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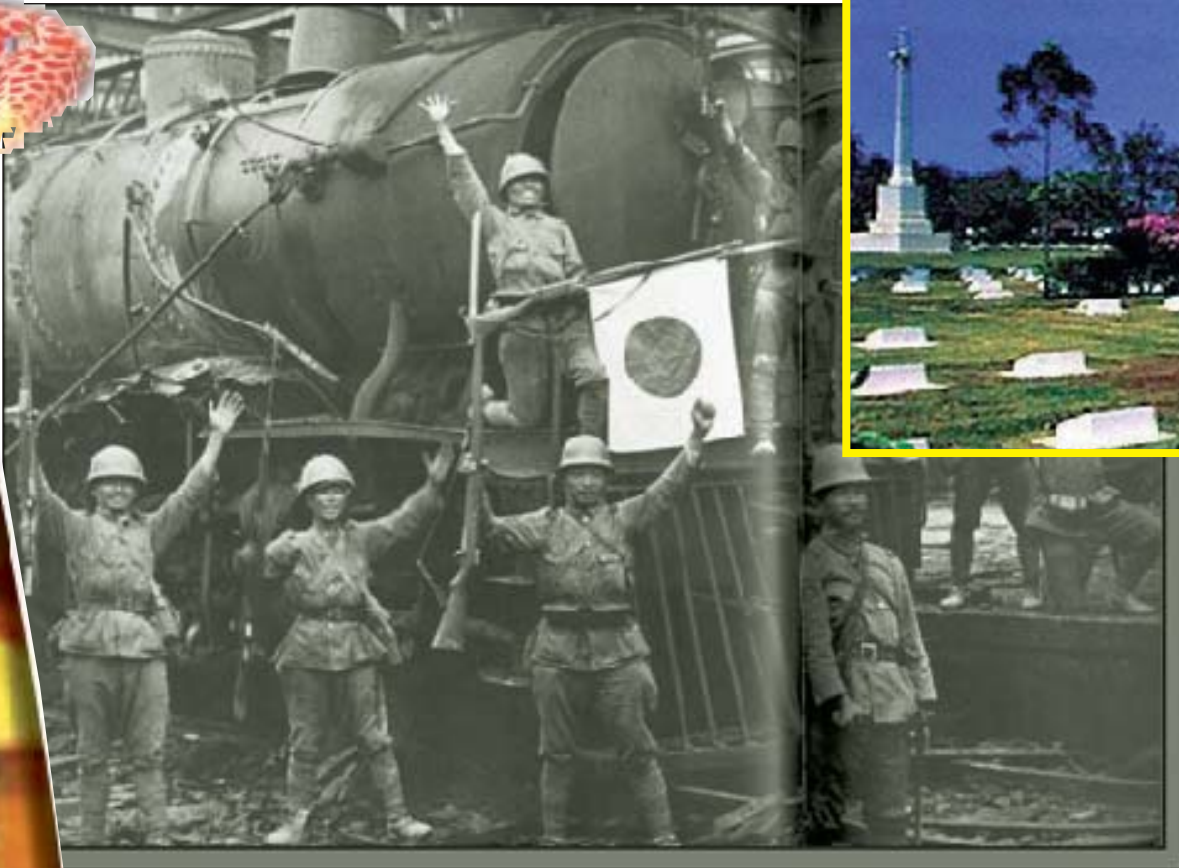
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Sharing, the deeds of Fallen Heroes



By ANNA VIVIENNE



On January 21, this Sunday to be exact, the small sleepy village of Petagas, in front of the Kota Kinabalu International Airport will be a hub of activities.

The residents will awaken to see commotions, rather brief, at the Petagas War Memorial. They may turn up and watch the hullabaloo there but then again they may not. After all they live near the memorial all days of their life so they hardly notice it.

For on this day, State dignitaries will descend there where a brief ceremony will be held. They will lay wreaths on the memorial and the 'Last Post' will be played. Relatives of the dead will come and ponder on how it must have been for the freedom fighters, and how life could have been if they had lived.

Be that as it may, the memorial was established there in memory of those who died for the country while fighting the Japanese. The monument is especially for those who were massacred on January 21, 1944.

In this park 176 of the guerrillas were killed and 131 were sent to Labuan to work in

labour camps. They also died there due to the harsh conditions imposed by the Japanese. It is believed that nine survived.

It is also believed that the remains of the comrades who died in Labuan were secretly brought back to Petagas and buried alongside their massacred friends.

Anyway, the Petagas War Memorial was built in memory of a group of people who dared to stand against a stronger force for the sake of freedom. Led by Albert Kwok, they created enough resistance to bother the Japanese army in and around Tuaran, Menggatal and Inanam area during the occupation. Although hampered badly by lack of weapons, they courageously carried out attacks on the invaders.

On Oct 10, 1943 they boldly marched into Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu) and fought long and hard. Unfortunately they were defeated and herded at Karamunsing before they were hauled to Petagas and massacred barely two months afterwards. Senior citizens who saw or were told about the executions have related that the guerrillas were ordered to dig the trench before they were beheaded and thrown in.

The first memorial ceremony was held on 21 January 1948 and since then the ceremony is held every year.

Be that as it may, the memorial is something interesting that could be shared with our guests. So if you are conducting a city tour this Sunday, drop by the Memorial and watch the ceremony. It is a sight worth seeing.

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