



Australian High Commission
Malaysia

MEDIA RELEASE

**AUSTRALIA AND SARAWAK
CELEBRATE SHARED HISTORIES AND FRIENDSHIP
THROUGH NEW PHOTO EXHIBITION**

Kuching, 26 August 2026 – The Australian High Commission in Malaysia today launched *Australians in Sarawak: Shared Histories – Enduring Friendship, Side by Side*, a photography exhibition celebrating the longstanding historical connections and enduring friendship between Australia and Sarawak.

Australian Defence Advisor to Malaysia, Group Captain Belinda Edmunds, hosted the launch alongside Deputy Premier of Sarawak YB Datuk Amar Professor Dr Sim Kui Hian. They were joined by local partners, community leaders, dedicated volunteers, newly appointed Youth Peace Ambassadors and veterans from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the Gurkhas.

Acting Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Mr Simon Fellows said, “The story told through this exhibition is one of partnership. It reflects a shared history that shaped not only the relationship between Australia and Sarawak, but also the partnership between Australia and Malaysia that is thriving today.

These photographs remind us that a longstanding friendship is built over decades and generations. As we look to the future and continue to deepen our partnership, we honour the individuals and communities who contributed to peace, reconciliation and regional stability, and whose legacy continues to underpin the strong bonds between our peoples.”

The exhibition explores a significant chapter in the shared history of Australia and Sarawak, through a collection of historic photographs to commemorate the courage, sacrifice and friendships forged during World War II and the early years of regional security cooperation in

Borneo. More than a military history exhibition, it captures the human stories of resilience, service and hope that continue to connect Australians and Sarawakians today.

The exhibition highlights Australia's leading role in the liberation of Sarawak from Imperial Japanese occupation in 1945 and honours individuals such as Brigadier Tom Eastick, Commander of Kuching Force and Military Governor of Sarawak following the war. It also showcases the close cooperation between Commonwealth forces from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the Gurkhas and the people of Sarawak, including the Iban Trackers, Border Scouts and Sarawak Constabulary, in support of the newly formed Federation of Malaysia.

These collective efforts helped create the conditions for the Malaysia-Indonesia Peace Agreement of 1966, which marked the end of Confrontation (*Konfrontasi*) and ushered in a new era of reconciliation and regional cooperation, helping to lay important foundations for ASEAN and the region's long-term stability and prosperity.

Group Captain Edmunds said, "The exhibition is much more than a collection of photographs. It is a story of people. It tells the story of Australians who came to Sarawak during some of the most challenging periods of the twentieth century. The photographs displayed here capture moments of service and sacrifice, but they also reveal something deeper: the relationships that were formed between Australians and the people of Sarawak."

Australia and Malaysia share longstanding ties built on defence cooperation, education, trade, investment, tourism, cultural exchange and deep people-to-people links. From shared wartime history to contemporary partnerships across a wide range of fields, the Australia-Malaysia partnership continues to be shaped by mutual respect, trust and common interests.

Group Captain Edmunds added, "While history often records conflict, the greatest achievement is peace, reconciliation and the friendship that we enjoy today. I hope this exhibition inspires reflection, understanding and a renewed appreciation for the enduring friendship between Australia and Sarawak."

The exhibition will be displayed at The Spring Shopping Mall, Kuching from 27 August – 27 September 2026.

The Australian High Commission extends its sincere appreciation to all individuals and organisations whose contributions, dedication and collaboration have made this exhibition possible.

Ends

Media note: Images will be available [here](#).

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