CHAPTER 4

THE STATE OF TERENGGANU

Terengganu in Chinese meant “have long term perspective and aim for higher achievement”. Terengganu in Malay was derived from “Trengganu.” The Portuguese called it Talagano; thereafter it was changed to “Terengganu”. An earlier traditional name for “Terengganu” in Chinese had the meaning of “slavery from childbirth.” Because of this, the local Chinese appealed to the local government to change its Chinese name to the existing one.
TERENGGANU – ABODE OF FAITH

Terengganu is also known by its Arabic honorific, Darul Iman, which means “Abode of Faith”. Its capital is Kuala Terengganu. Terengganu is located at the eastern part of Peninsular Malaysia. Its size is about 13,000 square kilometers. Terengganu borders Kelantan in the northwest, Pahang in the west and south, and faces the South China Sea in the east. The people of the state can relax and commune with nature at any time on the many white sandy beaches along its 240km-long eastern seaboard. Terengganu is famous because of three islands off its coast: Pulau Redang, Pulau Perhentian and Pulau Kapas. Tourists can explore the beauty of the undersea world during the non-monsoon season.

Terengganu has the biggest man-made lake, Tasik Kenyir, in Southeast Asia. It is about 369 square kilometers. About thirty big and small rivers flow into Tasik Kenyir. Besides providing a place of recreation for tourists, it also generates hydroelectricity. The supply is sufficient to meet the demands of the states of Kelantan and Pahang.
POPULATION AND CULTURE

Like its neighbour Kelantan, Terengganu has a rich Malay culture as its majority people are the Malays, who comprise about 95% of the population. The Chinese, who make up only 3%, live and work mainly in the capital, Kuala Terengganu, where they are mostly concentrated in bustling Chinatown which is located on Jalan Kampung Cina (“Chinese Village Street”). This was the first street that the Chinese traded in 300 years ago. It has been a trade centre since the early 13th century. Nowadays, Malays and Indians also conduct business here, reflecting the peaceful co-existence of the different races in Malaysia. The local Malay dialect commonly spoken in Terengganu is quite different from Bahasa Malaysia, the national language of Malaysia.

Terengganu practiced a Hindu–Buddhist culture combined with traditional tribal beliefs before the arrival of Islam. A stone monument with Arabic inscriptions dating back to 1303, found in Kuala Berang, indicates that Islam arrived in the state in the 14th century. The influence of Islam is evident. Big mosques are seen in the simple villages of the state. Islamic leaders and teachers are highly respected, and they are influential in the social, political and other aspects of life in Terengganu.
HISTORY

In the early 13th century, Terengganu and Siam had established political and trading ties. In the 15th century, Terengganu became a vassal of the Malacca sultanate. Its first sultan was installed in the 18th century when it emerged as an independent sultanate. In the 19th Century, it came under the control of the Siamese kingdom. In 1909, Siam signed a contract with Britain to transfer power over Terengganu to Britain. During the Second World War, the Japanese occupied Terengganu. After the war, administrative authority over Terengganu was given back to the British who held it until 1948, when Terengganu joined the Federation of Malaya. Subsequently, it became a state of independent Malaya.

Since 8th April 2005, the Chinese name for Terengganu has been changed. The previous characters gave the meaning of "increased slavery by bearing sons". The change of name was proposed by the Chinese community to the government. The new characters mean “stand high up to see further, and hope that it will gain more praises”.

Terengganu was a maritime trading state in the early 1900s. At that time, ships from Southeast Asia would stop at the port of Kuala Terengganu to trade spices (such as pepper), salt, rice and other goods. Not only that, the seafarers also had their ships repaired or bought new ships at Kuala Terengganu. Pulau Duyung (Mermaid
Island), sited near the port, benefited from its location and was famous for its high quality ships. Today, its shipwrights continue their tradition of making very strong and durable vessels from memory and experience, and do not need blueprints or plans. Ranging from fishing boats to yachts, these vessels are not only supplied to the local market and neighboring countries, but have also attracted sailors and boat owners from Europe, America and Canada. The rare technique of traditional boat making is still available on this island but this is a dying trade. Abdullah Muda, the leader in this industry, is the most respected boat maker on the island.

ECONOMY

The people of Terengganu are mainly involved in the mineral and petroleum industry, forest industry and agriculture industry. The fishing industry is the traditional economic activity in Terengganu. Not a few of the population are involved in the fish products industry. The most common is the production of fish crackers, which is a delicious snack. It is made from a mixture of pounded fish (usually mackerel and sardines), salt and sago dough. It is gray in
color and long in shape. The thick fish cracker is called “keropok lekor” while the thinne one is called “keropok keping”. Traditionally, they are steamed or fried. When eating fried fish cracker, it will taste even nicer with a specially-made chili sauce. Although traditional Malay fish crackers can be found throughout the country, after trying keropok keping and keropok lekor, we believe the people of Terengganu have justification for their pride in this product. Besides this food speciality, traditional handiwork and textiles as well as the hilt-carving art of Malay daggers are other unique attractions found in the state.

Terengganu has a big land mass with a small population. Currently, it still does not have shopping malls, cinemas or recreational places that cater to the needs of the younger generations. Some local youths have described on Facebook the monotony of their life in Terengganu, which they consider a good place for retirement.

In the past ten years, due to the discovery of oil fields in the South China Sea, from a small town, Kuala Terengganu has evolved into a modern city. Raw petroleum and natural gas are processed in Kerteh and Paka, while places like Dungun and Kemaman are involved in related industries. Although petroleum resources bring benefit to the country, Terengganu remains a relatively poor and undeveloped state. According to a 9th August 2010 article in the Sin Chew newspaper, the main source of income for the state of
Terengganu is petroleum tax. The government has been urged to implement development plans that can benefit the people, for example, the building of affordable houses. It is hoped that the resources in the state will be fully utilized in every phase of social development.

**MISSIONS IN TERENGGANU**

There are only ten churches in the whole state. This number includes earlier-established Presbyterian churches, Anglican churches, Baptist churches and an independent church, which was opened later. It is a spiritual field waiting to be harvested.

The years from 1931 to 1951 were known as the nurturing and shepherding period of the Malaysia Presbyterian Church. During this period, besides Johor, the Presbyterian Church also stepped into Terengganu and built churches. These are the Kuala Terengganu Presbyterian Church (1940), Kemaman Presbyterian Church (1950), Air Jernih (English) Presbyterian Church (1950) and Dungun Mission Centre (1951). The Presbyterian Church also participated in the Chinese New Village ministry during the Emergency. Till today, the Presbyterian Church continues to emphasize on the spiritual nurture
and development of the believers, as well as social concerns. It has progressively started old folks homes, Orang Asli ministries and foreign workers ministries, faithfully sharing the gospel to all.

The Baptists started their gospel work in Kuala Terengganu at a later date. In 1977, work on the construction of a small Baptist church building began. On completion in 1980, it was named the Kuala Terengganu Baptist Church. The Kemaman Baptist Church was the second Baptist church established in the state.

According to the June 2007 NECF report, pastors of east coast churches had established a fellowship twenty years earlier to take care of the pastoral staffs of Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang churches. In 2000, the east coast Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and independent churches set up a Chinese pastors’ fellowship. This fellowship prays regularly for the Chinese churches on the east coast. They meet every three or four months to share their needs and to pray for one another. They also regularly organize prayer camps to enhance the fellowship and evangelistic partnership among pastors from the different denominations.

From a survey conducted, it was ascertained that most of the pastors in Terengganu bear a heavy burden. They have many responsibilities and their scope of work is spread out over a few states because several churches lack full-time pastors and leaders. At the same time, the youths and professionals are migrating from the state,
contributing to the lack of workers in the local churches. Bearing in mind that this is a big harvest field, it is hoped that the churches and believers elsewhere can contribute to and help the body of Christ in Terengganu.
Profile of Terengganu

Area: 12,955 square kilometers
Capital: Kuala Terengganu

Total population: more than 1 million
Malays (95%), Chinese (3%),
indigenous people (0.8%), Indians (0.3%) and
others (0.2%)

Religions: Islam (95%), Buddhism or Taoism (4%),
traditional tribal religions (0.5%), Hinduism (0.2%),
Christianity and Catholicism (0.2%).

Prayer for Terengganu

1. Pray for God’s wisdom in governance and management, and that they will emphasize on development for the benefit of the people and exercise wise use of state resources.

2. Pray for improvement in and development of the state economy especially for the poor in the state. Pray for an influx of foreign investors to improve the development of the state.

3. Pray for the local churches that they can continue the evangelistic and shepherding work. Pray for the cooperation between the denominations to foster expansion of the evangelistic work.