

*Malaysian Murders and Mysteries* brings together 42 of the nation's most well-known and notorious criminal cases — and investigates over a century of crimes and murders that have gripped the attention of the entire nation and beyond. The cases go as far back as 1875, beginning with colonial-era intrigues that remain unresolved to this day, to the swift and sudden demise of a North Korean man at KLIA in 2017 and a mysterious epidemic that killed 15 villagers in a remote Kelantan outpost in 2019.

Based on the authors' meticulous research and consultations with several of Malaysia's most eminent historians and criminal lawyers, crime reporters and police officers, this compilation breathes new life into some of the cases and sheds new light on the notorious events.

**Infamous cases include:**

- **Jim Thompson**  
The Missing Millionaire, 1967
- **Botak Chin**  
The Robin Hood of Sentul, 1976
- **Jean Perera**  
The Slaying of a Beauty Queen, 1979
- **Mona Fandey**  
Pop Singer, Witch Doctor, 1993
- **Canny Ong**  
The Car Park Abduction, 2003
- **Altantuya Shaariibuu**  
The Mystery of the Mongolian Model, 2006
- **Teoh Beng Hock**  
A Fallen Comrade, 2009
- **MH370**  
The Missing Plane, 2014



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Martin Vengadesan  
AND Andrew Sagayam

**MALAYSIAN MURDERS AND MYSTERIES**

Marshall Cavendish  
Editions



*"A gruesome but gripping trip down memory lane."*

Azmi Sharom  
Election Commission deputy chairperson

# MALAYSIAN MURDERS AND MYSTERIES

A century of **shocking cases**  
that gripped the nation

Martin Vengadesan  
AND Andrew Sagayam

Notorious stories including Botak Chin, Altantuya, MH370 and many more ...


*"I am very happy these cases are being highlighted, as there are many stories in which the truth has been hidden. These are enigmas that continue to haunt many Malaysians."*

Kuan Chee Heng  
Founder of Community Policing Malaysia

*"The cases chosen are very interesting. Fairness, unbiased investigation and speed without compromising professionalism is the essence of police work. Just as justice must be seen to be served, the human rights of the victims and the perpetrators' families must also be protected. The authors have done well on a challenging subject."*

A. Thaiveegan  
Commissioner of Police (retired)

For Review only



# **MALAYSIAN MURDERS AND MYSTERIES**

A century of **shocking cases**  
that gripped the nation

**Martin Vengadesan AND Andrew Sagayam**

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*Dedicated to all victims of violent crimes in Malaysia,  
especially victims of crimes which remain unsolved.  
To the family members who have suffered alongside them.  
To those who have fought for justice, and also to  
those punished for crimes they did not commit.*

*A special thank you to  
the late Karpal Singh and  
the late Professor Khoo Kay Kim  
who gave their time to this book.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Every country has its own salacious scandals, gruesome crimes and unsolved mysteries. The lore of the Malay Peninsula is rich with stories of murder and intrigue surrounding such mythical figures as Hang Tuah and Mahsuri.

Modern Malaysia is no different. Over the past century, there have been cases that have gripped the attention of the entire nation only to become vague memories as time passes.

These crimes vary in nature and detail. In some instances the perpetrators have been caught and punished, while others remain unresolved. What most of them have in common is that they were real-life dramas played out through the media and thus carried into every home in the country. Ordinary Malaysians have been morbidly drawn to the darkness that can exist in the hearts of the worst and, sometimes, the best of us.

Motives varied from heated crimes of passion to cynical executions for profit or even simple cruelty. The criminals were sadistic, cool, twisted, ingenious and sometimes even credited with supernatural powers!

It has to be said that in compiling this book, we came across cases which are still rather 'sensitive' (and we use

that term in its all-encompassing, peculiarly Malaysian glory).

We are referring not just to ongoing trials such as the 1MDB legal cases and the Kevin Morais murder proceedings under which comment might be sub judice, but rather to situations in which prominent personalities who were implicated but not charged are still in a position to suppress the truth. Thus, one may find omissions that prevent this work from being the free-flowing exposé it should be.

Still, we were fortunate enough to be able to talk to some of the most eminent historians and criminal lawyers, crime reporters and police officers in the country, and they were able to breathe new life into some of the cases and shed new light on these notorious events. We hasten to add that many of these cases deserve a single book unto themselves and what we are providing here is but a summary with some fresh insights, rather than an in-depth look into any specific crime.

We go as far back as 1875, beginning with colonial-era intrigues that remain unresolved to this day and investigate over a century of Malaysian murders and mysteries.

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## THE SLAYING OF A BEAUTY QUEEN

**Date** : April 6, 1979

**Crime** : A former Miss Malaysia runner-up is found  
stabbed to death

**Details:** One of Malaysia's most sensational murder trials involved the death of beauty queen Jean Perera Sinnappa. A former Miss Malaysia runner-up, she was a widowed mother of three who was found stabbed to death in her car in an isolated turn-off point off the Federal Highway in Subang. Even more surprising was the fact that her brother-in-law, S Karthigesu, was found unconscious behind the car.

Psychology lecturer Karthigesu, who confessed to being in a romantic relationship with his late brother's widow, soon came under suspicion. In a sensational trial, he was charged with her murder, found guilty and sentenced to death. Perhaps even more sensationally, he was later freed after a key witness admitted to lying on the stand!

The facts of the case certainly seemed suspicious. Karthigesu said that he and Jean were returning to Klang



Front page of *The Star* on April 8, 1979, carrying news of Jean's shocking murder (courtesy of Star Media Group).

from a night out when he stopped off at a lonely junction to relieve himself. He then claims that he was knocked unconscious. Two engineers who were working for Malaysia Airlines which was then based at the nearby Subang airport came across their car. They saw the figure of Karthigesu lying near it and called the police.

When the police arrived, they found a much more gruesome sight inside the car. Jean Perera was found dead after having been stabbed 10 times. No valuables were taken, ruling out robbery as a motive. The police were surprised to discover that apart from being found unconscious, Karthigesu was relatively unharmed.

It was quite a sensation when he was charged with the crime a month later and by the time he stood trial on June 16, 1980, the whole nation was fixated on the case.

To this day, many who have met Karthigesu comment on how gentle his mannerisms were, and how patient and kind he seemed. From veteran journalists to teachers he

trained and even hardened lawyers, many were moved to support his cause.

Still, the circumstances of the case were heavily against him. Firstly, why was he relatively unharmed while Jean was stabbed so viciously? In fact, the doctor who first examined him gave testimony saying that there was no sign of any trauma or injury on Karthigesu's head that would explain his being unconscious. In addition, based on the testimony of witnesses Ramly Othman and Abdul Wahad Abu Amin, who happened upon the scene at different times, it appeared as if Karthigesu had shifted his position while supposedly knocked out!

Secondly, at the time of the crime, it had only been four months since his brother, chemist S Sinappa, was killed in a car crash on New Year's Eve, and yet Karthigesu was already talking of marrying Jean. It was even hinted that Karthigesu had always been in love with his brother's wife.

Thirdly, during the course of the trial, allegations surfaced that Jean had been having an extramarital relationship with a Dr Narada Warnasurya, a Sri Lankan national. Some 19 letters, purportedly from the doctor to Jean, were introduced as evidence in court and compounded the scandal with lurid sexual details.

Finally, and perhaps most damningly, Jean's relative Bandhulananda Jayatilake testified that 10 days after the murder, he was at Karthigesu's house when the police came to question the latter. He said that when the police left, Karthigesu had lost his cool and ranted about Jean, saying "the bitch did not deserve to live."



Psychology lecturer, S Karthigesu. *The Star* file image (courtesy of Star Media Group).

The Prosecution convincingly argued that the mild-mannered Karthigesu had snapped and killed Jean while overcome by jealous rage. The Defence, on the other hand, tried to portray Karthigesu as a gentle man devoted to his family. They claimed that he had been attacked by unknown assailants who had gone on to kill Jean. They questioned why there was no blood splatter at all on Karthigesu if he was indeed the killer, and also why no murder weapon was found at the scene.

At that time, Malaysia had a jury system and by a vote of 5-2 Karthigesu was found guilty of the murder and sentenced to death.

PK Katharason recalled: "An interesting story which not many people are aware of is that Karthigesu and Botak Chin met in prison. They were on death row at the same time and there was a lot of public interest in both of their cases. Both men were supposed to be charmers, but we can only speculate as to what happened at their meeting and whether or not they charmed each other!"

In most cases, an appeal is nothing more than a



## LONG LIVE KING GHAZ

**Date** : January 11, 1982

**Crime** : A plane crashes in the jungle and Foreign Minister  
Ghazali Shafie is the only survivor

**Details:** In the early 1980s, a small plane piloted by then Malaysian Foreign Minister Ghazali Shafie crashed into a mountainous jungle in Pahang. A shocked nation listened raptly as the media announced the death of the man known as King Ghaz, his pilot and his bodyguard.

But then came an even bigger shock ... the possibility that Ghazali had not perished in the crash after all!

PK Katharason was right in the thick of it. “*The Star* wrote the first edition saying that King Ghaz was dead. It was only later that we changed it to ‘feared dead’. In fact, Martin Vengadesan went with *The Star* photographer Andrew Chong on a late night drive to Kuala Lipis to show his first cousin that the final edition did not say he had died. Still, King Ghaz was a master dramatist who wanted to fight Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the time for the prime

formality. However, when Karthigesu made his appeal, Jayatilake suddenly retracted his story, saying that he had not told the truth on the stand. Due to this confession, Karthigesu was sensationally acquitted while Jayatilake was sentenced to 10 years’ jail after pleading guilty to a perjury charge. Although still a young man in his thirties, he was to die two years later while still serving his sentence. It was even speculated that he knew he was dying at the time he changed his story.

To this day, the Jean Perera case rouses strong emotions. Lawyer Y Sivaloganathan said: “It had all the ingredients of a Shakespearean drama and was quite possibly the most sensational murder trial in the country. Jean Perera was well known at the time. She was vivacious with striking eyes.”

As with many cases nowadays, Karthigesu’s involvement in the crime or lack thereof could quite easily have been proven with the forensic tools we have available these days, but back then, DNA testing simply did not exist. At that time, one of Malaysia’s most famous police dogs was put on the case!

Despite Karthigesu’s eventual release, the murder case continues to fascinate. A book, *The Murder of a Beauty Queen*, was written by Alex Josey while a documentary, *Jean Perera: The Beauty Queen Murder*, was produced in 2009. Opinions remain divided as to who her murderer actually was, or if the right man was convicted and then wrongly freed.

**VERDICT** Jean Perera Sinnappa’s murder remains  
officially unsolved.

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## THE MYSTERY OF THE MONGOLIAN MODEL

**Date :** October 19, 2006

**Crime :** A missing beauty is found, her body blown up by dynamite

**Details:** The story of Altantuya Shaariibuu is arguably one of the most notorious in Malaysia's history. A beautiful and mysterious woman, whose past may have included two divorces and stints as a teacher, model and translator, Altantuya was alleged to have played a role in negotiations involving the Malaysian government and foreign companies over submarine purchases.

What is certain is that she came to Malaysia apparently in search of commission from those negotiations. She was reported missing on October 19 by her second cousin Namiraa Gerelmaa. On November 7, her remains were found in a deserted forest area in Puncak Alam, Shah Alam, destroyed by C-4 explosives. What made the case more



Mongolian model,  
Altantuya Shaariibuu.

sensational was that Abdul Razak Baginda, who headed the Malaysian Strategic Research Centre think-tank, was charged with abetting her murder.

Razak Baginda was not the only person arrested in connection with Altantuya's murder. Three members of the police force were detained during the murder investigation and the two murder suspects were Chief Inspector Azilah Hadri and Corporal Sirul Azhar Umar, members of the elite Unit Tindakan Khas (the Malaysian Police Special Action Force). Azilah and Sirul were eventually charged with murdering Altantuya on Lot 12843 and Lot 16735 in Mukim Bukit Raja, Selangor, between 10pm on October 19 and 1am on October 20. Investigations by the Malaysian police revealed that she was shot twice before C-4 explosives were used on her body, although it is not certain whether it was the bullets or the explosives that killed her.



The burnt corpse of Altantuya was found at this location. *The Star* file image (courtesy of Star Media Group).

During the trial, numerous distractions occurred. It was alleged that Altantuya had worked with Razak Baginda helping to negotiate the submarine purchases. She was reported to have shown up outside his residence shouting loudly in order to make a scene to embarrass him. She claimed to be pregnant and wanted money to go away. Accusations of impropriety over kickbacks were thrown around.

Sirul's own statement, which he later recanted saying it was made under duress, spoke of a desperate Altantuya, who was whisked away to a remote location and, when realising that her life was in danger, had allegedly begged for her life, citing the unborn child in her belly. But to no avail.

In other controversial testimony, Altantuya's cousin Burmaa Oyunchimeg claimed to have been shown a

photograph by Altantuya, allegedly of Altantuya herself, Razak Baginda and then Defence Minister Najib Abdul Razak. Further controversy followed when Karpal Singh, acting on behalf of Altantuya's family, attempted to get said politician to testify at the trial.

While the trial was ongoing, writer/blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin was charged on May 6, 2008, with sedition for linking the politician to the killing. In a sensational statutory declaration on June 18, 2008, Raja Petra then went on to state his belief that the politician's wife was involved in the killing. On July 17, 2008, Raja Petra was charged with three counts of criminal intimidation over that declaration. He eventually fled the country and in April 2011 started giving interviews in which he distanced himself from his own previous allegations.

Yet another contentious issue was the testimony of private investigator P Balasubramaniam. Initially hired by Razak Baginda and part of the Prosecution, he then made two controversial statutory declarations. On July 1, 2008, he made a declaration containing some claims linking certain powerful figures to Altantuya, but a day later, he made a second declaration which did not contain these allegations. Following this retraction, Balasubramaniam went AWOL and appeared to have fled the country, with associates claiming he was in fear for his life and that his family had been threatened.

Eddie Chua covered the case, but found himself as confused as the public. "I flew to Mongolia to follow up there. There were so many loose threads. So many people

claiming different things. Some said she was married once, twice. Others said she was never a model. Some said she was still alive in France. You don't know what is true and what is not. Her father took up the case very aggressively and tried to get justice for her but the whole thing still seemed very messy."

Eventually, on October 31, 2008, the High Court acquitted Abdul Razak Baginda of abetment in the murder of Altantuya. Azilah and Sirul, however, were ordered to enter their defence. On April 9, 2009, both former policemen were sentenced to death for the murder of Altantuya, wrapping up the 159-day trial.

Dissatisfied with the verdict, Altantuya's father Dr Shariibuu Setev said he would still proceed with the claim against Razak Baginda, Azilah, Sirul and the Government of Malaysia for damages over his daughter's death.

In February 2013, Balasubramaniam returned from exile, articulating his intention to make a third statutory declaration concerning the case. He also stated that he had testimony that would help bring down the ruling government in the then upcoming May 5 General Election. However, within three weeks of the statement, he was dead from a heart attack. Followers of the case were immediately suspicious, speculating that the dead man had been silenced to prevent any further disclosures.

Later that year, Azilah and Sirul were acquitted of the murder by the Court of Appeal. In its findings on August 23, 2013, the panel chaired by future attorney-general Apandi Ali ruled that the trial judge had erred by not

examining whether the contradictions and inconsistencies in the Prosecution witnesses' testimony was material. They also said that further finding should have been made connecting the explosives to the accused.

Things took yet another turn on January 13, 2015, when the Federal Court overturned the appeal verdict and upheld the original sentence. The judges ruled that the Prosecution had indeed proved its case beyond a reasonable doubt. What was strange is that while Azilah was at the hearing, Sirul was nowhere to be seen. He had in fact fled the country!

Sirul had fled to Australia where he was detained by immigration after Interpol issued a high priority notice on him. He has been staying in a detention centre there since 2015, and has sought asylum, claiming he would be hanged if he returned to Malaysia. According to a media source in Australia, politicians from both sides of Malaysia's political divide sought contact with Sirul.

A highly-placed source said: "I am sorry to say this but it is my belief that Altantuya herself was playing a dangerous game, and she was trying to be too clever. She had some information with which she was trying to blackmail some quite high-ranking officials. However, it did not go all the way up to Najib. Whether it was personal or financial I am not certain, but she paid for it with her life."

Kuan Chee Heng is adamant that the case was twisted for political purposes. "From my sources, I can tell you — I put my head on the block and say that Najib and his wife Rosmah Mansor were not involved in any way. In this case,

they are innocent and political opponents have linked them unfairly.

“This was another case where the killers went too far. They received instructions to deal with Altantuya, which were meant to intimidate her into leaving the country and not returning. Send her to Mongolia or Timbuktu, not to kill her. These guys misunderstood and killed her instead.”

Following the Pakatan Harapan victory in the general election of May 9, 2018, the newly elected Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad discussed the possibility of commuting Sirul’s death sentence to allow him to testify in a reopened case. Sirul is demanding full immunity before returning.

On June 20, 2018, Dr Setev met with Mahathir and his lawyer Ramkarpal Singh, then informed the press that new Attorney General Tommy Thomas was amenable to re-opening the case.

**VERDICT** The two former policemen have been sentenced to death, but questions remain over their motives, and if they were the sole parties responsible.

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## TORTURE HORROR

**Date** : August 20, 2007

**Crime** : An eight-year-old girl is abducted and cruelly murdered

**Details:** Nurin Jazlin Jazimin was a beautiful little girl who went missing on August 20, 2007, just before her eighth birthday. She had gone to a *pasar malam* (night market) near her house in Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur to buy a hairclip. After the revelation that she had been seen dragged into a white van, a nationwide hunt was launched for the missing Nurin.

Tragically, on the morning of September 17, 2007, just six days after Nurin turned eight, her body was found in a gym bag in front of a shop lot in PJS 1/48, Petaling Jaya, Selangor. Her body was almost unrecognisable and she had been sexually assaulted. Her grief-stricken parents were barely able to recognise her but DNA tests later confirmed that the body was indeed that of Nurin.

Andrew Sagayam covered the Nurin case and remembers



connecting with strangers online and then meeting with them in person at private locations.

Although Poon continued to claim that Ng's death was an accident, the trial judge ordered a mandatory death penalty. On April 3, 2018, he was sentenced to death for her murder.

"This is another sad case all around," said Kuan. "She was young and too trusting. He came from a broken home and there was nothing premeditated about the crime. He tried something which he shouldn't have, she rejected him, he overreacted and now two lives are gone."

**VERDICT** Poon Wai Hong was sentenced to hang for the murder of an innocent teen.

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## THE MISSING PLANE

**Date** : March 8, 2014

**Crime** : Flight MH370 disappears en route to China, spawning the greatest aviation mystery of our time

**Details:** Perhaps no single tragedy is as deeply and freshly imprinted on the collective Malaysian consciousness as that of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. The May 13, 1969 racial riots, the Emergency and the Japanese occupation during World War II were events that happened generations ago and are mere 'stories' to the young. At the time of writing, it has been just over five years since MH370 vanished, and many are still moved by its mere mention.

For Martin Vengadesan personally, the situation was one of initial disbelief. He was woken up on his day off by a call from a colleague. "Have you guys put up the list of passengers on the missing plane?" his colleague asked.

"Not sure what's going on, I'll have to check," Martin replied.

Five minutes and many WhatsApp messages later, Martin was scrambling out of the shower and into his clothes, car, and into *The Star* office, where he was one of those manning the online desk. In fact, it was his first week as the senior editor on the desk. This was big.

The days that followed are still clear in Martin's mind. Even as news broke, there was a flurry of conflicting reports. A MAS plane en route to Beijing had dropped off the radar over the South China Sea. Then there were false sightings; some claimed the plane had landed in China, others that smoke was seen near Vietnam, Interpol had spotted Iranian hijackers. And so it began.

In the weeks after the disappearance of the 227 passengers and 12 crew members, Martin and his colleagues barely slept, always hoping to be woken by the news that the plane, which had inexplicably changed course and vanished from communication lines, had been found. There were so many times when false hope was raised. But every new crackpot theory was debunked soon after it was mooted.

People came to the office waving printouts of satellite images claiming they had found the plane. Colleagues claimed the Indonesians had spotted it. People in the Maldives had seen it. Radio and television stations from around the world were trying to call them about it, many with their own agenda. In fact, when they were interviewed by the foreign media, the media sometimes seemed to be trying to trip them up, as if they were part of some cover-up. Their job was to stay calm and alert.

But in their hearts, they knew that 48 hours was the cut-off point, beyond which it was unreasonable to hope for a safe and simple solution. When that time frame passed, the horrible reality slowly started sinking in. Each and every fact was startling. Nothing really made sense.

The Boeing 777 took off from Kuala Lumpur at 12:41am on March 8, bound for Beijing. It vanished from Malaysian civilian radar at 1:30am, just before passing to Vietnamese air traffic control. Communications on board had been switched off. It blipped on military radars until 2:15am, but that sighting was only later identified as flight MH370.

Reports were confusing from the start. The Vietnamese seemed to have spotted oil slicks in the South China Sea, but other sources indicated the plane had performed a U-turn and flew past Indonesia and in the direction of the Indian Ocean.

Suspicion fell in turn on Uighur terrorists, trafficked Iranians, even the Americans at the mysterious base of Diego Garcia, but nothing was concrete. Could it have been a technical fault? Dozens of nations were soon sending ships and planes to look for MH370 as part of a Joint Investigation Team but to no avail.

Temperatures rose. False sightings abounded. There was a farcical misstep when a *bomoh* was hired to track down the plane. There was even a hideous attempt to make a blockbuster movie out of it. And in a move of almost unbelievable heartlessness, some of the missing people had their bank accounts cleared out by unscrupulous bank officers.

Bank officer Nur Shila Kanan and her mechanic husband Basheer Ahmad Maula Sahul Hameed deservedly received hefty jail sentences of eight and seven years, respectively, for the crime of stealing RM77,530 from the bank accounts of four people who were on that flight.

Many of those on the flight were Chinese nationals, and their relatives were mistrustful of the Malaysian government. Families of those on board were understandably distraught. The hurtful conspiracy theories didn't help either.

Some attacked the captain of the plane, Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah, which angered his friend, Peter Chong, who also happened to be Martin's friend. Chong told Martin that he felt that if there was any element of foul play in the form of a hijacking, then Zaharie would have been a victim of it.

"Zaharie is someone who is very passionate about flying and very aware of the great responsibility a pilot bears towards his passengers and crew. He is a management pilot, which means he doesn't just fly but is involved in training and examining other pilots. He took it very seriously and we used to joke that he is one of the lucky people who has made his job his hobby. He is a good man and humble despite his senior position as a pilot. He wanted to make a difference to the community."

Chong was outraged by allegations implicating Zaharie in the disappearance of the flight — pilot suicide or otherwise. "I think sometimes the media forgets about the human element; the emotions of the families involved.

How can you irresponsibly cast such accusations on a man whose family is grieving and worried about his safety?"

The nation was united in grief on March 24, 2014, when then Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak sadly announced that MH370 had probably ended up in the Indian Ocean. There was still no conclusion and the hunger for an answer to all the questions remained undiminished. In fact, the pressure to backtrack on that announcement was intense.

On January 29, 2015, the Department of Civil Aviation Director-General Azharuddin Abdul Rahman declared the disappearance an accident and that all aboard were presumed dead. Although this was done for legal purposes, the search for the missing plane would continue.

Finally, more than four years after the plane went missing, newly appointed Transport Minister Anthony Loke announced that the search for the plane would be called off. The final day of the search was May 29, 2018. The company engaged in the final stage of looking for the plane's wreckage was Houston-based Ocean Infinity, which was searching on a 'no find, no fee' basis.

**VERDICT** There is no clear cut explanation as to what happened, and we may have to face the fact that there might never be one.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



MARTIN VENGADESAN is part of Malaysiakini's editorial team. He previously worked at *The Star* from 1996 to 2018. He specialises in historical and research-based articles and also spent many years in the digital section as editor of *The Star's* iPad app and popular news website *The Star Online*. He wrote two columns for *The Star*, 'Music Myths & Legends' (2002-2012) and 'Watching The World' (2013-2018) which touched on music history and world politics respectively. He contributed chapters to the best-selling *March 8: The Day Malaysia Woke Up* and the *KL Noir* series. He has served as general treasurer of the National Union of Journalists and was formerly general secretary of the Youth Wing of Parti Rakyat Malaysia and a vice-president of the Youth Wing of Parti Keadilan Rakyat. A father of three, he is the son of former diplomat Ambassador R Vengadesan.



ANDREW SAGAYAM is part of Malaysiakini's editorial team. He was formerly press secretary in the Prime Minister's Department. He was also a crime reporter, news editor and TV producer between 1998 and 2019 with *The Sun*, *Malay Mail*, *The Star* and *Bernama*. He has covered many of the most prominent cases of the last two decades, giving him an insight few others enjoy.

In the early 1980s, the pair attended the same primary school (Sekolah Seri Petaling) and church (St Francis Xavier) without having met. This changed in 1996 when they briefly played in a band together. Formerly recording artistes (with Samarkand and Bent Wavelength respectively), they joined forces to record as Martin Vengadesan & The Stalemate Factor, which has released three CDs in the past three years — *The Queen's Gambit*, *The Bishop's Sacrifice* and *The Knight's Flight*. A fourth CD called *The Rook's Siege* is on the way. Any crimes the duo may have committed have not been included in this anthology.