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These unsung heroes, too, deserve to be included in history books

By [Veena Babulal](#) - September 10, 2017 @ 1:38pm



The late S. Kulasingam once said: 'how could I die of anything but old age?'

It is time to start recognising unsung heroes who have contributed to the nation without seeking money or glory.

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"We should celebrate all of them, not just confine our history books to personalities who are primarily from the political or economic arenas."

She said these included personalities in the fields of teaching, science, medicine, sports as well as community leaders.

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Cardosa said it was time that the Education Ministry's Curriculum Development Division reviewed how the History subject was taught in schools to make space for these heroes.

"It should not only be people or things that promote the official national narrative.

"Students should be given the opportunity to learn about local heroes, too."

Cardosa said schools could implement history projects on local leaders by collaborating with heritage or history societies.

She said people of significance could be traced back to names of buildings and roads.

ABDULLAH HUKUM



Abdullah Hukum

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Abdullah Hukum was one such person. He was one of the pioneers involved in the development of Kuala Lumpur in the 1880s.

He was also responsible for opening up areas such as Pudu, Bukit Bintang and Sungai Putih, which is now known as Bangsar.

He was honoured by then Sultan of Selangor Sultan Abdul Samad with the title of Tuk Dagang Dianjuk.

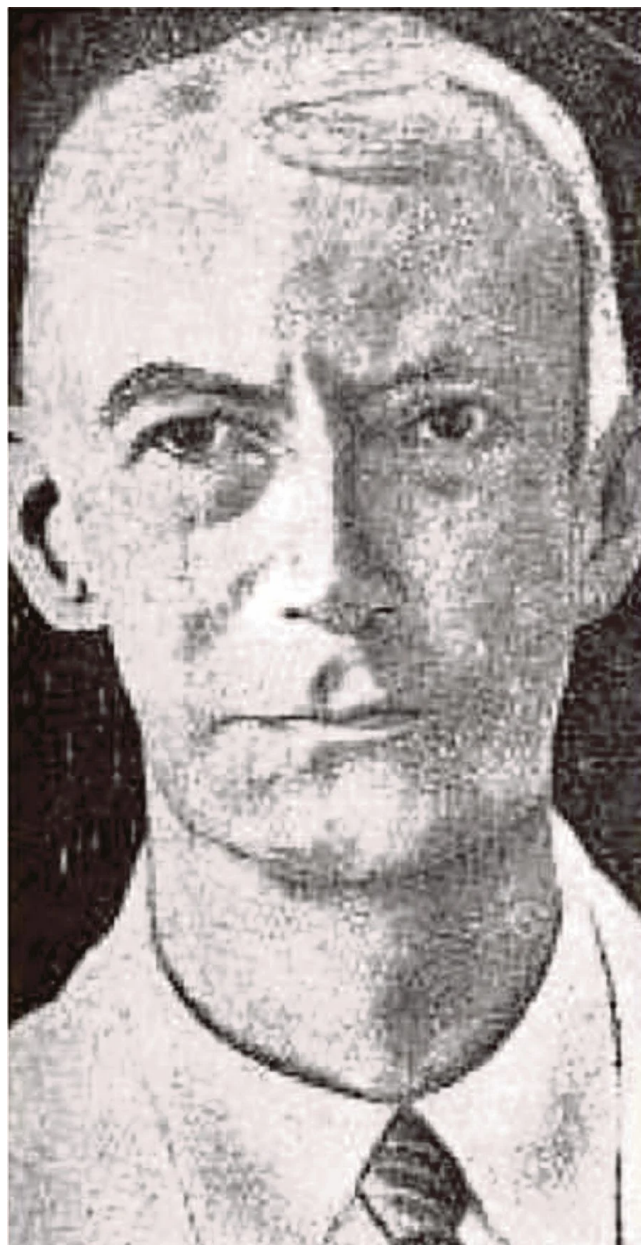
Abdullah Hukum, or Muhammad Rukun, from Sumatra, was of Kerinchi descent.

He came to Malaya with his father in 1850 when he was only 15, and lived in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor until his death.

He died at 108 in 1943, leaving behind 18 children, and is remembered for his service to the community.

Today, many structures – a village, mosque and LRT station in Bangsar – are named after him.

DR ERNEST ASTON OTHO TRAVERS



Dr Ernest Aston Otho Travers

Dr Travers was responsible for the building of the Sungai Buloh Leprosarium as a humane way to care for and treat leprosy victims who were ostracised in the early 20th century.

The leprosarium, believed to be the most modern of its time and then second largest in the world, opened on Aug 16, 1930. Countries like Brazil even modelled theirs after it.

Dr Travers, a former Selangor state surgeon, was drawn to the care of leprosy patients late in 1922 when he was tasked to take charge of a leprosy asylum in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur.



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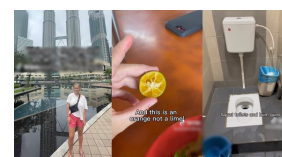
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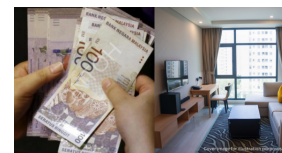
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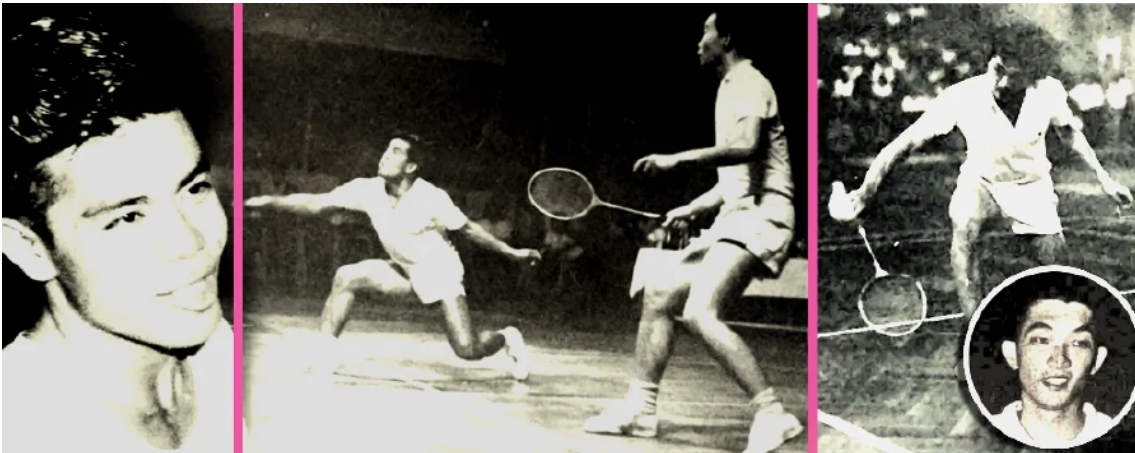
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Leprosy was incurable at that time. Many tried to run away, and those who could not relied on government-supplied opium to ease their pain.

Seeing that, he proposed that the British government build a more humane leprosarium in Sungai Buloh, at a place then called the Valley of Hope.

Jalan Travers, a short stretch behind Jalan Bangsar in Kuala Lumpur, honours his contribution.

TAN AIK HUANG AND DATUK NG BOON BEE



In this combo picture showing Tan Aik Huang (right) and Datuk Ng Boon Bee (left). The centre picture shows Datuk Ng Boon Bee (left) and Datuk Tan Yee Khan.

Tan won the 1966 All England Open Badminton Championships by defeating Japan's Masao Akiyama in the finals.

This came during a run of four straight appearances in the All England finals from 1965 to 1968.

Tan was a member of four Malaysian Thomas Cup teams, including its world champion team of 1967.

He won numerous international singles titles during the mid-to late 1960s, including the Danish Open, US Open, Canadian Open and Malaysian Open. He also won both singles and doubles titles at the 1966 British Commonwealth Games.

Ng is widely recognised as one of the greatest doubles players in the history of the sport.

He won the All England Open Badminton Championships men's doubles title thrice, twice with Datuk Tan Yee Khan in 1965 and 1966 and once with the late Datuk Punch Gunalan in 1971.

Fearing for his speed, power and anticipation on the court, he was also a member of the 1967 Thomas Cup winning team.

In the 1960s, Ng and Yee Khan formed one of the most successful men's doubles teams of the time, winning titles including the All England, Asian Games and the Badminton Asia Championships.

S. KULASINGAM

Kulasingham was a former Johor Criminal Investigation Department chief and Kuala Lumpur deputy CID chief.

Kulasingham was often described as being married to the job due to his dedication to the force. He died a bachelor at 77 in 2007.

He was conferred the Pingat Gagah Berani, Malaysia's second highest award for bravery.

A *New Sunday Times* report stated that the mere mention of Kulasingham's name would send shivers down the spine of criminals.

He was best known for capturing the infamous “Botak Chin”, who carried out many robberies in the Klang Valley in the 1970s.

He also captured “Kepong Chai”, a rapist with a penchant for scarring the faces of women with a blade.

He was labelled as the toughest cop ever after he survived attempts on his life.

In one such incident in 1975, he was reportedly at a traffic light when 11 shots were fired at him. One of the bullets shattered his right rib, pierced his liver and grazed his lungs.

Kulasingam had been quoted as saying: “How could I die of anything but old age?”



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