

Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: Hospital Kajang (Part II)



Pekan Brunei Hospital or 'Hospital Kajang' (1938)

After the construction and official opening in 1929, the Pekan Brunei Hospital or 'Hospital Kajang' had gone through several renovations and extensions. The original buildings were constructed with thatched palm leaves for the double roofs and woven nipah (kajang) leaves for the walls. The hospital initially had two wards with 18 beds, an operating theatre, dispensary, laboratory and an out-patient clinic. This was later expanded to include nearby small houses with eventual 48 beds capacity.

From an account of a patient (Mr. Han King Juan, now 89 years old) who was treated for head injury following a bicycle accident in 1943, then 21, the roofs (which were commonly referred as 'atap' roof) were constructed using wood rather than kajang leaves and the walls were constructed using wood and the floor was built with cement. The only part of the building where the walls were built with cement and wood was the kitchen complex. Each ward was furnished with metal beds and small side cabinets (one foot by two feet) and could accommodate up to 10 beds with the beds arranged in rows with the head against the back wall

and windows in the front wall. Each ward was also fitted with two ceiling fans for the comfort of patients. Back then when he was warded for treatment, ward occupancy was low and consisted mostly of fever and infectious diseases cases, usually of the lower limbs due to farming practices or trauma from accidents. The foods served were similar to what was normally consumed by the local people, consisting of rice and traditional Malay fares. At that time, the kitchen was staffed by four cooks who consisted of two Hainanese, an Indian and a Malay.

During the Japanese occupation, the hospital was functioning as usual providing healthcare services to the people. All of the healthcare staff that consisted of dressers (all men) and doctors were retained by the Japanese. The resident doctor, Doctor Graham, who was a Canadian, along with two other assistants, Doctor Yusof and Doctor Jaafar, both from the Malaya Federation, were some of those retained to run the medical facilities. Up until its destruction in 1944, the Pekan Brunei Hospital or 'Hospital Kajang' was considered the most modern hospital in the whole of Brunei.