot out of my chest. I constantly thought I would lose Reesha. A few minutes later, she arrived, smiling at me from her car. I felt

much lighter seeing her. She seemed excited too. Her car stopped nearby but not exactly in front of me. She carelessly and hurriedly got down on the other side of the road, not seeing the rushing truck behind. I screamed aloud, running. Towards her, intending to save her. But the storming vehicle hit her and its crushing wheels ran over her body, leaving it in pieces. The truck sped and vanished apparently, and there, in a sea of blood, lied Reesha. Her whole body was destroyed. One of her legs had torn apart from its position, and her face drowned in a pool of blood. I saw her lie in silence. There was the body, the dead body of my love, my life. There was the scene which I never wished to see. There lied the girl for whom I lived, right in front of my eyes, there she was she was no more. The whole incident happened in front of my eyes and I could do nothing! Another death had occurred — first my mother and then Reesha, which had left me in unbearable sorrow.

I took her in my arms and looking up at the sky, I cried out, "God, why did you give death to our segregation?" Reesha slept innocently, in my arms as I howled endlessly. She had left, but she left no reason for me to live.

Dipesh had written everything in his diary. Which was found after he poisoned himself, right after Reesha's funeral. There are millions of boys and girls like Dipesh, who lead their life floating in oceans of tears and distress. There are many who have sacrificed their life at a young age ... By the time you have read this article, there will be many who are crying, whose hearts are paining and who are surrendering to the misfortunes of life. Are there no ways to accord them a happy life?

