

MALAYSIAN POPULATION CENSUS

What is Malaysia's population? This is not an easy question to answer because the number keeps changing from year to year as some people die and others are born. Thus, once every ten years, the government sends out its officers to count the number of people living in the country. This counting is called a *census*. A book is compiled in which the number of people living in each part of the country is written down. The last time the census was taken was in 1970. At that time, it was discovered that there were almost 12 million Malaysians. For a more detailed study of the 1970 census, take a look at the table below.

RACIAL COMPOSITION—MALAYSIA, 1970

COMMUNITY	PERSONS	PERCENTAGE
Total	10,439,530*	100.0
Malays	4,886,912	46.8
Chinese	3,555,879	34.1
Indians	942,944	9.0
Dayaks	386,260	3.7
Kadazans	184,512	1.8
Other natives	337,395	3.2
Others	145,628	1.4

*This figure does not include the 12,779 wayfarers and persons afloat, of whom 11,646 were males and 1,133 were females.

PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA

The Malays

The largest single group of people in Malaysia today are the Malays. Most of them live in the Peninsula, although they also make up about one-fifth of the population of Sarawak and 10 per cent of the population of Sabah. The largest number of Malays in the Peninsula live in Johore, Kelantan, Perak and Kedah. They also form the majority (i.e. outnumber all the other groups) in Kelantan, Trengganu, Pahang and Perlis.

Most of us have visited a Malay kampung. The houses are usually built of wood and are

raised on posts above the ground. Why do you think they are built this way? Some Malay kampungs are built over water, particularly in fishing villages. Many Malays are skilful fishermen and sailors.

Nearly all the padi planters in Peninsular Malaysia are Malays. Many of them in Sabah and Sarawak also plant padi. Quite a number of Malays own rubber smallholdings where they tap their own rubber. Many are also small farmers. In Kelantan and Trengganu, Malay women weave beautiful sarungs with gold and silver thread, whilst the men are good at silverwork and wood carving.

Many Malays work in government service as administrators, or as officers and men in the police force and in the armed services. Every year more and more Malays are either going into business or taking up professions such as accountancy, law and medicine.

The religion of the Malays is Islam. People who belong to this religion are known as Muslims. Islam is one of the most important religions in the world, and is practised by millions of people in Indonesia, India and Pakistan, and in the Arab countries of Western Asia, as well as in North, West and East Africa. We shall be reading more about Islam later on in this book.

The Malay language is also an important and useful language, because it is spoken and

Fig. 2.2 The women from the east coast states are skilled at weaving kain songket cloth

