

FOR DISPLAY ONLY

# BRUNEI TODAY

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The Jawi script on various covers of publications.



The Jawi script is a must on commercial signboards.



A close-up view of a Khat.



Windsufers enjoying their sport at Pantai Serasa.

## Front Cover

A collection of *Khat* can liven up any lounge.

## Inside of front cover

The hilt of staff carried by the *imam* when he delivers his Friday sermon in the mosque.

## Inside of back cover

Another view of the beach with a clubhouse in the background.

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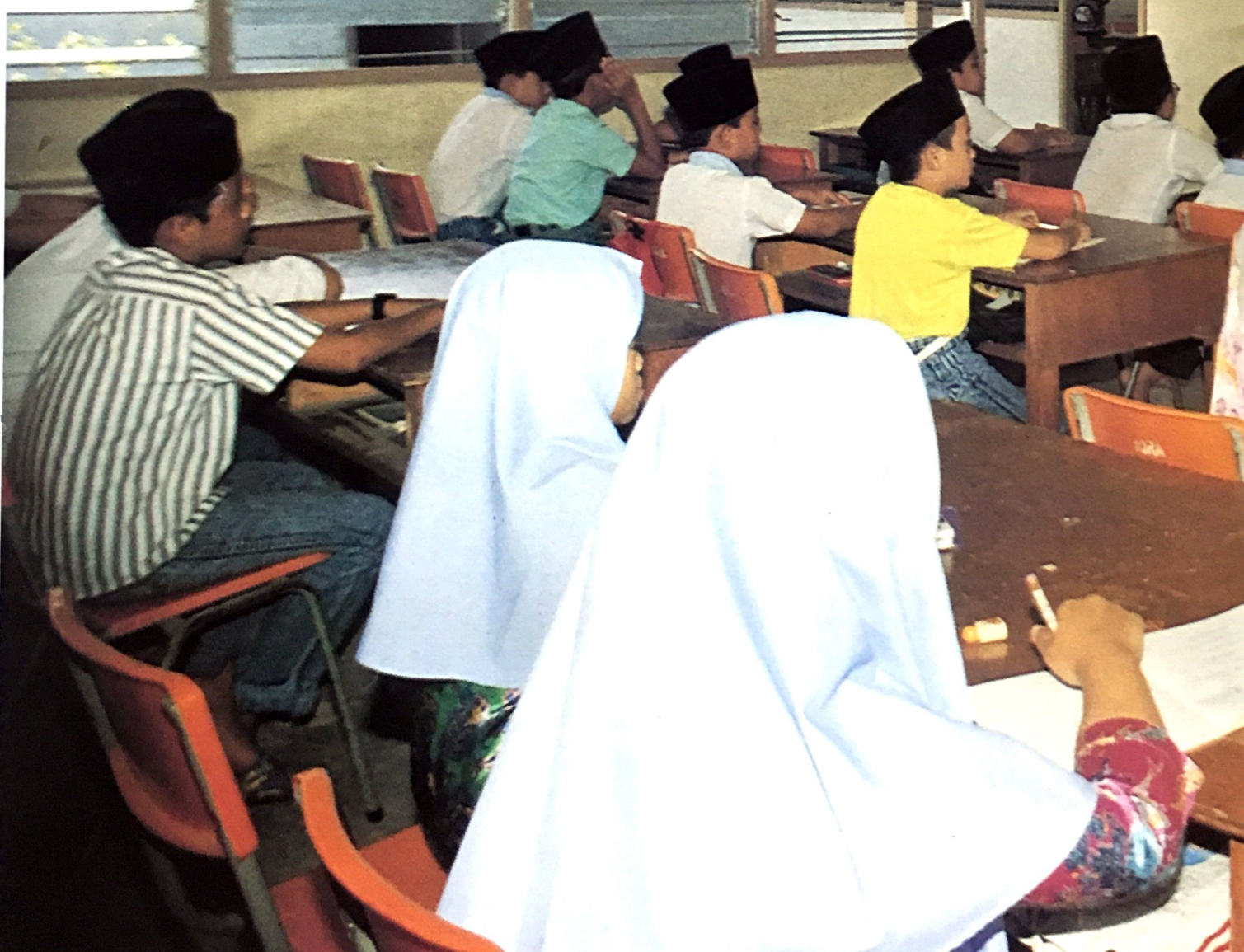
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# JAWI

— the script that became  
synonymous with Malay







An Arabic/Jawi script class of a private school in session.



The advent of Islam in the region brought with it the need to learn the Arabic script, which was necessary in order to peruse and study the Holy Koran, Traditions of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and other religious books as it was the only way then one could understand the faith correctly.

The exact date of Islam's entry to Brunei has never been pinpointed but according to Chinese annals on Brunei, which sent tributes to China, Muslims were already influential in the country in the tenth century because the King of Brunei sent a Muslim envoy known as Abu Ali, or Pu Ya Lee as the Chinese called him, to pay

*Government and commercial vehicles are required to display the department/ministry or business names.*



جباتن قنراغن

**JABATAN PENERANGAN  
JABATAN PERDANA MENTERI**

راديق  
MINI  
TOH

TANG





The Jawi script is a must on signboards, particularly commercial ones.



homage to Emperor T'ai-t'sung of the Sung Dynasty in 977.

Judging by the Chinese accounts it seems likely that Muslim missionaries, who sometimes doubled as traders, started introducing Islam and the Arabic script to Bruneians around the tenth century.

## Gacanga

Later the Malays in Brunei and those in the other Malay states to the west called the script Jawi, which has become synonymous with the word Malay, and added three characters of their own, namely Ga, Ca and Nga to the original Arabic alphabets. This lends further support to the belief that Islam came to Brunei earlier than popularly supposed because the Chinese also chronicled that the Jawi script was already widely used in Brunei long before 1363, the year when Brunei's monarch Awang Alak Betatar embraced Islam and changed his name to Sultan Muhammad on his marriage to a Johore princess.

With Islam firmly entrenched in the kingdom, Bruneians who were conversant with Arabic and its script propagated Islamic teachings to the people by conveying translations verbally as well as in



*A sound knowledge of the Arabic/Jawi script can be turned into a profitable art, namely khat or Islamic calligraphy. Our picture shows Mr Sabtu Surat, a khat artist, with one of his creations.*

the Jawi writing. Thus the necessity to make oneself master of the Arab-Jawi script eventually became, like Islam itself, part and parcel of Bruneian life. Learning the script also provided the people with a means of written communication.





*A variety of khat, arranged nicely can turn a dull sitting-room into a pleasant and serene one.*



When school or formal education commenced in the State in the early part of the present century, the Jawi script was taught side by side with the Roman alphabets.

### **Proliferation**

But as years past and unlike the belief in Islam, the everyday use of the Jawi script started on the wane and gradually lost out to Roman writing as the need to keep

abreast with international norms was unavoidably obvious. Another reason was that the translations of Islamic teachings from Arabic to Malay could be written in the Roman script just as easily. Nonetheless the Jawi writing continues to this day to be taught at schools because religious lessons, which Muslim students go to after their regular classes, have to use the Arabic-Jawi script.

The decline in the use of the Jawi writing has not been lost upon the Government, which has over the years introduced through the Language and Literature Bureau various measures to ensure the proliferation of the Jawi

*Wood is another material in which Islamic calligraphy is popularly made on.*





usage in the country. These include the requirement that the Jawi must precede other forms of writing on signboards, government and commercial vehicles, letterheads and the covers of certain publications. One government body that has always made extensive use of the Arabic-Jawi script, of course, is the Religious Affairs Ministry.

## Khat

The knowledge of Jawi writing can also be developed into a useful skill that is so essential in one Muslim art, namely *khat* or Islamic calligraphy. Khat can be made on several materials such as paper, wood, canvas, glass or more recently, copper. The subject is

almost always a particular verse or verses of the Holy Koran which the artist can write in multiform or a variety of styles according to his expertise and imagination. Due to the intricate nature of the art, the *khat*-maker requires not only a great proficiency in calligraphy but also an eye for details so as not to alter or distort the meaning of the verse.

A well-produced khat is very pleasing to the senses; its beauty coupled with the Muslim's sublime reverence for the Koran and its verses make it an ideal object for decorating a lounge or bedroom with.

Serious interest in practising Islamic calligraphy took root in the

*Khat can be made on paper, canvas, glass, ceramic, wood and metals, especially copper. The copper is first cut to the required size, cleaned or polished and then formica gum is spread evenly on the copper sheet.*

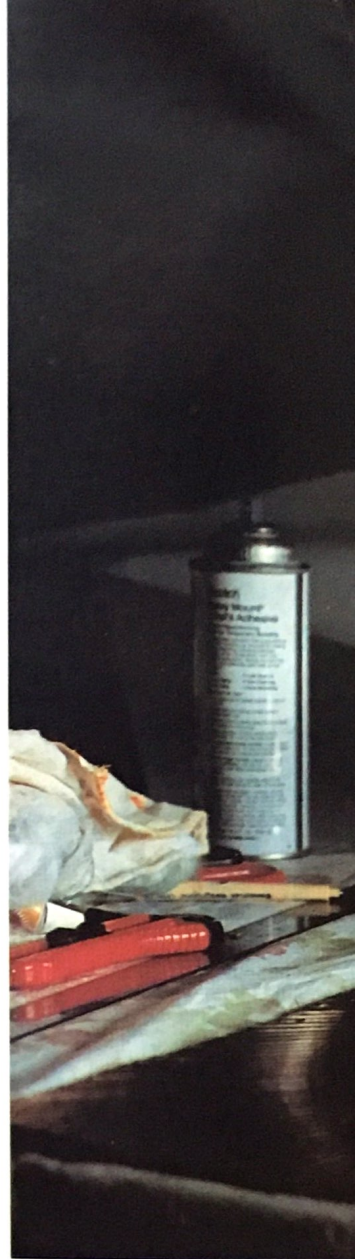
*The tracing-paper with the verse, which was written earlier, is superimposed on the copper sheet (right).*







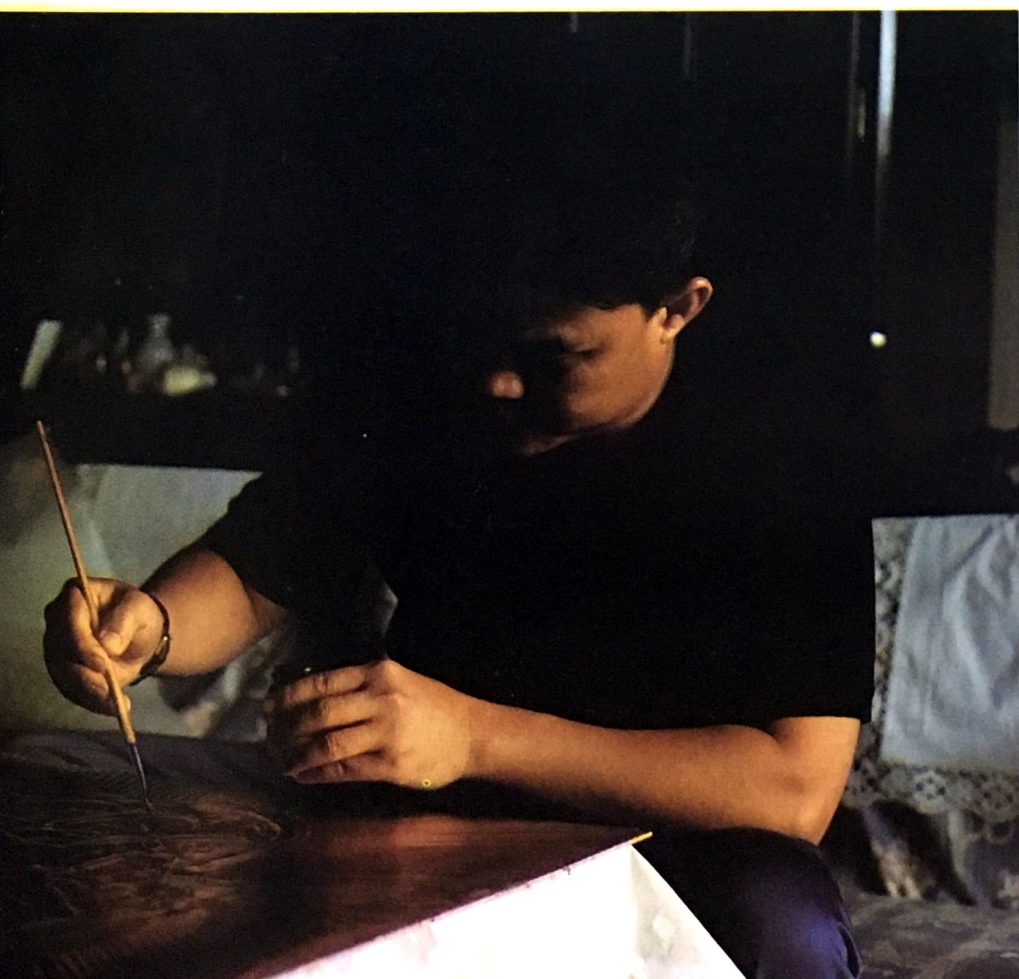
*The verse is carefully traced  
as written and is transferred  
on to the copper sheet.*







*When that is done the artist then begins the delicate work of 'tooling' using a hammer and a small chisel.*



*Once it is completed, the background is painted to give it a better contrast (left).*







country sometime ago. Today there are a number of Bruneians who have mastered the techniques after years of learning and practice. Although almost all of them first took up the art as a hobby, they soon found it a lucrative sideline income as they began receiving orders from khat collectors, especially after an exhibition or a competition.

## Copper

One of the successful Jawi writers is Awang Sabtu bin Surat,

*Before placing it inside a frame, it is sprayed with a compound to remove any dirt or residue and give it an extra shine.*

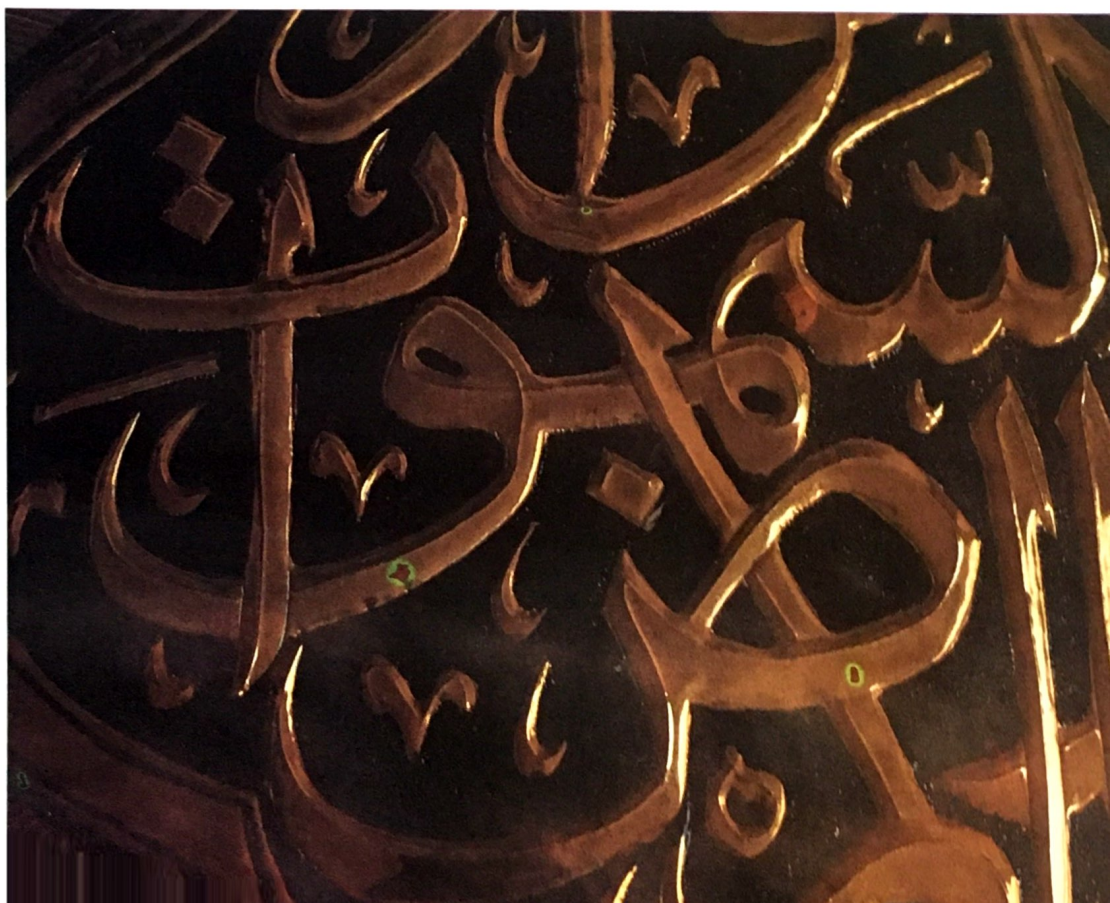
*A close-up view of the khat, showing the intricacy of the lettering.*

who discovered he had the talent for the art while still a student at the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers' College in the mid-Seventies.

After his graduation, Awang Sabtu was for a spell a religious teacher when he became interested in copper tooling. He learned from an older colleague once a week and eventually managed to assimilate sufficient know-how to strike out on his own.

Making calligraphy in copper or other metals for that matter is the most difficult because one has to be both an artist and a bit of a smith as well.

Awang Sabtu, who left his teaching profession in 1984 and has been with the History Centre as a Jawi writer ever since, says that depending on the size and intricacy of the letterings it normally takes him two to three weeks to







complete each work including several days on tooling alone.

## Engraving

Before the actual work begins the copper, wood or any other hard-surfaced material is first cleaned and polished. Selected holy verses are written on an ordinary piece of paper and later transferred onto a tracing-paper from where the verses are superimposed on the copper or other chosen materials for engraving with a chisel and a hammer.

The 36-year old artist, who carries out his work during his spare time, says the copper is further varnished with a polishing liquid to give it that extra shine and painted if a colourful background is desired.

The price of each finished product, which is usually agreed upon between the artist and the customer who commissions him to do the calligraphy on copper, ranges from one hundred to four hundred dollars. The cost hinges

upon the size and the complexity of the customer's choice of designs.

Like the other khat artists, Awang Sabtu frequently takes part in competitions including the ASEAN Islamic Calligraphy Contest, which is held in the country once every two years and has leading artists and craftsmen from the six ASEAN member countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, vying for top cash prizes.

Awang Sabtu has also participated in exhibitions during which he gave demonstration of his craft to schoolchildren. His one ambition is to be able one day to put up a solo exhibition of his works.

As khat has become a Malay art and craft it has, therefore, a steady market in Brunei Darussalam. At the moment the country continues to rely on overseas khat suppliers but artists like Awang Sabtu and his colleagues could change this state of affairs in the years to come.

*The Jawi script as seen on the covers of romanised publications.*

*Mr Haji Abdullah Jaafar, another Jawi calligraphy artist, with one of his four winning entries at a recent ASEAN Khat Competition.*



اورغ یخ نیقیس ایمانش  
لبه قرچای کقد مولوت  
درقدمات

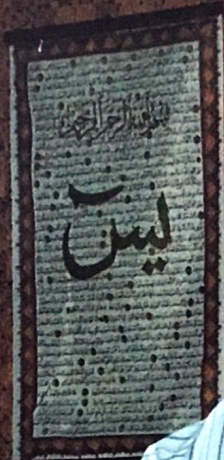
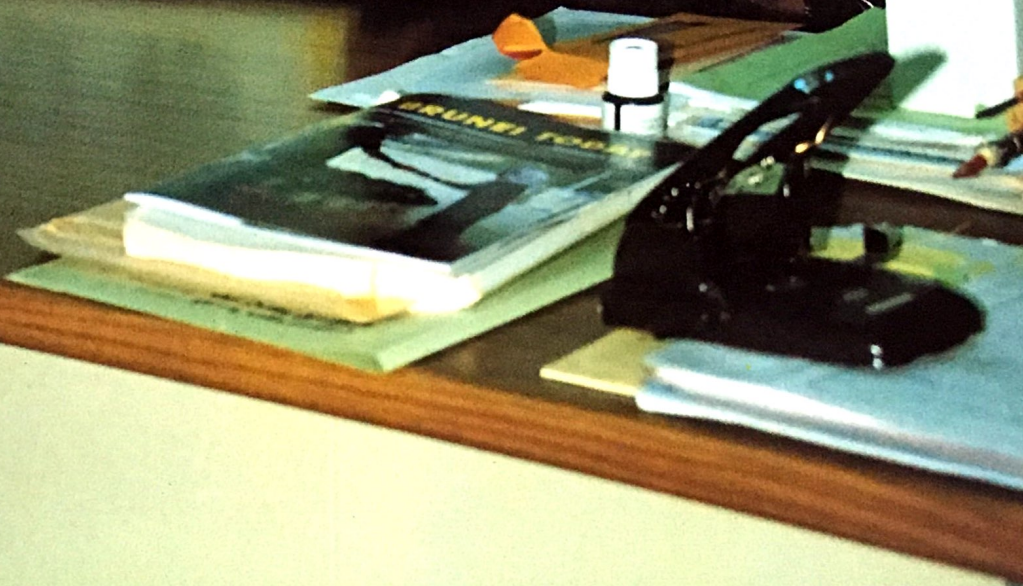


Table with 10 columns and 10 rows, likely a calendar or schedule. The columns are labeled: 1. Day of the week (e.g., Sunday, Monday), 2. Month (e.g., January, February), 3. Year (e.g., 1402, 1403), 4. Day of the month (e.g., 1, 2, 3), 5. Day of the week (e.g., Sunday, Monday), 6. Month (e.g., January, February), 7. Year (e.g., 1402, 1403), 8. Day of the month (e.g., 1, 2, 3), 9. Day of the week (e.g., Sunday, Monday), 10. Month (e.g., January, February).

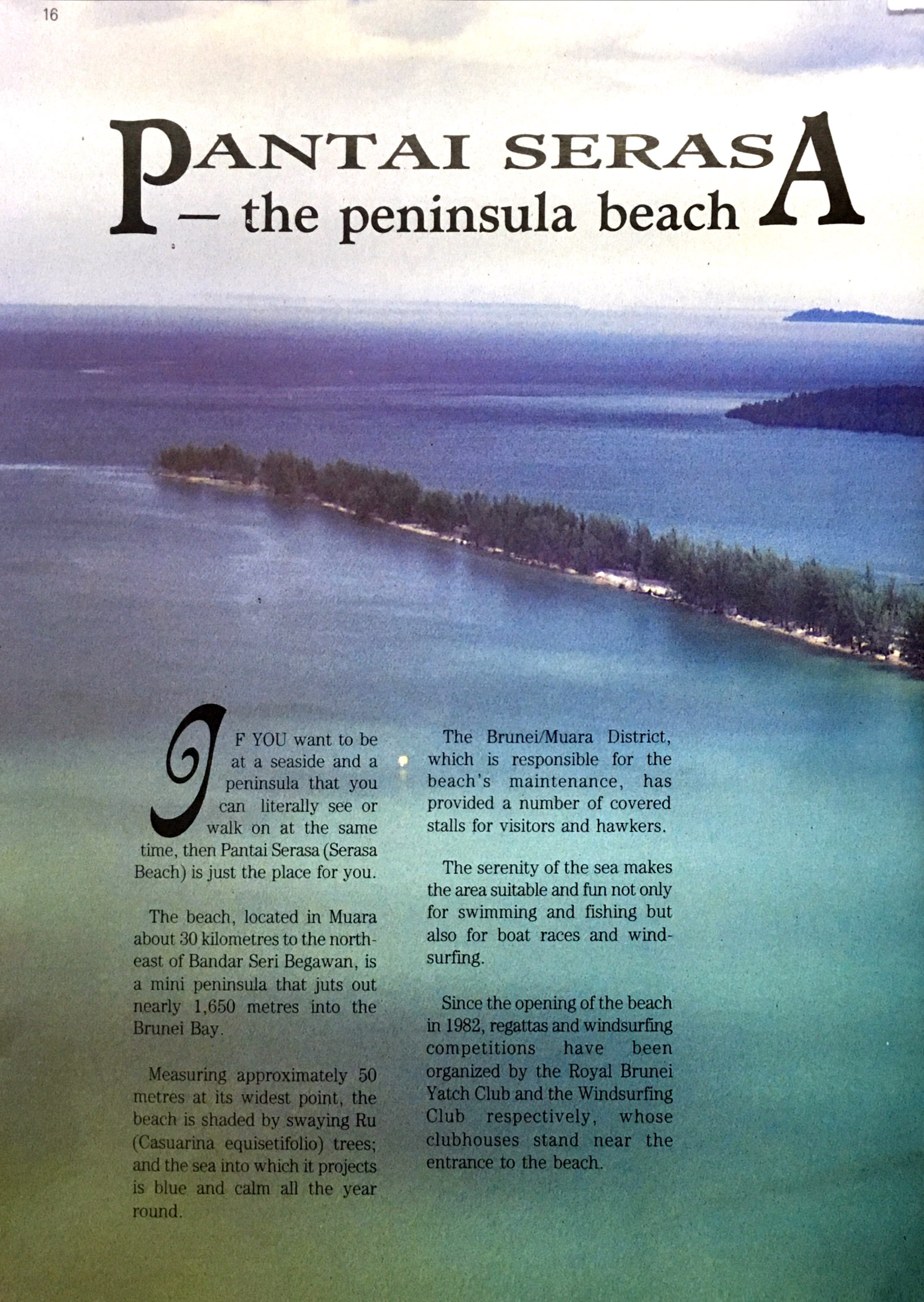
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# PANTAI SERASA

## — the peninsula beach



**I**F YOU want to be at a seaside and a peninsula that you can literally see or walk on at the same time, then Pantai Serasa (Serasa Beach) is just the place for you.

The beach, located in Muara about 30 kilometres to the north-east of Bandar Seri Begawan, is a mini peninsula that juts out nearly 1,650 metres into the Brunei Bay.

Measuring approximately 50 metres at its widest point, the beach is shaded by swaying Ru (Casuarina equisetifolia) trees; and the sea into which it projects is blue and calm all the year round.

The Brunei/Muara District, which is responsible for the beach's maintenance, has provided a number of covered stalls for visitors and hawkers.

The serenity of the sea makes the area suitable and fun not only for swimming and fishing but also for boat races and windsurfing.

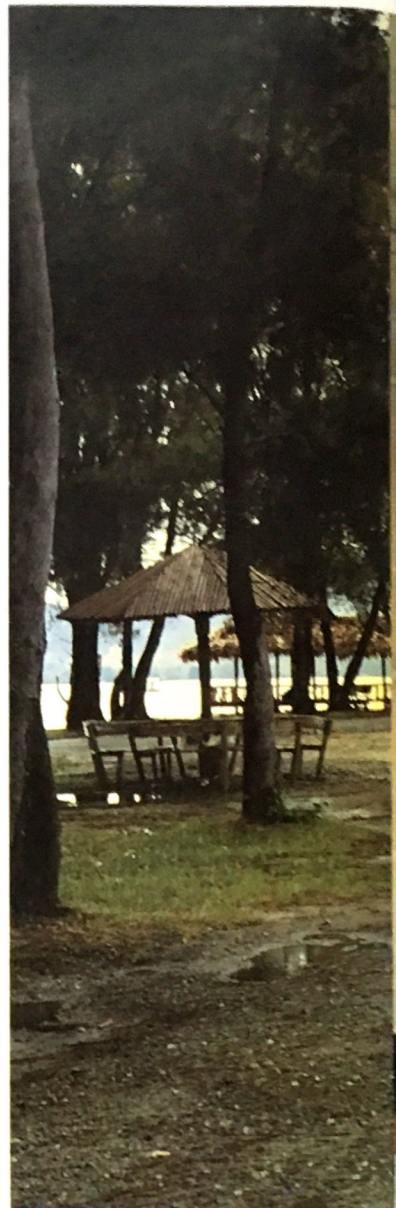
Since the opening of the beach in 1982, regattas and windsurfing competitions have been organized by the Royal Brunei Yatch Club and the Windsurfing Club respectively, whose clubhouses stand near the entrance to the beach.





*Pantai Serasa as  
seen from the air.*





*A straight road leads  
right to the end, giving  
the visitors  
a quick round trip of  
the mini peninsula.*

*The tip of the peninsula  
with a couple of an-  
glers trying their luck at  
fishing.*







*The variety of covered stalls found along the beach.*







*Windsurfers enjoying their sport.*

*The calmness of the sea makes boating fun and safe even for children.*

*An ASEAN boat race, comprising participants from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in action (below).*





