

# Raja Muda Regatta

The Raja Muda International Regatta 2002 this year attracted 28 boats ranging in size from the Mumm 30, *Panic*, to the 80-foot Valichelli, *Mia*. Now into its 13th running, the event starts in Port Klang and ends in Langkawi. It consists of three passage races and a series of inshores, with the fleet racing in three classes — Racing, Cruising and Classic.



On Saturday, the 16th of November, with up to 18 knots of variable wind, the fleet set off at 1300 on its first 100-mile overnighter to Palau Pangkor. Requiring thought, planning and deft manoeuvring, the boats took advantage of wind shifts, avoided shallow waters and a 2-knot adverse current and pondered whether to go inshore or further out to get ahead.

Frank Pong's *Jelik* unsurprisingly took line honours just after midnight (with an average speed of 10 knots). In the Racing class, the Rahim brothers, four-time winners of the regatta, took the top spot in *Gotcha Lagi!*, narrowly beating Warwick Downes and crew in *Stella*, with *Piccolo* in 3rd.

The Cruising class saw the Tayana 55, *Infinity*, take 1st place, followed by the big Swan 68, *Irmiren*. In the Classics, Richard Curtis' 100-year-old *Eveline* took the honours, beating the Royal Malaysian Navy entrant *Musytari*.

Starting at 1300 on Monday, the 18th, the next leg to Pinang, saw the wind building through the afternoon culminating a fierce thunderstorm with 30-knot winds . . . and casualties. First to retire was Tengku Nazim's *F31* with rigging failure. Then lightning hit the Thai entry *Pasaya* and Ayahudin's *Chantique* wiping out their electronics systems. Sails were torn and one boat had to be towed in.

Line honours once again went to *Jelik* which completed the 70-mile dash in 8:39:23 but 1st on handicap went to Peter Cremers in his new Warwick 55, *Shahtoosh*. *Stella* did better this time and knocked *Gotcha Lagi!* into 3rd (by just 5 seconds).

In Cruising, *Irmiren* performed magnificently in the tough conditions and beat *Infinity* and *Bourgeois Tag* into 2nd and 3rd respectively. In the Classics, though, there was a brave rescue, with *Eveline* and *My Toy* going to the assistance of *Chantique*, their efforts continuing through Tuesday morning.

At 1400 on Wednesday, the 20th, the fleet set off from Penang on its final passage race to the island of Langkawi. Leg 3 is notorious for its lively conditions but, despite preparations by crews, all that transpired was a thorough dousing by a rainstorm. The 70-mile course was completed shy spinnaker reaching in up to 15 knots with everyone finishing before 0500 on Thursday morning.



This time, *Stella* got it right, beating *Piccolo* into 2nd and long-time Asian racing campaigner, John Wardill and his crew in *Australian Maid*, into 3rd. Yes, you guessed it, *Jelik* took line honours, and on handicap did a little better in 4th. Results for the Cruising class were split, after handicap adjustments, with *Irmiren* taking the A division and *El Sea* taking B. The Malaysian Navy's two boats, *Dondang Sayang* and *Musytari*, did well in the Classics taking 1st and 2nd respectively.

After a lay day, racing began in earnest in Bass Bay, Langkawi, with windward/leeward for the faster boats and islands courses for the cruisers and classics. Well, as much as the weather gods would allow. A few minutes after the 1200 start of Race 4, race officer Jimmy Farquhar had to

postpone racing, with the fleet hanging around till 1500 before the committee finally decided to call it a day. And try to work out how to fit four races into the following day.

But Saturday couldn't offer what the sailors wanted. Only two of the four races could be held, in 4 to 9 knots of variable winds. However, the competition was keen and Race 4 was won by *Jelik* (also, of course, taking line honours). Downes and crew tried hard and scored a 2nd, with Chris Gee's *Matahari* in 3rd.

Race 5 saw a surprise entry into the top three with Stuart Harrison's *Panic* push *Stella* into 2nd, with *Jelik* trailing in 3rd and *Matahari* in 4th. This left *Stella* with four 2nds and one 1st, leaving them as the overall winners. Amir Zohri's *Gotcha Lagi!* was runner up. *Stella* also won Racing A; *Gotcha Lagi!* won Racing B.



*Irmiren* had four wins giving it Cruising A, with *Infinity* winning 1st overall in Cruising B. The Classic class was won by *Dondang Sayang*, skippered by Mohd Hamdan.

The regatta ended with a lavish prizegiving and party at the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club on Saturday night. To many, the Raja Muda is special, and supporters come back year after year for the sailing challenges it offers. Frank Pong, *Jelik*, says the event is one of his favourites and points out, rightly, that it is in a class of its own, testing skills and seamanship along a unique coastline, in all conditions.

**Loss of Jelik** On its return trip from the King's Cup in mid December, Frank Pong's Wylie 77, *Jelik*, lost its keel 20 miles off the southern tip of Palawan, 400 miles from Manila. The crew abandoned the boat and at the time of going to press it was still afloat at sea, although stripped of most of its fittings by nearby islanders and fishermen. It is unlikely that the yacht will be recovered.

