



# SULTAN OF PERAK SULTAN AZLAN SHAH'S BIRTHDAY



## The splendour of Kuala Kangsar

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**D**OES anyone know where and when the first Conference or Council of Malay Rulers was first held?

The maiden meeting, also known as the Durbar, was held in 1897 in Kuala Kangsar and attended by Malay Rulers and aristocracy from the four Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan.

That attendees, according to the National Archives of Malaysia, deliberated matters of religions, customs and traditions, and other Malay related issues.

It was attended by Sultan Ahmad (Sultan of Pahang), Sultan Abdul Samad (Sultan of Selangor), Sultan Idris (Sultan of Perak) Tuanku Muhammad (Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negeri Sembilan), F.A. Swettenham (Resident General), Sir Charles Mitchell (High Commissioner) Hugh Clifford (Resident of Pahang), J.P. Rodger (Resident of Selangor) and W.H. Treacher (Resident of Perak).

The choice of the venue showed that by the 1890s, Kuala Kangsar was already an important town in Perak after its neighbouring town of Taiping in the north and Ipoh in the south.

While the origin of its name remains hazy, there are at least two variants: first, based on the abundant "pokok Kangsar" (*Hibiscus floscosus*) along the Perak River and second, based on a folklore that certain explorers had named it Kuala Kurang Sa, a short form of Kuala Kurang Seratus in reference to the 99 tributaries of the Perak river.

Kuala Kurang Sa later went through changes to finally become Kuala Kangsar.

This royal town is the home to many palaces, some of which have been restored while others disappeared into oblivion.

It is also home to the famous Malay College Kuala Kangsar, founded collectively by the Malay Rulers of the four Federated Malay States in 1905.

World-famous author Anthony Burgess also taught at MCKK. Known as the "Eton of the East", the college has produced a number of Malay leaders in the political and administrative arenas.

As for the town itself, perhaps its slow-paced living, like the slow-flowing Perak river, had helped preserve the royal town in its pristine condition.

Kuala Kangsar has its fair share of attractions or a must-see for visitors like Istana Kenangan, which has been converted as the Royal Museum of Kuala Kangsar.

The palace, representative of the impressive traditional Malay architecture, was originally known as Istana Lembah (Valley Palace) befitting its location in a valley. It is also often called Istana Kuning (Yellow Palace) because of its predominantly yellow colour.

A short distance away in Bukit Chandan is Istana Iskandariah, the official residence of the Sultan of Perak, a magnificent and imposing structure built in 1933. The building has an attractive and unique architectural design, with its architecture resembling the Islamic Indo-Saracenic style blended with the architectural style of West Asia.

Also in the vicinity is another majestic and impressive building — the Ubudiah Mosque, reputed to be one of the most beautiful and spellbinding mosques in Malaysia.

Construction of the mosque, named Ubudiah by Sultan of Perak Sultan Idris Murshidul Adzam Shah to fulfil his religious vow, started in 1913 and



*Istana Kenangan*

completed four years later.

Kuala Kangsar is also known for the famed *labu sayong*, an earthenware produced in Kampung Sayong, which is located by the Perak river. A must-buy gift for visitors to Perak, one can also watch and try their hands at making the jars at the village.

Other attractions include the Sultan Azlan Shah Gallery, a former palace known as "Istana Hulu" or "Istana Kota" built by Sultan Idris Murshidul Azam Shah, the 28th Sultan of Perak; the Keris Memorial erected in 1963 to commemorate the installation of the 33rd Sultan of Perak Sultan Idris Shah; Pavilion Square Tower built in 1930; the first rubber tree in Malaya planted by English botanist H.N. Ridley in 1877; and the Victoria Bridge, one of the oldest railways bridges in the country having being constructed between December 1897 and March 1900.



*Labu Sayong*



*Sultan Azlan Shah Gallery*



*The first rubber tree planted in the country*



*Ubudiah Mosque*