
Malaysia

Kota Bharu Kelantan

Cultural Cities Profile
East Asia

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Introducing Kota Bharu

Kota Bharu is the epitome of the Malay culture, with its rich cultural heritage and distinctive urban landscape. It is the birthplace of many traditional arts in Malaysia, from giant kites to intricate textiles, performance art and traditional games. The city is a significant hub for celebrating indigenous culture and for supporting traditional cultural practice in a contemporary context. This includes a strong and innovative crafts sector.

Kota Bharu is the capital of Kelantan State. Central to the Kelantan Structure Plan 2040 and implemented across government agencies, the direction of Kelantan state government is “Developing with Islam”. This focuses on balancing economic, physical, and infrastructure development across the states in a respectful manner compatible with the dominant religion of the State.¹

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[Kota Bharu] is the cradle of authentic Malay culture.

Nik Mahmud bin Nik Jaffar, Deputy Director of Kelantan Tourism Information Centre (TIC)²

City Vision/Mission/Slogan

The vision of the Kelantan State government is to become the civil service leader by 2020. Its missions are to provide world-class civil services and strengthen Kelantan’s civil service management system. Its motto is ‘towards world class organisation’.³

The vision of Kota Bharu Municipal Council Islamic City (MPKB-BRI) is for Kota Bharu Islamic City Municipal Council to become the leading organisation that will develop Kota Bharu City as a clean, beautiful and independent Islamic city based on the ‘developing with Islam’ policy. The mission of the city council is to bring prosperity and well-being to the citizens, enhancing socio-economic development, and contributing to the economic growth of Kota Bharu city in particular and the state of Kelantan in general.⁴

Ismail Petra Arch, Kota Bharu.

Photo © G.Mannaerts,
CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

- ¹ Rancangan Struktur Negeri Kelantan (Leaflet).
- ² Interview by Penang Institute
- ³ Visi, Misi dan Moto, Kelantan State Government. <https://www.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/suk-kelantan/info-pejabat-suk/visi-misi-dan-moto>
- ⁴ Visi dan Misi, MPKB-BRI. <https://mpkbbri.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/mengenai-kami/berita-2/berita-4>



Creative Industries and Cultural Services

Kelantan is best known as the cradle of Malay civilisation. It possesses a unique native dialect that can be hard to understand even for people who can speak Malay and it is the birthplace of many traditional arts in Malaysia, from giant kites to intricate textiles, performance art and traditional games.⁵

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Kelantan Government launched a targeted campaign, titled *Visit Kelantan Year 2020*. The efforts of the government focus on attracting domestic tourists with programmes carrying the theme: 'Family, Food and Festival', while ensuring the public and tourists strictly adhere to the precautionary measures as stated by the Health Ministry.⁶

East Coast Economic Region (ECER)

Kelantan falls under the Federal Government's East Coast Economic Region (ECER). In addition to Kelantan, the ECER also covers the states of Terengganu, Pahang and the district of Mersing in Johor. Under the ECER scheme, Kelantan is to be transformed into a major international tourism destination, an exporter of Malaysia's resources-based and manufactured products, as well as a vital trading, infrastructure and logistics hub.

- Five key clusters have been identified as development focus to move the region's economies up the value chain. These are: tourism; oil, gas and petrochemical; manufacturing; agriculture and education.

- Four key enablers identified to support development and attract investment to the region include transport, infrastructure, real estate and the initiatives as outlined in the ECER Master Plan.

Currently, the federal government through the East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) is working closely with the Kelantan government to improve the living standards of the people and eradicate poverty, as in 2020 Kelantan recorded the highest poverty rate in the ECER and the second highest in Malaysia, with a high percentage of the *Orang Asli* (Indigenous community) belonging to the 'dire poor' segment.⁷

To overcome youth unemployment and enable SMEs to bounce back post Covid-19, the ECER have identified key sectors that have the potential to create long-term economic growth. This includes the tourism sector, inclusive of cultural tourism. The improvement of infrastructure in major tourist locations is expected to enhance industry resilience and to attract both international and domestic visitors.

- One of the key projects of ECER's tourism infrastructure boost is the redevelopment of Kampung Laut as a 'Heritage Village'. The infrastructure upgrade is said to be completed in May 2021 and to benefit over 11 local entrepreneurs.
- Two new commercial complexes – Laman Warisan and Laman Seni (near the Kampung Laut Mosque) – are also being actively developed, aiming at completion in early 2022. Displays and sales points for local cultural products such as batik, kites and handicrafts will be made available.

Wayang Kulit (Shadow Puppetry) performance in Kelantan.

Photo © Tourism Malaysia



⁵ Kelantan: The Real Cradle of Malay Heritage Few Know About. <https://www.lokalocal.com/blog/local-story/kelantan-malay-heritage>

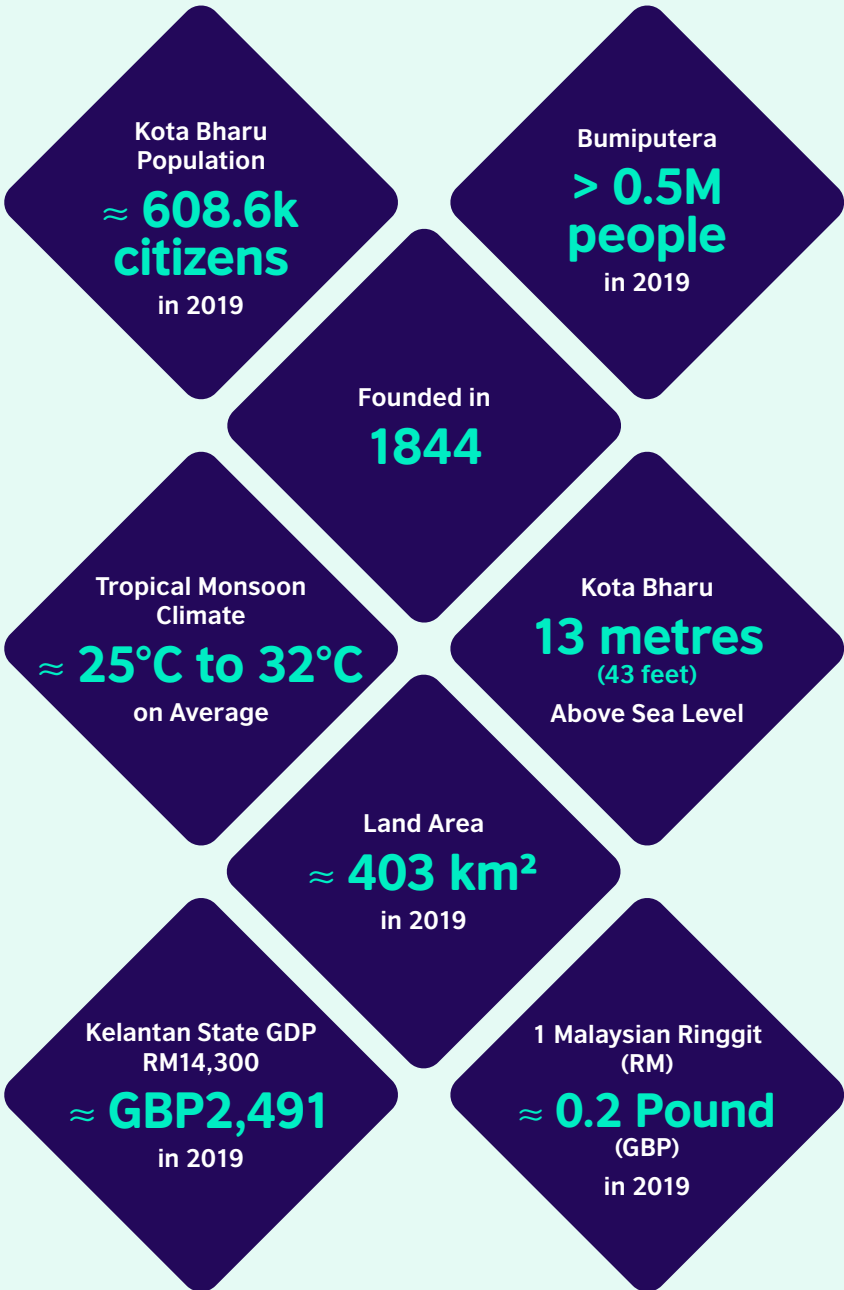
⁶ Visit Kelantan Year 2020: State to focus on attracting domestic tourists. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/03/12/visit-kelantan-year-2020-state-to-focus-on-attracting-domestic-tourists/1845907>

⁷ <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/highimpact-ecerdc-projects-can-improve-living-standards-kelantan-folks>, accessed in July 2021.

Kota Bharu in Numbers

Kota Bharu has **2 government hospitals** and **51 government clinics** as of 2018

In Kelantan, the Malays speak **Kelantanese Malay**



45 Kelantan Women Development Centres were set up across the state to provide handicraft skills to women through sewing, handicrafts making, cuisine and other training programmes

Kota Bharu is sister city with **Kasaoka, Japan** since 1999

Kota Bharu is only **20km** from **Thailand's** border

Context

Kota Bharu was established in 1844. From 1936 until 1970, the city was managed by the Kota Bharu Town Council (*Majlis Bandaran Kota Bharu*), then by the Town Board (*Lembaga Bandaran*) in 1971 after MBKB was abolished. In 1978, the Kota Bharu Town Board was restructured and upgraded to the Kota Bharu Municipal Council (*Majlis Perbandaran Kota Bharu*).⁸

Kota Bharu Islamic City Municipal Council and Ketereh District Council Islamic Municipal are administered by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Kelantan State Government's policies.

The city was one of the first places seized (December 10, 1941) by the Japanese in their drive to capture Singapore during World War II.⁹

Location/Region

Situated near the mouth of the Kelantan River and close to the Thailand border, Kota Bharu is situated in the northeastern region of Peninsular Malaysia, close to the southern Thai border. The name Kota Bharu means 'new city' or 'new castle/fort' in Malay.

Ethnic Diversity

The Malay language, as the national language, is the most commonly spoken language in Kelantan. English is another compulsory subject in the national education system. Other common languages spoken in Malaysia are Mandarin, Tamil and the dialects of different ethnic groups.

The Kelantanese, regardless of race or ethnicity, have a strong state identity and are united by their culture and dialect (known as Baso Melayu Kelate), which is not easy to understand by the Malays from other parts of Malaysia. Indigenous people, such as the Betek, live in the National Park and converse in the Betek dialect. In 2019, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, Kota Bharu district had:

- Bumiputera 564.3K
- Chinese 26.9K
- Indians 1.8K
- Other 1.8K
- Non-citizens 13.9K



Despite having a Malay-majority population, some Chinese dialects were spoken with a little mix of Thai, especially in areas like Tumpat.

Noor Azran Mohamad Noor, Malaysian Historical Society
Kelantan branch treasurer¹⁰

⁸ Latar Belakang MPKB-BRI. <https://mpkbbri.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/mengenai-kami/berita-2/latar-belakang>

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kota-Bharu>

¹⁰ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/12/13/a-state-rich-in-culture>

Cultural, Arts and Civic Policy

The Kelantan Malay cultural landscape is distinctive and diverse. Policies on culture and arts lean towards practices that are deemed in alignment within Islamic principles.

Kelantan is poised to be a key destination for Islamic tourism according to State Unity, Culture, Heritage and Tourism Committee chairman Major (R) Datuk Md Anizam Abdul Rahman. To achieve this goal, the State has allocated budgets to restore tourist sites and promote local attractions.

The National Department for Culture and Arts (JKKN KB) is another central stakeholder in the city's cultural scene. It organises an arts troupe that performs at local and international events, and also manages an art gallery with displays on traditional arts. JKKN KB has an active social media presence, which promotes art troupe performance updates and community cultural news.

A rich portfolio of local cultural bodies can be found via the registry of the *Majlis Kebudayaan Kelantan* (Kelantan Cultural Council). These include associations for writers, artists, theatre, *dikir barat*, *wau* makers, *silat* practitioners, traditional or folk music, actors and more.

Key Policies in Culture/Cultural Tourism

Kelantan Tourism Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government

This policy aims at developing the tourism sector as an act of worship to Allah, based on the principle of “Invites to Goodness and Prevents Evil”. Strategies have also been formulated to promote Kelantan as a tourist destination, including:

- Promote Kelantan as the State of ‘*Serambi Mekah*’ (The Veranda of Makkah) and as the go-to place during the Month of Ramadan;

- Promote the image of ‘*Kota Bharu Kota Budaya*’ (Kota Bharu a cultural city), ‘*Zon Budaya*’ (cultural zone) and ‘*Zon Ilmu*’ (knowledge zone);
- Develop and promote recreational places, theme parks, technology parks, sports facilities, homestays, MICE tourism, jungle tracking, riverine activities, traditional games, historical sites, Handicraft Villages, cultural arts and architecture, that are deemed appropriate under Islam;
- Maintain and preserve the architecture of traditional Malay villages on the outskirts of the city and develop them into a tourist attraction;
- Ensure the design of government and public premises highlight the characteristics of the local Malay architecture.¹¹

Kelantan Sustainable Development Master Plan 2019 – 2023, 2019. Kelantan State Economic Planning Unit.

The vision of the Kelantan Sustainable Development Master Plan is to position Kelantan as a state overflowing with blessings, mercy, prosperity and welfare, through sustainable development. Five Master Projects were highlighted:

- The Green Tourism Project Proposal at Lojing Highlands focusing on the Rafflesia Conservation Park;
- The Bandar Baru Tunjong Project Proposal to increase the number of activities in the town, enhance locals’ quality of life, and attract investors;
- The Tok Bali Port Project Proposal to increase the number of activities in the port and attract investors to the Tok Bali Special Area Plan;
- The Kota Bharu Project Proposal to elevate Kota Bharu as a smart and sustainable city, and
- The Kelantan Project Proposal to develop the global bioplastic industry in the state.¹²

¹¹ Kelantan Tourism Policy. P. 11 – 12.

¹² Kelantan Sustainable Development Master Plan. P. 11.

Religion and Society



Religion has a pronounced role in the civilian life and policy direction. Central to the Kelantan Structure Plan 2040 and implemented across government policies, “Developing with Islam” is the focus.

Kelantan Youth Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

The policy was formulated to ‘develop youths who can contribute to the well-being of the state’. They are expected to be knowledgeable and have strong aqeedah (faith) and power of mind, physical strength, great personality, and courage. To realise these goals and to implement the youth development plan efficiently and systematically, the state government aims to:

- Establish a Kelantan State Youth Policy

Coordinating Committee.

- Prepare strategies and activities like economic and social programmes or Ummah development activities.¹³

Kelantan Social Problem Prevention Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

The goal of this state policy is to prevent and control the spread of social problems in Kelantan through Islam. The policy focuses on three key strategies:

- Identify and control social problems, antecedents and risk factors.
- Take action against individuals at risk to protect communities.
- Mobilise community resources.¹⁴

Capacity Building and Digital Development

Recognising the monthly household income is below the national average, the state government implemented the Kelantan Sustainable Development Masterplan 2019 – 2023 and the Kelantan Strategic Plan 2016 – 2025 to upgrade local infrastructure and upskill citizens.

Honing in on green and smart industries, subsequent new business will be expected to generate employment opportunities especially for school leavers. Strategies include capacity building and enablement for youth and the underprivileged as well as infrastructure upgrade to ensure safe water, energy and food.

In terms of digital development, an innovation hub has been planned on the outskirts of the city with the aim of attracting new investors and public private partnership for development of green technology projects.

Kota Bharu is also host to numerous local universities and colleges allowing for potential to leverage on public, private and academic collaborations to realise these plans.

Key Policies in Digital Infrastructure

Kelantan ICT Gateway Sdn. Bhd. (KIGSB)

The company’s equity is wholly owned by the Kelantan state government through the Kelantan State Economic Development Corporation (PKINK). KIGSB, which began operating in 2015, has been appointed by the Kelantan State Government as a One-Stop Agency (OSA) and the State Government Strategic Partner for the development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry, which plays a role in planning, coordinating and monitoring ICT and digital development programmes, projects and initiatives in Kelantan.¹⁵

KelantanPay

Kelantan Utilities Mubaarakan Holdings Sdn Bhd, in partnership with Kelantan ICT Gateway Sdn Bhd and Zen Trillion Sdn Bhd developed KelantanPay. It is an application that allows users to pay bills, taxes, license, permit application, and so on.¹⁶

¹³ Kelantan Youth Policy.

¹⁴ Kelantan State Social Problem Prevention Policy.

¹⁵ Kelantan ICT Gateway Sdn. Bhd. <http://kigsb.com.my/our-company/company-profile>

¹⁶ KelantanPay. <https://kelantanpay.com>

Kelantan Agriculture Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

The Kelantan State Agricultural Policy with the slogan “Developing Together with Islam”, is a policy that emphasises economic growth and development as well as commercial agriculture to maximise income and position Kelantan as the national food granary. The policy aims to:

- Maximise income from agriculture based on production efficiency and increase productivity by selecting profitable crops and through the efficient use of modern technology.

- Intensify and expand the agricultural sector through intensive rural development, commercialisation and large-scale agriculture; encourage the use of modern technology and management; and encourage the involvement and participation of the private sector in commercial agriculture.
- Position Kelantan as the national food granary by doubling crop production for food, livestock production, and production of the fishing industry; and developing Small and Medium Industrial Parks for the food processing industry.¹⁷

Creative Entrepreneurship



Operating across three campuses, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan is known for its programme that enable students to become high-impact creative entrepreneurs with the help of technology.

Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

The Faculty of Creative Technology & Heritage (FTKW) was set up in 2006 in line with the National Creative Industry Policy (DIKN, 2009), which aims to preserve the heritage and propel Malaysia as a high-income, creative hub in the region.

- FTKW specialises in providing graduates with faculty supports to position them as creative entrepreneurs in the fields of design, creative technology and heritage.¹⁸

Digital Kelantan Collection, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Digital Kelantan Collection is a major digital portal that promotes research in science by providing a lighthearted infotainment. It aims to inspire the public to learn about the history, culture, traditions and natural wealth of Kelantan.

- It collects and digitises records on cultural heritage across the state and achieve social harmony through encouraging local communities to understand their cultural origins.¹⁹

Key Policies in Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth

Kelantan Welfare and People Wellbeing Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

The Kelantan Welfare and People Wellbeing Policy is to encourage, guide, assist, and nurture residents to follow a virtuous and prosperous lifestyle. This policy aims to:

- Implement the concept of *Ubudiyyah* (obedience with submission), *Masuliyyah* (kindness) and *Itqan* (excellence).
- Increase the awareness of target groups on matters related to infrastructure development and available support systems.
- Encourage volunteerism and philanthropy.²⁰

¹⁷ Kelantan Agriculture Policy. P. 2.

¹⁸ Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.

¹⁹ Digital Kelantan Collection, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.

²⁰ Kelantan Welfare and People Wellbeing Policy. P. 8.

Kelantan Education Policy, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

In the education policy, Yayasan Islam Kelantan (YIK) is responsible for ensuring that education produces Muslims who are faithful, virtuous, knowledgeable, pious, and worthy to contribute to the development of the family unit, community, state and Ummah. Several steps and strategies have been undertaken for the above, namely:

- Implement the 'Towards an Independent YIK' policy;
- Increase government budget in education;
- Increase the number of permanent teachers, raise teachers' salaries and retirement benefits;
- Improve educational infrastructure, especially technological capability;
- Create schools of various streams in particular science, technology and tahfiz (reading, listening and reciting by heart).²¹

Kelantan Mawaddah Family Policy, 2015. Kelantan State Government.

The Kelantan Mawaddah Family Policy aims to strengthen the family and its well-being by increasing the potential of each family member to ensure that they each carry out their respective roles and duties effectively and they collectively contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of the society.²²

Kelantan Fitrah Children Policy, 2019. Kelantan State Government.

The Fitrah Children Policy (DKF) aims to strengthen the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development and potential of children by protecting their rights and ensuring that no child suffers from any form of discrimination.²³

Kelantan Women Policy, 2020. Kelantan State Government.

The Kelantan Women Policy aims to develop the potential of women to contribute to the development of the state, well-being of its people, and the ummah as a whole based on the Islamic way of life.²⁴

Culture and Inclusive Development – case studies

The Idea of OKU (Person with disabilities) Muqarrabun, 2020. Kelantan State Government.

The two thrusts for the development of the disabled are as follows: highlight the disabled community to others in the state and provide them with an adequate and appropriate support system; and educate the public about disabled people and encourage the public to accept disabled people without any form of discrimination.²⁵

Kelantan Affordable Housing Policy, 2020. Kelantan State Government.

The main goal and objective of the Kelantan Affordable Housing Policy is to provide houses that are affordable, adequate, liveable and of quality for the comfort and well-being of the people based on Islamic standards.

- This policy is a guideline set by the State Authority, Local Authority, Technical Agencies and Developers to plan and oversee the development of affordable housing development projects in the state.²⁶

Kelantan Women Development Centre

The Kelantan Women Development Centre was established in 2005 under the auspices of the Secretariat of Women, Youth and Sports Development. Presently, 45 PPWK have been established throughout the state of Kelantan to provide handicraft skills to women through sewing, handicrafts making, cuisine and other training programmes.²⁷

²¹ Kelantan Education Policy. P. 2.

²² Kelantan Mawaddah Family Policy. P. 5 – 6.

²³ Kelantan Fitrah Children Policy. P. 6 – 8.

²⁴ Kelantan Women Policy. P. 4.

²⁵ The Idea of OKU Muqarrabun. P. 1.

²⁶ Kelantan Affordable Housing Policy. P. 1.

²⁷ Pusat Pembangunan Wanita Kelantan (PPWK). <http://wanitakelantan.com/ppwk-memberdaya-wanita-kelantan>

Environment and Sustainability

Located on the river and coast, Kota Bharu is prone to floods and seasonal monsoon. Despite Kelantan government's pledge to sustainable management of natural resources and reduce the impact of climate change, disaster management such as drainage and flood mitigation measures often outshines the resources devoted to green policies. Indeed, as oil remains a priority sector for the economy, green policies are not given the priority seen in cities which prioritise environmental sustainability.

Less government attention is given to issues such as energy efficiency, green tourism and green solutions. Drivers of change such as introduction of new technology, modernisation and globalisation are also relatively slow in comparison to its counterparts across the country.

On city-making, the local plan – currently being revised to take Kota Bharu to 2035 – proposes to implement an 'Islamic streetscape' and expand the city's green and recreational spaces.

Like many other cities in Malaysia, Kota Bharu has also embraced street art. It has become a popular method to explore the city through its mural walk.

Key Policies in Environment and City Planning

Kelantan Structural Plan 2040, 2018. Kelantan State Government.

The Kelantan Structure Plan 2040 aims to turn Kelantan into a developed, sustainable, and dynamic state, through the development to improve quality of life.²⁸

Kelantan Southern Region Development Plan 2030, 2014. South Kelantan Development Authority.

The Kelantan Southern Region Development Plan 2030 is a critical roadmap, to transform Kelantan's Southern Region. The holistic transformation of Kelantan's Southern Region involves five phases. The primary initiatives are the development at Lojing and the establishment of the Inland Port.

- Other initiatives include the development of Gua Musang and Kuala Krai as a one-stop region and a heritage region respectively, and Jeli/Tanah Merah for ecotourism.²⁹

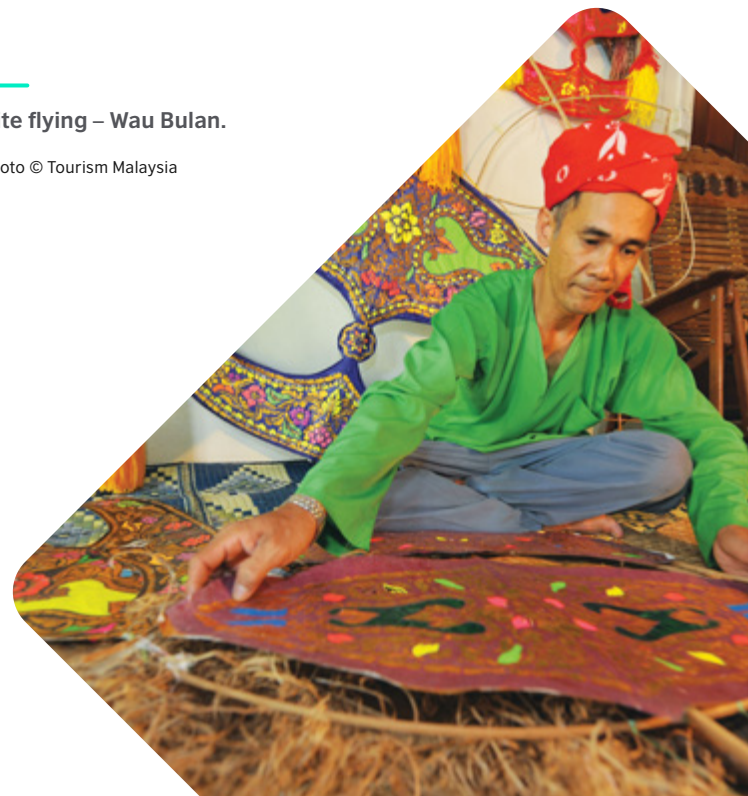
KESEDAR Strategic Plan: In A New Direction For South Kelantan 2030, 2014. South Kelantan Development Authority.

The vision of KESEDAR Strategic Plan is to become the most developed rural region in Malaysia. The objectives are as follows:

- Balance the population density ratio;
- Narrow the development gap between areas;
- Provide infrastructure facilities and social amenities;
- Improve the socioeconomic status of South Kelantan and eradicating hardcore poverty as well as reducing poverty;
- Invest and develop human capital.³⁰

Kite flying – Wau Bulan.

Photo © Tourism Malaysia



²⁸ Rancangan Struktur Negeri Kelantan (Leaflet).

²⁹ Kelantan Southern Region Development Plan 2030.

³⁰ KESEDAR Strategic Plan. P. 3.

Culture, Environment and Urban Landscape – case studies

Kelantan Utilities Mubaarakan Holdings Sdn Bhd, 2007

Kelantan Utilities Mubaarakan Holdings Sdn Bhd (KUM) was incorporated in 2007 and is wholly owned by Kelantan Chief Minister Incorporated (PMBK).

- KUM initially focused on water operations and sewerage management but has since then evolved by diversifying its investment portfolio to also cover the green technology industry.
- In 2019, KUM was officially appointed by the state government as its Strategic Partner in developing the green technology industry in Kelantan.³¹

Used Cooking Oil Campaign (UCO)

The 'Used Cooking Oil Campaign' (UCO) was initiated by the State Government together with Kelantan Utilities Mubaarakan Holdings Sdn Bhd (KUM). KUM has been collaborating with the Kelantan Women's Development Centre (PPWK) to collect Used Cooking Oil (UCO) by holding workshops and activities in an effort to build community creativity through Green Practices, and to subsequently succeed in the Clean Kelantanku Campaign.

- The used cooking oil is then recycled into biodiesel oil, soap, wax, flower soap and other products for commercialisation.³²

Bandar Tasek Raja, 2010 – present

Located in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, Bandar Tasek Raja, with a gross development value (GDV) of RM179 million, is the current project of Eastland Equity Bhd. The township is a joint venture development project

between the Kelantan state government, Majlis Daerah Pasir Mas, and Eastern Biscuit Factory Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Eastland.

- Bandar Tasek Raja was officially launched in October 2010 and is being carried out in two phases. Phase 1 consists of 112 units of shop offices and departmental stores, with a GDV of RM51 million while phase 2 comprises 154 units of three-storey shop offices, with a GDV of RM128 million. Development work for phase 2 started in October 2017.³³

Palekbang Bridge Project, 2020 – present

The construction of the one-kilometre Palekbang-Kota Baru bridge costs about RM250 million. The bridge will be the alternative route for motorists travelling from Tumpat to Kota Bharu to reduce traffic congestion on the Sultan Yahya Petra bridge. Once completed in November 2023, the bridge will become the fourth set-up across the Kelantan river for motorists travelling from Kota Baru.³⁴

Redevelopment of Kampung Laut, 2020 – present

The redevelopment of Kampung Laut or Kampung Warisan (Heritage Village) costs about RM40 million. It is going to bring a huge impact on the socio-economic status of the people, especially those living in Tumpat.

- It is expected to be completed in May 2021, and will provide business opportunities to local entrepreneurs. The main component in the first phase of the project is the relocation of the 300-year-old mosque believed to be the oldest in the region.³⁵

³¹ Kelantan Utilities Mubaarakan Holdings Sdn Bhd. <https://www.kelantanutilities.com.my>

³² Go Green. <https://www.kelantanutilities.com.my/go-green>

³³ Challenging business environment for Eastland. <https://www.nst.com.my/property/2020/08/617591/challenging-business-environment-eastland>

³⁴ Two development projects under ECERDC will boost Kelantan's domestic tourism. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/01/654143/two-development-projects-under-ecerdc-will-boost-kelantans-domestic>

³⁵ Two development projects under ECERDC will boost Kelantan's domestic tourism. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/01/654143/two-development-projects-under-ecerdc-will-boost-kelantans-domestic>

Cultural Ecosystem and Infrastructure

Kota Bharu being an Islamic city, is at times perceived as relatively conservative. Cultural funding from state agencies is limited; creative organisations and independent groups rely on grants from federal agencies such as the Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA) or national bodies like the National Visual Arts Development Board.

The Kota Bharu Street Art project is a fine example of private-public partnership. Kelantan Art Society (PESENI) first pitched the idea of starting a street art project to a few local authorities – which later led to a grant from Kelantan office of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC).

- The project continues to expand after the initial MOTAC seed funding, depicting traditional performances and well-known icons of these artistic genres. Some mural works feature solidarity for Islamic causes – there is a street nicknamed Palestine street for its depiction of the people, architecture and culture of Palestine.
- The street art project under PESENI remains open to their members and is inclusive across gender, age and career experience.

Regional stakeholders

East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Master Plan 2.0: The Next Leap 2018 – 2025

The state of Kelantan is expected to attract RM9.5 billion in private investments which will create 26,950

jobs and 19,760 entrepreneurship opportunities under the ECER Master Plan 2.0. The focus will be on manufacturing activities, as well as urban tourism, ecotourism, arts and, culture and heritage tourism to further promote economic growth.³⁶

- According to the Plan, the Kampung Laut in Tumpat will be turned into a Heritage Village (*Kampung Warisan*), acting as a living museum showcasing its rich local traditions and heritage while improving the socio-economic status of the locals through entrepreneurship activities.
- Projects in progress include: Kampung Laut (Tumpat Redevelopment as a Heritage Tourism Village); Palekbang-Kota Bharu Bridge; Kelar Water Treatment Plant (Phase 2), Pasir Mas; Tok Bali Integrated Fisheries Park (construction of sewage treatment plant, water tank and utilities); Tok Bali Industrial Park; Pulau Suri, Tumpat (Redevelopment of Pasar Terapung); and Human Capital Development Programme (empower ECER, entrepreneur ECER, ECER Talent Enhancement Programme).³⁷

ASEAN Food and Heritage Festival, 22 – 31 August 2019

The 2019 ASEAN Food and Heritage Festival features a variety of unique foods from 10 ASEAN countries including Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Brunei, Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines. The organisers also focused on local Kelantanese food.³⁸

³⁶ ECER Master Plan 2.0. P. 110.

³⁷ Kelantan. <https://www.ecerdc.com.my/about-ecer/kelantan>

³⁸ Festival makanan dan warisan himpun makanan 10 negara ASEAN. <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/wilayah/2019/08/601244/festival-makanan-dan-warisan-himpun-makanan-10-negara-asean>

Heritage Assets and Activation

There is no lack of cultural experiences one can have in Kota Bharu – from enjoying the built heritage to crafts to cultural performances and even immersing in the local community life. Multiple sites and practices across the city are in the national heritage register under the National Heritage Act.

Another highlight of Kota Bharu is its concentration of traditional cultural cottage industries for *wau* making (kite-making), batik printing, *keris* making, silver crafting and *songket* (gold cloth) weaving as well as woodcarving.



The best word to define Kelantan's culture is unique. There are many centuries-old heritage cultures in Kelantan that are still well-preserved until this date... Kelantan is very well-known for its variety of Malay cuisine, traditional arts, music and games. The buildings in Kelantan generally have their own distinctive features that symbolise the fusion of Islamic and Malay architectural elements... [making] them unique to the world...

Nik Mahmud bin Nik Jaffar, Deputy Director of Kelantan Tourism Information Centre (TIC)³⁹

UNESCO Titles

Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity: Mak Yong, 2008

Mak Yong is an ancient form of theatre developed by Malay communities. It merges acting, vocal and instrumental music, gestures and elaborated costumes. *Mak Yong* originated from villages in Kelantan in northwest Malaysia, and is performed either for entertainment or ritual purposes, more specifically healing practices.⁴⁰

Tentative List of World Heritage

National Park (Taman Negara) of Peninsular Malaysia, 2014

The National Park (*Taman Negara*) of Peninsular Malaysia is the first and largest national park gazetted in the country in 1938/1939. It is considered a hotspot for biodiversity as it hosts many species of flora and fauna with many of them being endemic, rare, vulnerable or otherwise threatened in Malaysia.⁴¹

Royal Belum State Park, 2017

The State Park is part of the Peninsular Malaysian Central Forest Spine (CFS) covering an area of 27,891 ha. It is considered a hotspot for biodiversity in Malaysia as it hosts diverse ecosystems and habitats for many species of flora and fauna of which many are endemic, rare, vulnerable or otherwise threatened in Malaysia and the region. The park plays a vital role in the environmental education of ecosystems and for scientific research in biodiversity, not only for Malaysians but also for everyone in the region and the World.⁴²

Heritage Activation Case Studies (selected)

Kelantan State Museum Corporation

Two heritage resources are listed on the website of the Kelantan State Museum Corporation, being:

- *Wayang Kulit* (Shadow Puppet), a traditional theatre performance art that is popular among the Southeast Asian community.⁴³
- The monument of the Japanese First Landing Site during World War II. It is located at Kuala Pak Amat, Pantai Sabak. It marked the beginning of the war between Japan and the British in Malaya.⁴⁴

Kampung Laut Mosque, 1730s – present

Masjid Kampung Laut is a mosque situated in the vicinity of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. It was located at Nilam Puri, facing the Kelantan campus, about 20 km away from the city of Bandar Kota Bharu. It is an important religious centre which was expanded to include additional prayer rooms, store rooms, a verandah and a tower.⁴⁵

Padang Merdeka Kota Bharu, 1840 – present

Padang Merdeka, better known as Padang Besar among the locals, is an important historical civic open space in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.⁴⁶

Muhammadi Mosque, 1867 – present

Muhammadi Mosque is also known as Masjid Besar Kota Bharu. Its wooden structure was built in 1867 but replaced with a more solid concrete structure between 1922 and 1925. Further renovations were done on the mosque in 1959, 1968, 1976 and 1987. Masjid Muhammadi is also a renowned Islamic learning centre in the region, particularly among religious scholars and those seeking knowledge of the religion.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Mak Yong. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mak-yong-theatre-00167>

⁴¹ National Park. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5927>

⁴² Royal Belum State Park. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6176>

⁴³ Wayang Kulit Kelantan. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/warisan/wayang-kulit/wayang-kulit-kelantan>

⁴⁴ Tugu Laman Pendaratan Jepun 1941. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/warisan/monumen/tugu-sabak>

⁴⁵ Kampung Laut Mosque, Nilam Puri. <http://www.mdketereh.gov.my/en/visitors/places-interest/kampung-laut-mosque-nilam-puri>

⁴⁶ Open Spaces in Urban Malaysia. P 36.

⁴⁷ Muhammadi Mosque. <https://itc.gov.my/listings/masjid-muhammadi>

Bank Pitis, 1890 – present

Bank Pitis was a place used to store treasury notes and important state documents. It was set up in 1889 – 1890. The longish office building was demolished in the 1940s but the 5m by 2.4m structure that was named as Bank Piti remains.⁴⁸

Guillemard Bridge, 1924 – present

The Guillemard Railway Bridge is a bridge crossing the Kelantan River at Kursial, Tanah Merah. This bridge is the longest railway bridge in Malaysia. The name ‘Guillemard’ is named after the British Governor, Sir Laurence Guillemard (the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner Malay States).⁴⁹

Krai Stairs, 1927 – present

Krai Stairs, formerly known as the Bradley Stairs, was built in 1927. Its name was changed to “Krai Stairs” in 1994. It functions as a water transportation base connecting Kuala Krai to several villages upstream and downstream that cannot be reached by road. It is also used as a place to measure the water level during the monsoon season.⁵⁰



Masjid Muhammadi, Kota Bharu.

Photo © Tourism Malaysia

⁴⁸ Bank Pitis harks back to old Kelantan. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/05/01/bank-pitis-harks-back-to-old-kelantan>

⁴⁹ Jambatan Guillemard. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/tempat-bersejarah/jambatan-guillemard>

⁵⁰ Tangga Krai. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/tempat-bersejarah/tangga-krai>

‘Movers and Shakers’ in the Cultural and Creative Sector of Kota Bharu (selected)

Community-led activities rely on alternative spaces, as the public facilities and venues often host State and Municipal sanctioned programmes. This includes: Drum & Desk⁵¹ which also functions as a co-working space and organises events such as storytelling sessions, a Maker’s Market and Techstars Startup Weekend. The Philla⁵² is a popular hang-out of local cultural practitioners. It hosts regular performances, workshops and exhibitions in both its indoor café

spaces and outdoor plaza. This reflects a wider trend where local cultural practitioners have begun to start their own small hospitality business to offer accommodation and cultural experience to visitors.

In addition to this, the local community continues to stage traditional cultural performances. Groups like PUSAKA have a national profile in their research and documentation of cultural practices, as well as their proactive organisation of the local artist community.

Table 1 Selected Kota Bharu stakeholders⁵³

Media/Film/Digital	Arts	Crossover – Culture/Arts/Lifestyle
CutiKelantan, 2011	Cik Minah Songket and Batik, 1930	Akademi Arjunasukma, 2009
KCTV Production/ Kelantan Creative TV, 2015	Eyo Hock Seng, Tok Dalang (Wayang Kulit master)	Akademi Nik Rashiddin, 2007
Kelantan TV, 2011	Nik Faiz Nik Amin, founder of Gahara and president of Malaysian Craft Council (MCC)	Geng Wak Long, 2008
	Kelantan Malay Traditional Shadow Play (Wayang Kulit) Gallery, 2008	Kedai Hitam Putih, 2013
	Mak Yong Kijang Emas Cultural Group, 2005	Gu Kito, creative entrepreneurs
	Rosnan Abdul Rahman, director of JKKN Kelantan and performing artist	Nik Nur Amalina, Kelingkan
	Sulizi bin Che Awang, performing artist	Amir Harith bin Mat Kashim (Bunij), CEO of Bujin’s Batik
	Wau Gallery Pak Sapie and Wan Anuar, 1980s	
	Kotak Seni, art gallery	
	Pauline Fan, creative director and Eddin Khoo, founder director, PUSAKA	
	Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Warisan Pusaka troupe	
	Kumpulan Kijang Emas, Dikir Barat troupe	
	Radix Dix, Wayang Kulit	

⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/drumanddesk>

⁵² <https://www.facebook.com/thephiliaventure>

⁵³ For the purpose of this report, cultural influencers are defined as the media or cultural sector go to people comprising key opinion leaders who are networked into the public, private and cultural scene. They or their organisations, where possible, have a substantial following (>50,000 followers) especially on social media and/or digital channels and are seen as credible experts in their field and can influence change, innovating culture and arts practices through their programmes. In order to provide a sampling of the movers and shakers, they have been categorised into 3 key sectors comprising media, film and digital, the arts, and those within a crossover of culture, arts and lifestyle.

Media/Film/Digital

CutiKelantan, 2011 – present

CutiKelantan is a blog that provides information about tourism in Kelantan. The content of this blog includes places of interest, street food, homestays, resorts and hotels. Most of the articles in the blog are written by the founder of CutiKelantan and other writers who have experienced Kelantan.⁵⁴

KCTV Production/ Kelantan Creative TV, 2015 – present

Kelantan Creative TV is an online TV featuring tourist attractions, food enterprises, unique culture and travel, and the daily life of Kelantanese People.⁵⁵

Kelantan TV, 2011 – present

Administered by Serambi Media Network, Kelantan TV is an alternative site that enables visitors to follow the development of the State of Kelantan through video and photo news.⁵⁶

Arts and Craft

Cik Minah Songket and Batik, 1930 – present

Cik Minah Songket and Batik is a renowned *songket* and weaving company in Kelantan which sells *songket*, batik and local handicrafts.⁵⁷

Eyo Hock Seng, Tok Dalang (Wayang Kulit master)

Eyo Hock Seng is the only non-Malay *Tok Dalang* (*wayang kulit* puppet master and storyteller) in Kelantan. He has been a *Tok Dalang* for more than 40 years and is among the 10 *wayang kulit* puppet masters who still perform shows in the state.⁵⁸ He is also a renowned *Tukang Karut* (a Jester) in the art of *Dikir Barat*.

Nik Faiz Nik Amin, founder of Gahara and president of Malaysian Craft Council (MCC)

Gahara was established in 2007 by architect-turned-artist Nik Faiz Nik Amin, a third-generation batik artisan based in Penampang, Kelantan. It is one of the leading premium batik textile producers in Malaysia under the label Ruzzgahara. It specialises in block printing and is known for its unique techniques ranging from tie-dye to *shibori*. Its production and creative hubs are based in Kota Bharu, Kelantan and is known as Rumah Gahara. In Kuala Lumpur, Gahara is based at the BoutiqueCafe, located at the National Textile Museum.⁵⁹ Nik Faiz also founded the Malaysian Craft Council or Pertubuhan Kraf Malaysia in 2019. The non-profit membership organisation was set up to promote an international interest for the Malaysian craft industry – for the people, by the people.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ CutiKelantan. <https://www.facebook.com/cutikelantan>

⁵⁵ Kelantan Creative TV. <https://www.facebook.com/KelantanCreativeTV>, accessed in July 2021; KCTV Production. <https://www.facebook.com/KCTVProduction>

⁵⁶ Kelantan TV. <https://www.facebook.com/kelantantv>

⁵⁷ Cik Minah Songket & Batik. <https://www.facebook.com/Cik-Minah-Songket-Batik-343959184765>

⁵⁸ Meet, Eyo Hock Seng and Adam Eyo, your Tok Dalang. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/12/436895/meet-eyo-hock-seng-and-adam-eyo-your-tok-dalang-nsttv>

⁵⁹ Gahara. <https://www.gahara.my>

⁶⁰ Malaysian Craft Council. <https://www.facebook.com/malaysiancraftcouncil>

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We are giving batik a contemporary twist and connecting traditional techniques to fresh and imaginative designs. This blend of the traditional and modern is the creative quality of Malaysia and Kelantan.

Nik Faiz Nik Amin, founder of Gahara and president of Malaysian Craft Council (MCC)⁶¹

Kelantan Malay Traditional Shadow Play (Wayang Kulit) Gallery, 2008 – present

Kelantan Malay Traditional Shadow Play Gallery was formed by Muhammad Dain Othman (Pak Dain) who was active in *Wayang Kulit* performances from 1983 until 1990 and performed locally and abroad. He established the gallery in 2008 to popularise the art form.⁶² Pak Dain is also the master puppeteer of Fusion Wayang Kulit, a new style Wayang Kulit play inspired by characters from movies like Star Wars as well as superheroes from Marvel and DC Comics.⁶³

Mak Yong Kijang Emas Cultural Group, 2005 – present

The Mak Yong Kijang Emas group started in 2005 under the guidance of the Mak Yong Apprenticeship Programme of JKKN Kelantan. The group consists of 20 contract artists made of dancers and musicians who are capable of performing *Mak Yong* and other types of dances and music. The group is often invited to perform at various venues in Kelantan and abroad.⁶⁴

Rosnan Abdul Rahman, director of JKKN Kelantan and performing artist

Rosnan Abdul Rahman is the director of JKKN in Kelantan. He is also a well-known performing artist who acted as *Pak Yong* (the King character), a character often played by women and rarely by men, in the traditional *Mak Yong* performance.⁶⁵

Sulizi bin Che Awang, performing artist

Sulizi bin Che Awang or better known as Cikgu Sulizi, is a school teacher and a well-known *Dikir Barat* (traditional music form) performing artist who has produced several albums and is actively involved in *Dikir Barat* related activities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.⁶⁶

Wau Gallery Pak Sapie and Wan Anuar, 1980s – present

Pak Sapie was a well-known *wau* (traditional kite) maker. After his passing in 2018, his son, Wan Anuar took over to continue his late father's legacy.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Interview by TFCC.

⁶² Wayang Pak Dain. https://wayangpakdain.com/index-page_id-11.html

⁶³ Made in Malaysia: Pak Dain, master shadow puppeteer & Fusion Wayang Kulit. <https://www.prestigeonline.com/my/people-events/people/made-in-malaysia-pak-dain-fusion-wayang-kulit>

⁶⁴ National Department for Culture and Arts, JKKN Kelantan. <http://www.jkkn.gov.my/en/jkkn-kelantan>

⁶⁵ Rosnan dari dunia seni bina ke dunia Mak Yong. <https://www.astroawani.com/berita-hiburan/rosnan-dari-dunia-seni-bina-ke-dunia-mak-yong-114376>; Official website: <http://www.jkkn.gov.my/ms/jkkn-kelantan>

⁶⁶ Sulizi bin Che Awang. <http://cikgusulizi.blogspot.com/2012/11/profil.html>

⁶⁷ Galeri Wau Pak Sapie Dan Wan Anuar. <https://www.facebook.com/galeriwau>

Kota Keni, gallery

Kota Keni is an independent gallery, offering “a safe place to create arts, restore and renew hopes and aspirations”. It runs workshops and capacity building programme from watercolour and art therapy sessions, to studio visits and many more.⁶⁸

Pauline Fan, creative director and Eddin Khoo, founder director, PUSAKA

Pauline Fan, creative director and Eddin Khoo, founder director of PUSAKA. PUSAKA is a cultural organisation that works intimately with the leading custodians of ritual and traditional performing arts in Malaysia and the region. It is dedicated to creating a comprehensive documentary archive of traditional performing arts in Malaysia while strengthening its viability at the community level. It revitalises cultural traditions through organising regular performances and youth instruction projects in local communities, ensuring the transmission of these traditions to a succeeding generation. It also works closely with international partners to present authentic Malaysian performance traditions at cultural festivals and programmes abroad.⁶⁹

Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Warisan Pusaka troupe

One of the most accomplished in Malaysia, the Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Warisan Pusaka troupe was founded by the late Tok Dalang Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollah Baju Merah), renowned for his dexterity and subtlety as well as his provocative presentation of ‘irreverent’ *Wayang*. The troupe is now steered by the founder’s disciples, Tok Dalang Nawawi, and master musician, Abdul Rahman bin Dollah. In 2015, the troupe went on a highly successful month-long residency tour of the United States for the Caravanserai programme by Art Midwest. It has also been actively involved with PUSAKA’s training projects, demonstrating their commitment to the transmission of complete *Wayang Kulit* knowledge to succeeding generations in Kelantan.⁷⁰

Kumpulan Kijang Emas, Dikir Barat troupe

Kumpulan Kijang Emas is a reputable troupe of the traditional Malay group performance *Dikir Barat*. The musical form often involved instruments and singing in a group – often in a competitive setting. Their music is widely popular and available on streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music.

Radix Dix, Wayang Kulit

17-year-old, Radix Dix is an up-and-coming *Wayang Kulit* puppet maker. He belongs to a community of young creative entrepreneurs passionate about the conservation and revival of this traditional art form.

⁶⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/kotaksenikb>

⁶⁹ PUSAKA. <https://www.pusaka.org>

⁷⁰ <https://www.pusaka.org/communities-wayang-kulit>

Crossover – Culture/Arts/Lifestyle

Akademi Arjunasukma, 2009 – present

Akademi Arjunasukma provides all services related to *Dikir Barat* and traditional Kelantan art. It specialises in *Dikir Barat*'s art and provides services including performance package, coaching staff, musical instruments, and orders for *Dikir Barat* costumes. It is currently based in Klang but active in Kelantan.⁷¹

Akademi Nik Rashiddin, 2007 – present

Akademi Nik Rashiddin is an institution and centre for wood carvings. It is also known as Kandis Resource Centre, a legacy of the late woodcarver, Nik Rashiddin Nik Hussein, to make Nik's wood carvings collection accessible to Malaysians, especially craftsmen, art lovers, researchers and artists.⁷²

Geng Wak Long, 2008 – present

Geng Wak Long was founded by Mohd. Kamrulbahri Bin Hussin, who is also known as Wak Long (or Wok Long in Kelantanese Dialect). He is a multi-disciplinary skill musician, composer, music educator, music director, improviser and artistic director. Geng Wak Long performed in various international events and released its first compilation of Kelantanese Malay Traditional music in an album called "The New Authentic Kelantanese Traditional Music of Malaysia". It also launched a cultural Centre namely Sanggar Budaya Geng Wak Long Kampung Banggol Gelang Mas, at Pasir Mas, Kelantan.⁷³

Kedai Hitam Putih, 2013 – present

Kedai Hitam Putih, with its slogan "knowledge for everyone" (*Ilmu untuk Semua*), is a bookstore in Kota Bharu which publishes and sells books from Malaysia and Indonesia.⁷⁴

Gu Kito, collective of creative entrepreneurs

Gu Kito is a community of creative entrepreneurs, plugged in the youth culture of Kota Bharu. The group is effective in mobilising community participations through social media channels and partnerships with like-minded organisations such as the Drum & Desk. They have organised startup accelerator event Festival Gu Kito, KB colour run and neon night run. They are active partner to the annual Kelantan Art & Culture Festival (KACF).⁷⁵ In 2019, they presented a series of events in the leadup to KACF, highlighting the fabric of local independent art scene. Activities include, pitch meetings, networking events, performances, flea market, food and cuisine sampling, to name a few.

Amir Harith bin Mat Kashim (Bujin), CEO of Bujin's Batik

Amir Harith bin Mat Kashim, also known as Bujin, is the CEO and master craftman of Kota Bharu batik brand, Bujin's Batik.⁷⁶ Promoting and preserving cultural heritage, Bujin has won the Piala Seri Endon (PSE) in Fashion Category in 2012 and is the first batik maker to be awarded the Golden Hand Award by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in 2009. Bujin also founded a batik gallery in Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. This showcases an exclusive batik collection as well as runs the Bujin Academy to educate rural communities and their youth the crafts and process of batik making.

Nik Nur Amalina⁷⁷, Kelingkan Kelantan

Nik Nur Amalina is a young embroiderer, promoting the traditional embroidery known as *Kelingkan*. *Kelingkan* embroidery is a traditional Malay embroidery technique that employs a flat metallic ribbon or plate coated with a gold or silver colour.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Akademi Arjunasukma. <https://www.facebook.com/akademiarjunasukma>

⁷² A master carver's legacy. <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/women/2007/04/28/a-master-carvers-legacy>. Official website: <https://www.facebook.com/AkademiNikRashiddin>

⁷³ Geng Wak Long. http://www.gengwaklong.com.my/about_us.html

⁷⁴ Kedai Hitam Putih. <https://www.facebook.com/khpmalaysia>

⁷⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/youthentrepreneurssolution>

⁷⁶ <https://bujinsbatik.avana.asia>

⁷⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/kelingkan>

⁷⁸ <https://encyclocraftsapr.com/kelingkan-malay>

Events, Festivals and Creative Marketplaces (selected)

Since 2018, the annual Kelantan Art and Culture Festival showcases food, games and performances with public engagement activities designed for the youth and senior population. Satellite events are often held in the lead up to the festival period.

The State Dance Festival and the Kelantan Folk Arts Festival – organised by the JKKN – takes place by the seaside in neighbouring Tumpat.

As for traditional performances, these take place regularly and within the communities engaging the young and old. The events often start organically and can go on for hours.

Such festivals and events provide an opportunity to enjoy the *Wayang Kulit*, *Mak Yong*, *Menora*, and *Rebana* performances.

Kelantan International Wau (Giant Kite) Festival, 1980s – present

Organiser: Kelantan State Government and Kelantan Tourism Information Centre in collaboration with Malaysia Kite Council, Kelantan Kite Association and Tumpat District Council

The International Wau Festival is an annual event since the 1980s that includes participants from various countries including Norway, Germany, Australia, Brunei, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, Thailand, Japan, Korea, USA, Cambodia and China.⁷⁹

East Coast Textile Craft Festival, 2010 – present

Organiser: Kraftangan Malaysia, Kelantan

The East Coast Textile Craft Festival promotes the Batik craft industry in Kelantan. The festival in 2020, introduced east coast textile craft to visitors and showcased batik painting and *songket* weaving demonstrations.⁸⁰

Kelantan Folk Arts Festival, 2017 – present

Organiser: JKKN Kelantan and Kelantan State Government

The Kelantan Folk Arts Festival highlights the unique local cultures as tourism products. Activities at the 2020 festival included *Rebana Ubi*, *Kertuk* and *Dikir Barat* competitions, and performances by the Kelantan Percussion Symphony Orchestra.⁸¹

Kelate-Japan Festival, 2018 – present

Organiser: Kelantan state government and Japanese Embassy in Malaysia

The Kelate-Japan Festival aims to promote both Kelantanese and Japanese cultures to locals and visitors at the festival.⁸²

⁷⁹ <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/wilayah/2019/08/602319/pesta-wau-antarabangsa-kelantan-dapat-sambutan>

⁸⁰ Festival Kraf Tekstil Pantai Timur 2020. <https://www.kraftangan.gov.my/fktp2020>

⁸¹ Tourism industry to generate RM192b in 2020. <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2019/07/15/tourism-industry-to-generate-rm192b-in-2020>

⁸² All things Japanese at Kelantan fest. <https://www.nst.com.my/education/2019/08/514678/all-things-japanese-kelantan-fest>

Kelantan Art and Culture Festival (KACF), 2018 – present

Organiser: Gu Kito and Kelantan Tourism Information Centre

The Kelantan Art and Culture Festival aims to showcase the Kelantanese creative scene as well as its culture and traditions through a series of art and cultural activities and performances.⁸³ During this annual event, satellite events are hosted by community organisers in partnership with KACF.

Kelantan Exchange 2020

Organiser: Malaysian Craft Council

Kelantan Exchange is an event organised by Malaysian Craft Council to rejuvenate local arts and crafts. It consists of conference, dialogue, art exhibitions, cultural performances and bazaars.⁸⁴

Siti Khadijah Market, 1985 – present

Siti Khadijah Market is a place that sells various types of food and daily necessities, mostly by women sellers. The uniqueness of this market is the scenery which can be experienced on the third floor of this hexagonal building. This market is named after the wife of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W..⁸⁵

Tok Guru Bazaar, 2011 – present

Tok Guru Bazaar is one of the shopping locations in the centre of Kota Bharu. Apart from selling various ready-made clothes, batik and *songket*, tourists also can find local food at the bazaar such as *keropok* and *dodol*.⁸⁶

Siti Aishah Bazaar, 1985 – present

Siti Aishah Bazaar, also known as Buluh Kubu Bazaar, is a bazaar famous for batik. Shoppers can find a large variety of batik, *songket* and handicrafts at reasonable prices.⁸⁷

Siti Khadijah Market –
the economic centre of
the Kota Bharu community.

Photo © Tourism Malaysia



⁸³ Kelantan Art & Culture Festival 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/KACF2020>

⁸⁴ Kelantan Xchange. <https://www.facebook.com/KelantanXchange>

⁸⁵ Pasar Siti Khadijah. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/pusat-membeli-belah/pasar-siti-khadijah>

⁸⁶ Bazar Tok Guru. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/pusat-membeli-belah/bazar-tok-guru>

⁸⁷ Bazar Siti Aishah. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/pusat-membeli-belah/bazar-siti-aishah>

Cultural Infrastructure, Creative Hubs and Networks (selected)

The State manages numerous facilities that showcase local culture; especially the Malay culture. In Kota Bharu, the Gelanggang Seni is a cultural centre that offers traditional performances and demonstrations on a regular basis. There is also a Crafts Village, a crafts bazaar, museum and gallery that offers a variety of arts and culture programmes. As to the JKKN complex, it is equipped with cultural facilities such as an auditorium and practice studios.

The youth culture and independent art scene is growing in Kota Bharu, despite the social conservatism of the city authorities. Café and book stores double as co-working spaces, galleries, and merchandise stores. Such venues regularly host performances, exhibitions and startup events. There are pop up markets where aficionados sell collectibles and local bands such as Clue Be Trees⁸⁸ and On High Music⁸⁹ are invited to perform. Local urban-lifestyle collective KBLooker⁹⁰ is one of the regulars that typifies the vitality of the city's youth scene.

Creative Hubs

Rumah Gahara, 2020 – present

Gahara is a leading premium batik textile producer in Malaysia. It launched an Artists' Residence, a curated art-tourism and homestay programme for art lovers in 2020 at its premises. Rumah Gahara It is based on 5 pillars being: Academy, Artisan, Galleria, Green and Gourmet.⁹¹

Port B

Port B⁹² is a co-working space tailored for Gen Z and the gig economy. Aiming to rejuvenate the city, Port B provides an open-space working area, with free wifi, unlimited coffee, free drinking water in addition to formal meeting rooms and relaxing lounge areas.

Drum & Desk

Drum & Desk⁹³ is a café and co-working space. It also houses the first and only roastery in Kota Bharu. Drum & Desk regularly presents community programmes such as storytelling sessions, Maker's Market and Techstars Startup Weekend.

The Philla

The Philla⁹⁴ is a mixed-use venue that offers a combination of services from venue hire to food and dining. A popular hang-out of local cultural practitioners, it hosts regular performances, workshops, exhibitions, flea markets and concerts.

The Bold Lab

The Bold Lab⁹⁵ is a café that is an active partner of other like-minded creative entrepreneurs in KB. It has showcased artworks by local artists, organised an Art & Coffee programme on latte-making and has been a partner with the annual Kelantan Arts and Culture Festival (KACF).

⁸⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/cluebetrees/videos>

⁸⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/onhighmusic>

⁹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/looksstreetculturevintage>

⁹¹ Rumah Gahara. <https://www.gahara.my/rumah-gahara>

⁹² <https://www.facebook.com/portbpace>

⁹³ <https://www.facebook.com/drumanddesk>

⁹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/thephiliaventure>

⁹⁵ <https://business.facebook.com/theboldlab>

Creative and Cultural Assets

Kelantan Public Library Corporation, 1938 – present

Kelantan Public Library Corporation is designed to manage, maintain and expand the number of books and library materials for the community. It has seven branch libraries, one community library and three rural libraries in Kelantan.⁹⁶

Kelantan Art Gallery, 1988 – present

The Kelantan Art Gallery is currently based in an old building next to the Kelantan Tourism Information Centre (TIC) at Jalan Sultan Ibrahim. The ground floor is used to display paintings while the second floor is utilised as a space for the Kelantan Art Association (PESENI) to display their work. It is also sometimes used for periodic exhibitions as well as other activities such as drawing workshops and drawing competitions organised by the Kelantan State Museum Corporation.⁹⁷

Kelantan State Museum, 1990 – present

The Kelantan State Museum was established in 1990. It showcases the history of Kelantan from the beginning to the modern era. It also presents the cultural arts of Kelantan, including the necessary equipment of puppetry, *rebana ubi* (Malay tambourine), performing arts and others.⁹⁸

Kelantan Islamic Museum, 1991 – present

Kelantan Islamic Museum serves as an institution for collecting, researching, preserving and displaying the socio-cultural historical heritage of the Muslim community. Among the collections of exhibitions are artefacts, photographs, and diagrams related to the history of the arrival of Islam to Kelantan-Nusantara, Islamic religious figures, the Religious Department, Kelantan Islamic Council and various collections from Islamic countries.⁹⁹

Kelantan Royal Museum, 1991 – present

The Royal Museum is also known as *Istana Batu* (Stone Palace). It is because the structure of this building was made of cement concrete, while another two nearby palaces, namely *Istana Balai Besar* and *Istana Jahar*, were made of wood. It exhibits the History of the Sultanate of Kelantan from the beginning to the present including genealogy, writings, diagrams, pictures, formal attire, gift items and others related to the Sultanate of Kelantan.¹⁰⁰

Kelantan Handicraft Museum, 1991 – present

Kelantan Handicraft Museum was built as an initial step to redevelop the Kelantan handicraft industry as well as showcase long forgotten handicraft materials. Among the collections found at the museum are numerous types of weaving, batik patterns as well as embroidery and *songket* weaving.¹⁰¹

Kelantan War Museum (Bank Kerapu), 1991 – present

The building of the Kelantan War Museum originally belonged to The Mercantile Bank of India Limited, the first commercial bank in Kelantan which started operating in 1912. During the Japanese occupation of 1941 – 1945, the building was used as the Japanese Secret Police Office. After the end of World War II, the building was taken over by The Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank before being converted into a museum. The Kelantan War Museum displays artefacts and photographs about the history of World War II and particularly the incidents that happened in the state during that period.¹⁰²

Kelantan Royal Traditions and Customs Museum, 1992 – present

The Kelantan Royal Traditions and Customs Museum, also known as *Istana Jahar* (Jahar Palace), was built in 1887 as a royal residence. The museum was established in 1992 and displays various kinds of Royal Kelantan Customs. It also exhibits the old weapons of Kelantan such as *keris*, spears, *badik*, *kelewang* and others.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Kelantan Public Library Corporation. <http://www.kelantanlibrary.gov.my/v3/index.php/en>

⁹⁷ Balai Seni Lukis Kelantan. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/balai-seni-lukis-kelantan>

⁹⁸ Muzium Negeri. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-negeri>

⁹⁹ Muzium Islam. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-islam>

¹⁰⁰ Muzium Diraja (Istana Batu). <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-diraja-istana-batu>

¹⁰¹ Muzium Kraftangan. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-kraftangan>

¹⁰² Muzium Perang (Bank Kerapu). <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-perang-bank-kerapu>

¹⁰³ Muzium Adat Istiadat (Istana Jahar). <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-adat-istiadat-istana-jahar>

Dar Nur al-Zahra' Islamic Community Library, 2005 – present

The Dar Nur al-Zahra' Islamic Community Library is an independent public community library that is privately owned by an established corporate figure. It is currently located at Lorong Merican Off Jalan Telipot, Kota Bharu.¹⁰⁴

Wau Museum, 2011 – present

The Wau Museum is the first kite museum in Kelantan and the second in Malaysia, after the Pasir Gudang Kite Museum in Johor. It became a world centre of reference and information on the history and development of the kite art handicrafts. The museum also exhibits various types of kites from around the world. Reference books and kite making equipment, such as bamboo, paper and rope as basic materials for making handicrafts are also provided.¹⁰⁵

Kuala Krai Museum, 2014 – present

The building of the Kuala Krai Museum was formerly a Kuala Krai Magistrate's Court which was loaned to the Malaysian Historical Society of Kelantan State Branch to be used as a gallery, as its management was at that time under the responsibility of the Kuala Krai District Council. It was handed over to the Kelantan State Museum Corporation in 2016 and later became known as the Kuala Krai Museum. The museum contains artefacts of Kuala Krai and the history of the establishment of the Kuala Krai Colony among others.¹⁰⁶

Sendi Studio and Gallery, 2020 – present

Sendi Studio & Gallery showcases digital artworks and contemporary art that combines and applies modern technology and traditional techniques, by contemporary artists and graphic artists from around the world, and those who are local members and

partners of Sendi Studio and Gallery. It was founded by Associate Professor Ahamad Tarmizi Azizan (Atan AF), former dean of Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and Nooraihan Abd Hamid in 2020.¹⁰⁷

Sultan Muhammad IV Stadium, 1967 – present

The Sultan Muhammad IV Stadium, located in the heart of Kota Bharu, was built in 1967 at a cost of RM1.5 million, and can accommodate 30,000 spectators. The Kelantan government is expected to begin work to upgrade the Sultan Muhammad IV Stadium in 2021 in preparation for the 22nd Malaysian Games (SUKMA) in 2026.¹⁰⁸

Wat Photivihan Temple (The Sleeping Buddha), 1973 – present

Located in the Tumpat district, The sleeping Buddha measures 40 metres from head to toe, with a width of 9 metres and a height of 11 metres. It was built in 1973 and is a symbol of Buddhist pride in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁹

Sultan Ismail Petra City, 1990 – present

The Sultan Ismail Petra City is located in the heart of Kota Bharu. It was completed in 1990 in conjunction with the declaration of Kota Bharu as a Cultural City. It consists of giant gates, characterised by a traditional Malay-Kelantanese architecture. It has become one of the most famous tourist attractions in Kelantan.¹¹⁰

Handicraft Village, 1991 – present

The handicraft village is one of the main tourist attractions in downtown Kota Bharu. It is a local centre for art and handicraft activities, sales and exhibitions.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Dar Nur al-Zahra' Islamic Community Library. <https://www.facebook.com/darnurulzahra>

¹⁰⁵ Muzium Wau. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-wau>

¹⁰⁶ Muzium Kuala Krai. <https://muzium.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/muzium3/muzium-kuala-krai>

¹⁰⁷ Sendi Studio and Gallery. <https://sendigaleri.wixsite.com/my-site>

¹⁰⁸ Kelantan naik taraf Stadium Sultan Muhammad IV awal 2021. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/sukan/555471>

¹⁰⁹ Tokong Wat Photivihan. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/tempat-bersejarah/tokong/tokong-tidur>

¹¹⁰ Kota Sultan Ismail Petra. <http://digitalkelantancollection.umk.edu.my/koleksikelantan/items/show/2904>

¹¹¹ Kampung Kraftangan, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. <https://www.facebook.com/Kampung-Kraftangan-Kota-Bharu-Kelantan-463031530374075>

Sultan Ismail Petra Mosque, 1992 – present

Sultan Ismail Petra Mosque was named after the former Sultan of Kelantan, Sultan Ismail Petra Ibni Almarhum Sultan Yahya Petra, who officiated the mosque in 1992. It is considered the largest mosque in Kelantan.¹¹²

Wat Machimmaram Temple (The Sitting Buddha), 2001 – present

The height of the Buddha equals a 10-storey building. The temple cost RM4 million and took 10 years to complete. It is surrounded by some influential Buddhist statues and is adorned with dragon carvings. The sitting Buddha is the largest sitting Buddha in Southeast Asia.¹¹³

Taman Tengku Anis, 2004 – present

Tengku Anis Park is a recreational park located in Tanjung Chat, Kota Bharu. It is popular with the locals due to its relaxed atmosphere. It is also a great place for families for leisure activities in the evenings or weekends.¹¹⁴

Gelanggang Seni

Gelanggang Seni is a cultural centre that hosts various programmes such as *wayang kulit* and martial arts, and also a place for traditional games, kites demo and music performances.¹¹⁵

Pantai Cahaya Bulan, n.d.

Pantai Cahaya Bulan literally means Moonlight Beach. The beach is about 10 km away from Kota Bharu and is a popular spot for family outings and picnics.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Masjid Sultan Ismail Petra. <https://itc.gov.my>

¹¹³ Tokong Wat Machimmaram. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/tempat-bersejarah/tokong/tokong-duduk>

¹¹⁴ Taman Tengku Anis. <https://www.facebook.com/infokelatekito/posts/taman-tengku-anistaman-tengku-anis-ini-merupakan-sebuah-taman-rekreasi-yang-terl/1280588958633422>

¹¹⁵ Gelanggang Seni. <http://tourism.kelantan.my/index.php/en/pelancongan/tarikan-istimewa/gelanggang-seni>

¹¹⁶ By the light of the silvery moon at Pantai Cahaya Bulan. <https://www.freemalysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2018/10/02/by-the-light-of-the-silvery-moon-at-pantai-cahaya-bulan>

