A Police Force, staffed by uniformed men trained to perform police work and in receipt of regular pay, was not introduced in Trengganu until late in 1920.

For more than a century previously, the maintenance of law and order had been placed in the hands of one of the Sultan's trusted chiefs, who was known to the public by the official title of "Dato Mata".

This picturesque title existed in the reign of Baginda Omar (1839-1876) and was applied to an individual named Che Mohamed. When he died his duties and title were handed down by Sultan Zainal Abidin III to Che Mohamed's son named Che Ali. Although Che Ali bin Mohamed was granted the title of Dato Nara Wangsa, he was more often referred to as Dato Mata even after he finally retired.

Che Ali, like his predecessor was in nominal charge of an unspecified number of young men known as 'Budak Raja', each of whom wore a Kris and carried a spear but who received no pay and was given no uniform. These young men, who attended on the Sultan and depended on the Ruler for their livelihood, at one time included Enche Abdul Rahman bin Ishak (later Dato Lela) who is referred to in a separate article in this issue.

It is probable that neither Enche Ali nor the 'Budak Raja' had any clear idea of the duties of 'Police' as they are known today, and Enche Ali was called on by the Sultan to undertake responsibilities which were more military than civil on at least one occasion: this occurred when the semi independent territorial chief of Besut in the north of the State, declared himself independent. The Sultan instructed Dato Nara Wangsa to organise an expedition to punish Tengku Long, the Chief of Besut, and to enforce the Sultan's authority. Dato Nara carried out his orders, with the assistance of To' Bilal Osman, To' Bilal Wan Din and To' Khatib Ahmad three well-known Trengganu warriors, and a force of armed men set off for Besut. But before they arrived Tengku Long had decided not to risk defeat by 'Dato Mata' and had withdrawn into Kelantan.

Che Ali - Dato Nara - had wide interests. He had a talent for drawing and sketched an artist's impression of the Sultan's palace (Istana Hijau) before it was destroyed in the great fire of 1882. He welcomed and gave hospitality to a French man who designed the Trengganu Perahu Pinis and thus benefitted many sea-going Trengganu citizens. A portrait of Che Ali was painted by Julius Wentscher, a German artist, in 1936 when he was reported to be over 100 years old and the painting is reproduced here by permission of the Straits Times.