

From Colonel PAW Edwards MBE



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MALAYSIA 2007

Many will be aware that next year will be the 50th Anniversary of "Merdeka" or independence for Malaysia and the Malaysian Government has declared it "Visit Malaysia Year". The British High Commission is planning a variety of events in 2007 to highlight the contribution made by the UK and to ensure we maintain a firm partnership for the future. For my part, I wish to highlight the contribution made by our armed forces and police services during the Second World War, the Emergency and the Confrontation. It follows that although we encourage veterans to visit Malaysia at any time, 2007 will clearly be special. I know that many already intend to visit and the Malaysian government are also very keen for you to do so. The aim of this open letter is to explain what is planned thus far for 2007 and to advise groups of veterans what my small defence section can do for them and how they can help us to help them.

As yet, the plans for Merdeka Day 31 August remain unconfirmed by the Malaysian Government and we are keeping in close touch. However, it is likely that they will include a marching parade with a section for veterans. There could also be a special social function on the night of the 30th. As soon as we know the arrangements have been confirmed we will pass on the details.

How can we help groups of veterans? Your tour company will do much but we can also assist with up to date local knowledge, memorial services (eg contact a local padre), access to bases where veterans used to serve and perhaps even presentations of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) to those eligible.

How can they help us to help them? Primarily by giving us warning of their intentions as far in advance as possible and then staying in touch. For example; to gain access to a site which is currently an operational barracks will require a letter from us to the Malaysian Ministry of Defence at least two months in advance with a list of names and passport numbers. Similarly, if we are to book a padre and perhaps a bugler we would need about the same. For the presentation of PJMs by a senior Malaysian we would need to provide at least three months warning. In sum, groups should contact us at an early stage with a draft programme and rough numbers and we will work with them to ensure they get the very best from their visit. Avoid Ramadan, which should be roughly 10 September to 12 October 2007.

I have one final request and that is for articles for publication in newspapers here. Notwithstanding the fine website www.britains-smallwars.com where many veterans have posted first hand stories of their service in the region, if any veterans are willing to give some personal accounts of their time here whether Second World War, Confrontation or Emergency they would gratefully received, ideally with one or two photographs.

I will endeavour to update you regarding the arrangements for next year as soon as I know them. Meanwhile, my e-mail address is paul.edwards3@fco.gov.uk and the team also consists of Lt Cdr Martin Davis RN (martin.davis@fco.gov.uk) and WO2 Phil Owen (phil.owen@fco.gov.uk). We also have a central mailbox: defence.kualalumpur@fco.gov.uk which is checked daily. Our website www.ukmilitarygraves.org.my is in the process of a facelift and will include the latest information in due course.

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