

# FRIDAY WRAP

#2.10.1

'A Glimpse of Humour'

5 March 2011



Petronas Towers

## Wrap

- ~ Rap -- to talk., *conversation*.
- ~ a piece of thin, flat bread *that can contain anything* eaten as a sandwich.
- ~ Signaling the end (*ie of a week*)
- ~ Under wraps – *secret*.

## The Tourist.

### Part IV.

#### 'Baie Terima Kasih'

Friday 29 April 2011

Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

On first impressions this airport did not make an impression.

Disembarking the airplane the heat, humidity and smell welcomed us like a long lost friend. We had a 'moerse' long way to walk just to get inside the terminal. We were not impressed.

Here I thought of a young ex-colleague who was always on the look out for 'Good Marriage Material'. The first Malaysian girl I saw, and most of the rest, wear hijab that closes their hair completely. It is just part of their mode of dress. But some of them wear the tightest pants and tightest, shortest tops leaving a lot to be desired. Awesome to me though.

This is a Muslim country yes but not an Islamic one. This is not an Arab state as I thought it would be. This is a country with a free and open society and there is no compulsion of religion. In a country where there is 28 million people only 65% are Muslim so Malaysia is a multi-religious society and the Malaysian constitution guarantees religious freedom. Despite the recognition of Islam as the state



Chinatown

religion, the first 4 prime ministers have stressed that Malaysia could function as a secular state.

Then walk, walk walk. Then up through immigration, baggage control and customs into the hall where our driver was waiting for us. We were getting use to this 'meet and greet' and I would recommend it to anyone travelling to a foreign country. The driver knew exactly where to go and he was paid for already. So minimum time was spent between airport and hotel. But this was a very helpful but glum driver and we did not interact at all. He did show me where the Masjid is though.

It was quite a long drive to Chinatown but there were plenty of sights to see along the way.

We made it to the hotel but we could only book in at 1500, which was strange, but I could hurriedly go to the Masjid up the road for Jumu'ah.

For me, one of the things I look forward to, is going to a Masjid in another town, city or country and this experience was excellent.

The Masjid Al-Bukhari was beautiful. All glass and white marble, it did not have windows just big glass doors that opened up entirely. And a stunning dome.

There were a lot of familiar faces in the Masjid as there is lot of people that look likes someone you know back at home. There was a lot of Indians with only a very light sprinkling of Somalis. I do not think Malaysia has a very good refugee program. Maybe to their neighbours but not to African Countries.

There was a huge sign in Malay on either side of the Masjid and I could not figure out what it meant. 'Keluar' Does that mean library? Toilet? What? Only later at the hotel did I figure out that it means EXIT.



Masjid Al-bukhari

I mistook the *'Imaam'* for the *'Bilal'* as he was small and young. He rendered the *'Khutba'* beautifully in Malay and Arabic. Short and sweet. *'Menggerunkan!!'* that is awesome in Malay.

The Malay words for 'Thank you' is *'Terima kasih'*, we use to use those words when we were young until someone thought it would be better to use *'Shukran'* which is Arabic, and we are not Ay-rabs. There is still a lot of words derived from Malay like *'Piesang'*, *'baie'*, *'verandah'*, *'jamang'*, *'kaparang'* and many, many more. But more than that we have lost everything from our Malay ancestors.

After Masjid there is a whole flea market outside the Masjid with all kinds of food stalls with benches and tables set up for all the patrons to eat. And it's like a Buffet, you get to take a plate and dish up different dishes from different containers and you pay at the end. They even have a cart providing dessert. This is so far removed from salomies and

samosas after Friday Prayers at some Masjids. I guess we here in Cape Town are not so big on food.

Chinatown, where we were staying, is centre of everything Chinese in KL. I passed 3 Chinese schools on my way back to the hotel. There was also a Chinese bookshop on the corner where everything is in Chinese. KL comprises of 43% Chinese, 10% Indian and 9% foreign. The Chinese have been in KL since the first wave in the 15 century and a second in the 18 century but the Chinese culture is still very strong. There was a huge shop just selling Chinese *'Manga'* comics.

We drew some money and went to have lunch at KFC. This KFC was so cold it was almost a fridge but the place was crowded so the patrons probably liked it.

Then it was time to book in at the **Swiss Inn Hotel**. This is very modern posh hotel but the room was tiny. Tiny, tiny, tiny. Modern but small. A double bed against the wall with

enough to walk on the side, a small space in front of the bed. The bathroom toilet was very narrow and you had to take off all your clothes if you wanted to go to the loo. You couldn't fall asleep on this toilet as you would knock yourself silly. These rooms were made for business people requiring a place to sleep and wash, nowise would you be able to give a jol in this room. Nowise.

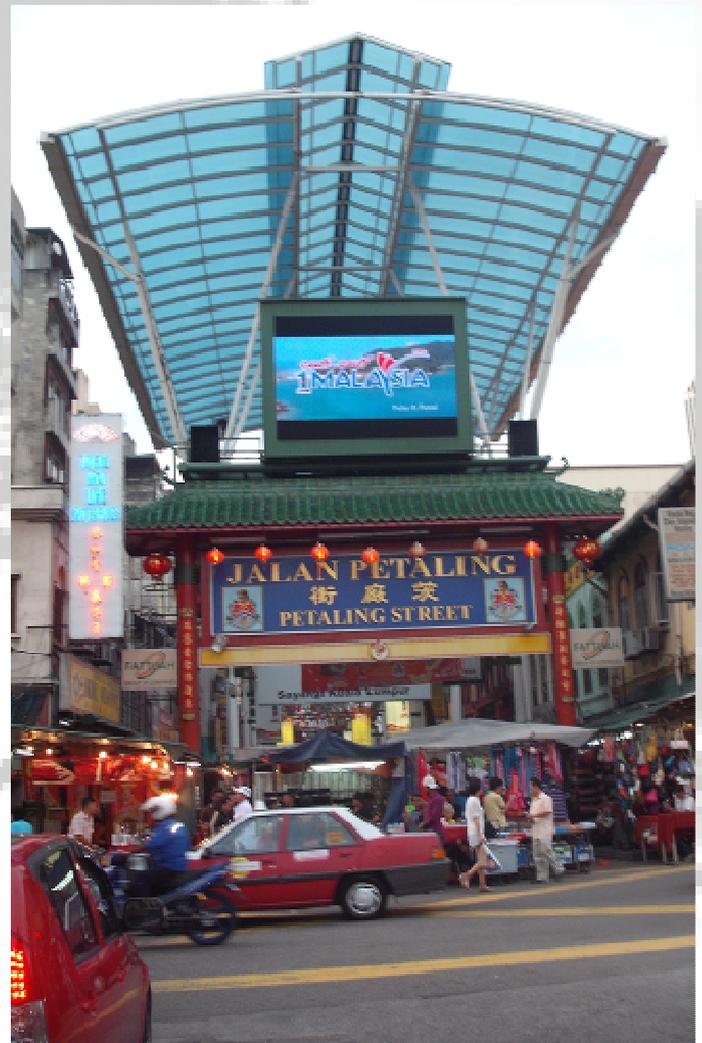
But we quickly got used to it. We couldn't wait to switch on the air-conditioning. The afternoon was set aside for the wedding of 'William & Kate Show', the royal wedding. We were seven hours ahead in time to London so we saw the whole program, we did not have to stop for Jumu'ah.

While the ceremony was on I had to go hunting for a plug for my laptop and got to go through a whole department store down the road, until I found it on the fifth floor. Strange how doing the normal things, give you a chance to see the things normal people on a normal day do but in another country. There was a lot of locals out shopping for food and clothing.

Then back to the hotel to watch the rest of the 'William and Kate Show' and watching the people walking down the Mall waiting for 'The Kiss'. I'm not a true blue Royalist but I love a little pomp and ceremony. Actually I was more interested in seeing the old aircrafts fly by, that really brought a tear to my eye. As the first aircraft flew past the program stopped abruptly and a Malaysian Game Show was on. I guess they are not big royalist either. And we complain about SABC, it looks like other countries also have a problem with their Television Broadcaster.

Then we were out on to the street. Around the corner and we were on to Petaling Street.

This was a Shopper's Paradise where price haggling is a must and we spent almost every evening on Petaling



### Petaling Street

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(Malay: *Jalan Petaling*, Simplified Chinese: 茨厂街, Traditional Chinese: 茨廠街, pinyin: Cíchǎng Jiē, Cantonese: Chee Cheong Kai) is a Chinatown located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

It is infamous for pirated clothes and accessories along with bootleg DVDs and CDs. Petaling Street however does not exclusively offer pirated products. Haggling is a common sight here and the place is usually crowded with locals as well as tourists. The area has dozens of restaurants and food stalls, serving local favourites. Traders here are mainly Chinese but there are also Indian, Malay, and Bangladeshi traders.

The hotel's restaurant open up onto Petaling Street so there was even easier entrance and exit.



Street Vendors

There are hundreds of stalls with a lot of duplications and with the narrow alleyways it takes hours to get from one side to the other. The ladies loved this street and can almost say this is one their most favouritist streets in the world.

We browsed the stalls then looked for a place to eat. There were halaal places to eat along the way but the Street vendors cleanliness left much to be desired. Though I would've eaten, the ladies couldn't see themselves eating there. The one was in a lane sort of all dark and wet. The other was on the corner with no place to sit and eat. So we had a choice of KFC, Macdonalds and Nando's. Yes Nando's. Did you know Nando's is an South African exported Franchise?

We saw a huge mall, or what we thought was a mall, and crossed four roads to get there only to find out it's a train station. Still packed

like an airport this time of night with people on their way home.

Here most of the shops are open from 1030-2200.

At the end we opted for Macdonalds, something I do not eat willingly. I always ask, 'When is Macdonalds going to make adult food?' The food was okay as Macdonalds go. The Macdonalds in KL all had free WIFI so there were a lot of students doing homework and research on their laptops while we having supper.

And so our first day in KL came to an end; I had experienced a Jumuah in a foreign city, a beautiful Masjid, Petaling Street and a long walk in one of the most bustling metropolises in South East Asia. Wow!

**Saturday 30 April 2011**

We rose early to a very wet KL. But rain here is not associated with cold like it does in Cape Town. The rain does not cool at all, nay, the heat remains the same and the humidity



National Palace

goes up. You even get to appreciate walking in the rain. We had brought rain jackets but we would probably have suffocated if we had to wear it there. The ladies just learnt not to wear too flimsy tops when walking in the rain.

The ladies watched some reruns of the Royal Wedding while I did some maintenance around the 'house' and by 1100 we were on our way.

KL has a **Hop-on-Hop-Off Bus** which does a circuitous route pass 44 tourist attractions. You buy a ticket (38Baht for a 24 hour pass) then you can get off at any off the stops then back on another bus. The buses run every half hour. Thanks for the excellent advice VJ.

The bus stop was right outside the door of the hotel with the ticket box and we did not have a long wait and we were on our way.

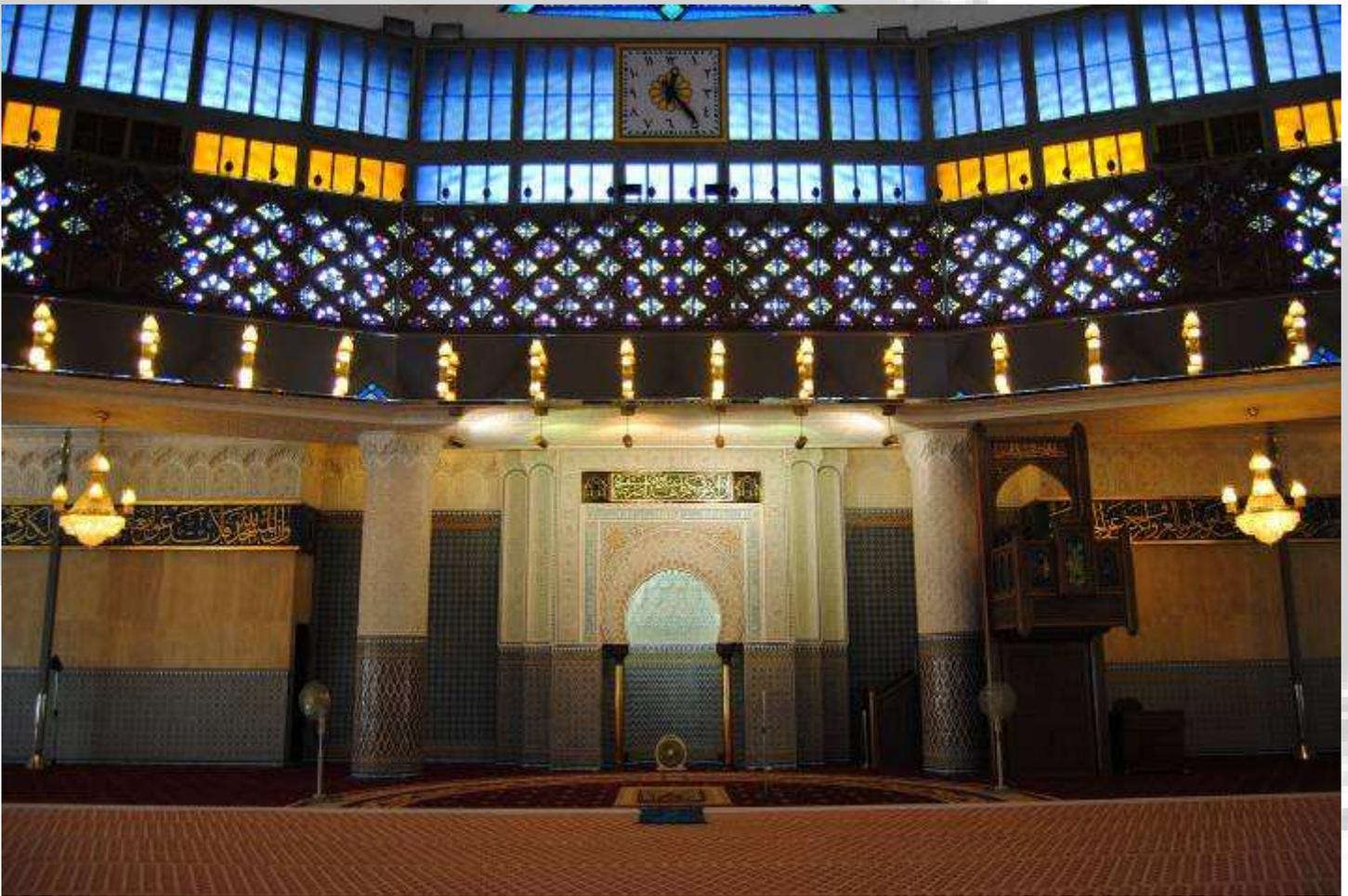
Three stops later we stopped at Istana Negara or National Palace is the official residence of His Majesty, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King) of Malaysia. They had a five

minute photo stop so I took the opportunity.

Then we went pass the Kl Sentral, National Museum, Parliament Of Malaysia, National Monument, Asean Sculpture Garden, Kl Lake Garden, Orchid Garden, Bird Park, National Planetarium, Tun Abdul Razak Memorial, Islamic Art Museum, here we should've gotten off but thought we could come back. We didn't. Damn!

At the next stop I did not make a mistake we out of the bus in an instant. The stop - The **Masjid Negara** or National Masjid of Malaysia. It has a capacity of 15,000 people and is situated among 13 acres of beautiful gardens. I had a chance to pray in this most exquisite Masjid. The ladies got purple gowns to don over their clothes and looked like characters out of Harry Potter, scary too they were.

We spent more than an hour here, chatting to the guardian of the Masjid and visiting the well stocked Gift Shop. We really should've spent more money here.



Masjid Negara

We left on the Athaan for Thur.

We stayed on the bus for the highlight of KL for the ladies - Petronas Towers in Jalan Ampang or more importantly **Suria Shopping Mall** with air-conditioning.

The **Petronas Towers** are the world's tallest twin buildings and is very, very impressive. It was built from 1992-1998 at a cost of \$1.6 billion dollars. It has 88 floors and 78 lifts. Yes, 78 lifts, some of them double decker lifts. It is 375m high and 451.9m with the spire. Designed by Cesar Pelli an Argentine-American [architect](#) known for designing some of the world's tallest buildings. There is a Skybridge on the 41<sup>st</sup> floor a viewing deck on the 88th floor which you can visit.

But we were into the shopping mall first where we did some shopping, did a lot of mall shopping as oppose to window shopping. Mall shopping is to window shop, sight see and people watch combined, we were getting very good at this. And we learnt when something is a bargain in a foreign

currency and that the shops actually accept Visa.

As always, the women got sick, tired, thirsty and hungry very quickly. Half of the time of our trip was spent looking for either air-conditioning, somewhere to eat or toilets. But I jest.

We found the food court where all the food was halaal. I couldn't figure out the ladies, out of all the food on offer, from the mediocre to the most exotic they still opted for rooti and curry from an Indian Café. Only afterwards they realise they could actually have chosen a little bit of everything for the same price. That is probably the price you pay for being mediocre.

I, of course, had to go for the exotic and chose the Hotplate Black Pepper Chicken with egg. Excellent. We even attempted dessert.

With our bellies full we explored this huge Shopping Mall. I was particularly impressed with the book shop. Okay, okay with everything. As everything is twice the size as we



Petronas Towers



Suria Shopping Mall

know it. Whereas Exclusive Books here in Cape Town has a shelf on 'History and Biography' this bookshop was an *aisle*. This was really a lump in the throat moment for me and would probably spend a whole day in this shop. This was one of the things I dreamt of, to see a real life megastore bookshop. And the books were cheaper too. I did not buy anything. I had tears in my eyes when I left the shop and vowed to return.

Later we tried to get tickets for the ride up to the viewing deck but were informed they only sell 1400 tickets a day and it is always sold out within two hours of the ticket box opening at 0700.

Damn! But we knew it was a long shot. Fellow traveler, VJ, came two days in a row without getting tickets.

So we took some photos, mall shopped some more, bought some food for supper and later made our way back to catch the **Hop-on-Hop-Off Bus** again for our trip back to the hotel. There was not much you get out of the ladies again as they were sick, tired and thirsty again and both promptly ignored the sight-seeing and fell asleep on the air-conditioned bus.

They missed out on Kl Tower, Jalan P. Ramlee (Clubbing Area), Aquaria Klcc, Kl Convention Center, Karyaneka, Craft Cultural Complex, Rumah Penghulu Abu Seman, Sungei Wang Plaza, Bukit Bintang Plaza, Bintang Walk, Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, Berjaya Times Square, Ain Arabia and back to Chinatown.



KL Tower

The evening we explored our neighbourhood in Chinatown again and made further acquaintance with all the vendors in Petaling Street. We again could not scrape up the courage to eat some Halaal street food and ended up in Macdonald's again. No, I was beginning to enjoy it. We finished the evening by eating cold foreign seafood pizza for late supper. It did not go down well. Our stomachs still has not adapted.

We really won't be able to do justice to these cities we visit by just spending a day or two in them. You need to at least live in these metropolises if you really want to fully experience it.



Shopping Mall ~



KL Cityscape

### Sunday 1 May 2011

Breakfast was had. No ku'susters this Sunday morning but excellent eggs, beans, chicken sausage, toast, fruit, flapjacks with maple syrup, coffee and juice. To admit, I was getting *gatvol* of eggs now. But to me food is food. Especially on travel.

After some look around a clean and cleared Petaling Street we headed for the 'Central Market' which is located at Jalan Hang Kasturi.

It was founded in 1888 and was declared a Heritage Site and is now a landmark for Malaysian culture and heritage. We found this to be an excellent market of Malay culture but wholly over-priced.

I was in search of Kukri, a Nepalese knife used by the Gurkhas and made famous by Denzil Washington in 'Book of Eli'. I found one here but it was over-priced and way out of my price league. I was asked to make an offer but did not, as I knew what the knife was worth. I'm kicking myself as I should've made an offer. Damn. It was a very sad moment. Even the old farm tools were way too expensive.

The ladies also had a very limited shopping experience as everything proved to be very expensive and we were soon out of there and heading to Bintang Walk.



Bintang Skytrain Station

This is home to one of KL's oldest shopping centres, Bukit Bintang Plaza and further down the road is a collection of street-side cafes, restaurants and pubs. At night, Bintang Walk truly come alive, when live jazz music is played and the whole place is beautifully light-up. Bintang Walk is within walking distance but the heat and humidity was daunting. What was even more daunting is the huge logjam of traffic and we walked faster than the busses and taxis. This was on a Sunday afternoon! There has never been a traffic jam in Cape Town on a Sunday afternoon ever!

Eventually we got to Bintang Walk and now the ladies were sick, tired, thirsty and hungry in random order. After a huge search and exploring most of two Shopping Malls we ended up in the restaurant I pointed out in the first place. So much for being an 'informative guide'.

Lunch was excellent with copious amounts of liquid being consumed.

Eventually we had to gather ourselves and leave this air-conditioned haven. But we had to leave sometime.

We made our way over the road and up the stairs. We were going to take a ride on the Monorail. The Monorail serves as a feeder route to many bus routes. So you use the Monorail to navigate the city to get to your bus or railway station. Cool né.

We first took a ride to the last station Titiwangsa, we got out went down the stairs and looked left then right then turned around and went back and bought tickets to the last station on the other side - KL Central. After a sight seeing trip through KL we got to KL Central. Then we got out went down the stairs and onto the pavement. We looked left then right then turned around and went back and bought tickets to Petaling Street.

This Monorail is really impressive. It was opened on 31 August 2003 and there are eleven stations and 8.6km of rail and the trains travel at top



Matching Bridal Couple

speed of 60kmph and had 21,765,233 riders in 2008. All this above the ground and above some very busy road. There is a train approx. every eight minutes.

Walking back to the hotel we encountered a Malaysian Wedding Couple beautifully attired in their bridal garments. I can tick that off now too. I even got them to give me a pose. They were getting strange poses from the Wedding Photographer like they do here in Cape Town sometimes. After I took my pic I left the Wedding Photographer to do his job. We were just around the corner from our hotel without even knowing it and we had a most welcomed return to air-conditioning.

After some rest, recuperation and prayers we were back on the streets going through all the Chinese Tea Shops in our area. These shops had the tea and all the paraphernalia that goes with the making of tea

because to the Chinese tea making is an art form.

Inevitably we ended up in Petaling Street where the vendors were starting to recognize us. This was our last night and we were spending the last of our Ringgits and buying last stuff like you tend to do on the last night of a holiday. Petaling Street will always have a soft spot in our hearts. Think Street Market in Adderley Street in December. Now imagine ten times the amount of stalls. Now imagine ten times the amount of people. And this happens every night. A place where you could bargain down an item from RM65 to RM35. A place to bargain and for bargain hunters.

Back at the hotel we packed and got ready for our 0700 pickup for our 1030 flight back to Doha.

We were on our way home.