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ISSUE **104**

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WAITING FOR THE BUS



Artist's rendering of Ipoh Sentral at Meru Raya



Kidd Road Bus Station



The need for an efficient public bus system in the city was first highlighted in the Ipoh Echo a year ago. It was then described that the half-century old bus system was suitable only for a Municipality, not a city which has expanded in size and population, covering a wider radius to include several burgeoning suburbs. Therefore, when the then Pakatan State Government under Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Nizar Jamaluddin announced in September 2008 that it had entered into an agreement with a consortium known as the Combined Bus Services Sdn Bhd to provide 250 new buses over a three year period to replace the current fleet of 'boneshaker buses', Ipohites breathed a sigh of relief. They thought their woes for efficient public transportation would be over. But, they were in for a disappointment.

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Slow Moving Implementation Raises Residents' Ire

With the change of state government early last year, the implementation of the agreement did not appear to move fast. Since then only 10 of the "pink" buses belonging to the consortium are seen on the road, all plying the Ipoh-Kuala Kangsar route.

The agreement also stated the consortium would construct a new integrated bus terminal at the proposed new township, Meru Raya, to be known as Ipoh Central Transportation Hub and commission 30 new buses for service. The first ground breaking ceremony for this Hub was held in 2008 during the time of Dato Seri Nizar Jamaluddin and a second ground breaking ceremony officiated by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Zambry was conducted in February this year – a delay of two years with no actual construction in sight.

Service and Affordability
Ipoh without an LRT service has only the public bus and taxis to enable the man in the street to get around. A survey carried out by Ipoh Echo shows that members of the public chorused their complaints in unison that "the project needs to move faster." All they wanted was improved service immediately, and a



State Assemblymen Dato' Rusnah Kassim (Hulu Kinta) and Dato' Nazri Ismail (Manjoi) both from Tambun Parliamentary Constituency which covers Zone 2, revealed that both assemblymen had brought up the 'bus' issue in the State Assembly.

Dato' Rusnah also added that the service from Ipoh to Tanjung Rambutan, although available was only "40% efficient" describing the service as unreliable as it did not have a firm schedule.

Is There A Solution In Sight?

According to Dato' Abu Bakar, the director for UPEN, the agreement states that the introduction of new buses will only start once the Ipoh Central Bus Hub at Meru Raya is operational claiming this is part of the original agreement.

A check with the Corporate Director of

Chong also remembers the bus inspector, an Indian with a wide brimmed hat, who used to do spot audits. In short, the quality of service then was reliable and affordable and got you to your destination on time. "You can't say the same about the bus service now," lamented Chong.

What Is Ailing The Industry?

According to "Razali" (who spoke on condition of anonymity) who is familiar with the industry since it started almost 70 years ago, the problems started when the Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board or LPKP started issuing bus permits to new operators on routes that were already being run by long time operators.

Unlike the older operators the new operators only serviced their routes during the peak times when there was large passenger load thus diluting the margins of the older

had issued licenses to new operators as a business license not realising that this service was a social responsibility of the government. The government now realises this and early this year launched the Vision 2020 Roadmap Government Transformation Programme (GTP) based on the principles of 1Malaysia, People First and Performance Now under which Urban Public Transport is listed as one of six National Key Result Areas, (NKRA). The GTP will initially focus on the Klang Valley before proliferating to Penang and Johor.

However, based on the feedback highlighted during the *Turun Padang* sessions, Ipoh residents deserve a better connectivity immediately. Fortunately this sentiment is not just echoed by the commuters and state assemblymen but also by Senior Executive Councillor for Transport, Dato' Dr. Mah Hang Soon

himself who responded "we should move faster" when asked for his sentiments on this project.

Possible Solutions

According to Razali there is no way the new operators would want to surrender their licenses after putting in their capital investment. Thus a proposed short-term solution to overcoming the problem would be:

1. **Freeze new applications of permits for overlapping routes.** This was proposed a year ago by Perak Omnibus Owners Association Chairman Ms Yeoh Choo Hoon.
2. **Upgrade the infrastructure.** Bus shelters are available but bus stops have long been missing.
3. **Review the bus routes and maintain tight time schedules.**
4. **Implement special bus lanes in the city to**

overcome traffic jams. This proposal was mentioned by Dato' Dr. Mah Hang Soon last October.

For the medium term the solution would be to upgrade the buses while the long-term solution would be to erect a Bus Station.

Low passenger Loads

Regarding the non-profitable routes where operators refuse to operate, it was proposed that these routes be tendered out with the government subsidizing the operator on a per kilometre basis. In fact this subsidy proposal had already been offered by the Menteri Besar last year "to companies willing to service small towns which have low passenger loads".

Hence with all these possible solutions being bandied about would it now be feasible for Ipohites to have a better bus service sooner? According to CBS Director Dato' Hiew, "it would be possible but it would have to be negotiated with UPEN first".

Hopefully when we do another review a year from now some boneshaker buses will be off the roads and the current no-service routes will have service.

JAMES GOUGH



comfortable journey at an affordable cost. They were not interested in a new hub, only service and affordability.

Well-Known Problem

The problem of good bus transport in Ipoh is well known. Furthermore in the last 12 months residents had directly forwarded their woes during their "Turun Padang – Meet the People Sessions" with the city council.

It was also brought up at the monthly Ipoh City Council meeting by Councillor Shahul Hamid Mydin Shah (Zone 2 Kuala Kuang/ Chepor/ Meru). Shahul reported that his zone did not have any bus service after the operator stopped because the route was not profitable. A follow-up with

Combined Bus Services Sdn Bhd (CBS) Dato' Hiew Yew Can revealed that the building will be ready by September 2011 but operational around February 2012 and added that the work was on schedule which means that commuters will have to wait another 18 months.

Bus Service During the 60s

According to a resident, Chong (not his real name), who lived along Kampar Road in the late 60s, one could plan one's journey then. Chong studied at St Michael's Institution. There were two buses that passed by Kampar Road every 15 minutes. Both stopped at the Kidd Road Bus Station from where he would walk to school. The fare then was 15 to 20 sen.

operators. By contrast the older operators operated per their original schedules, whether peak or off peak and they did it well knowing that good service was the key to maintaining their customer base.

The profits from their operations were subsequently channelled to maintain bus shelters, bus stops and upgrading their buses. Unknowingly then, these private bus companies were providing a social responsibility to the community.

However, with the new operators diluting their earnings, the quality of their service gradually declined and today, is a far cry from the 60s' standard of service.

Social Responsibility

According to Razali, LPKP

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From the Editor's Desk

● by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

CREMATORIUM FOR NON-MUSLIMS

Consultative council is willing to work with the authorities. However, they should not drag their feet and remain indifferent...Scarcity of burial grounds

A crematorium may not be appealing to the squeamish but for those who have been clamouring for one, it is definitely a necessity. The scarcity of burial grounds in the city is a cause for concern for Ipoh's non-Muslim communities, and the question of a crematorium becomes more urgent with each passing day especially in view of the expansion of the city and the accompanying population increase.

One organisation that is in the forefront of the drive for a crematorium is the Perak chapter of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism. Its chairman, V.M. Thiagarajan, unravels the problem facing the non-Muslim communities in

Ipoh. "The council was given the responsibility to coordinate and supervise the construction of the crematorium in 2004", he said. "But nothing substantive has materialised from our many discussions with the authorities." He blamed it on several factors. "Indecision and procrastination are the two major flaws."



Mr. Thiagarajan

Lip Service

Since being appointed chairman on May 15, Thiagarajan has held meetings with his committee to work out a suitable engagement strategy. "We want the authorities' commitment, not mere lip service," he remarked, tired of being given the run-around.

The matter was raised with Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon, Executive Councillor for Local Government, Health and Environment, whom Thiagarajan and his committee met on July 16. At a follow-up meeting with Dato' Abu Bakar Hj Said, Director of the State Economic Planning Unit, on July 20, they were told to identify possible sites for the project. Three locations were recommend-



Papan Town.

ed to Dato' Abu Bakar. Having made its choices known, the council hopes the state government will respond.

Papan Site

The 15-acre site near Papan, apportioned by the state government for the said purpose, was unsuitable as it lies smack in a dumping ground. "Clinical and household wastes are being disposed there", Thiagarajan lamented.

"Moreover, it's quite a distance away from Ipoh."

The council is willing to work with the authorities in ensuring that this long-standing problem is resolved amicably. "We too hope that the cost of construction and maintenance will be borne by the state government, as funds amounting to RM1.5 million had been allotted previously", said Thiagarajan. The proposed crematorium should

incorporate the latest in cremating technology so as to ensure a clean environment.

The needs of the non-Muslim communities should be addressed as it affects a major portion of the city's inhabitants. The number of non-Muslims in Ipoh caps at almost 500,000 or 75 per cent of its population. The authorities should not drag their feet and remain indifferent.

The Will Is Not Enough

● by Peter Lee

A businesswoman named Audrey who is in her 50s has been managing her husband's business after her husband aged 60 became paralysed by a stroke he suffered one year ago. Due to his condition, Audrey has placed him in a prominent nursing home which could give him the best nursing care while she manages the business. She also has a son aged 12 who is mentally retarded and she sent him to a special school for the disabled. After work she would then pick up her son and take care of him. It is a daily routine for her to visit her husband together with her son after dinner. One day while talking to her sister, she was asked whether any plans or arrangement have been made to take care of her husband and son if she dies. She told her sister that this problem has always been in her mind but she still could not find a solution.



In Audrey's case, she could begin planning by setting up a Living Trust or Inter-Vivos Trust. When she sets up the trust, she is called the "Settlor". In her trust, she has to appoint a trustee company like Rockwills Trustee Bhd. to be the "Trustee" because it has the expertise, impartiality, professionalism and most importantly perpetual existence. The next important issue is the appointment of the "Protector" who acts as a watchdog on the "Trustee". The Protector or Protectors are people whom the Trustee would liaise with concerning the welfare of the beneficiaries in terms of distribution.

Then it is equally important to appoint one or two "Guardians" for both her husband and son. In regard to this, she has to discuss with her close family members like sisters or brothers or even close relatives who are willing to take up the responsibility. But if all her relatives could not take up the responsibility due to their own family commitments, then she has to identify a suitable nursing home for her son. That being the case, the role of her family members appointed as "Guardian" would only be monitoring the homes that provide nursing care for her husband and son. It is also suggested that the guardian should be given an allowance to do this job. The "Guardian" can also act as the "Protector" in this trust.

Since Audrey could not will away her estate to either her husband or son due to their condition, it is best that she will away her estate to her "Living Trust" if she passes away. In her will, she has to appoint Rockwills Trustee Bhd. as the main executor since Rockwills Trustee Bhd. is also appointed as the trustee for the "Living Trust". The instruction in her will would be giving all her movable and immovable assets to her trust. As for immovable assets such as properties, she could give her instruction to the trustee to either sell or convert to cash immediately or when the need arises. Having all these arrangements in place, one has to take note that if Audrey passes away, the duration to wait for her "Grant of Probate" to unlock her assets and give them to the "Living Trust" would be one to one and a half years. Therefore, she must create an immediate funding upon her death by assigning her insurance policies to her trust when she is alive because money will be released to the trust maybe less than a month after the death certificate is produced as it does require waiting for the "Grant of Probate".

When all the above is sorted out, Audrey now has to specify how much is to be allocated monthly for the nursing homes providing the necessary care for her husband and son or guardian who is going to take care of her son. In her case, she must state that the trust will end when both her husband and son die or upon the exhaustion of funds. Anything further would be any one's guess because this is the best she can do as she cannot control the future.

Peter Lee is an Associate Estate Planning Practitioner (Wills & Trust) with Rockwills International Group. He is also an Islamic Estate Planner providing Wills & Trust services for Muslims. He is based in Ipoh and can be reached at: 012-5078825/05-2554853 or excelsec@streamyx.com.



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One on One

• By Fathol Zaman Bukhari

The Intricacies Of Legal Aid – Who Is Eligible And How?

Ipoh Echo interviews M. Gokoolaram Naidu (Ram), Executive Legal Officer of Perak Legal Aid Centre & Human Rights Committee.

Ipoh Echo: Give us an overview of the Perak Legal Aid Centre.

Ram: The Bar Council Legal Aid Centre of Perak was formed in late 1984. When I joined the Centre I had to work from inside my car because, besides a founding Chairman and committee, there was no office for me to work in. We toiled to get an office lot at the Central Market complex. It did not matter if the office space was small, as our main objective was to reach out to the people. Flyers, posters and ads were used to inform Ipohites of the new service available in town. I went to courts, police stations and government departments distributing leaflets. The Centre was officially opened on March 11, 1985. Since then, we have been instrumental in reaching out to almost 7,000 clients. There are currently 15 Bar Council Legal Aid Centres in Peninsular Malaysia, one in each state.

IE: What is the difference between your centre and Biro Bantuan Guaman?

Ram: There's always confusion over our management. In Malaysia there are two legal aid schemes, namely the Legal Aid Bureau or Biro Bantuan Guaman and the Bar Council Legal Aid Scheme.

The Legal Aid Bureau is a government-funded scheme administered by the Prime Minister's Department. The Bar Council Legal Aid Scheme is a programme of the Malaysian Bar. It was set up in the early 1980s, and services offered are pro bono.

The Malaysian Bar is the only national bar association in the world that finances and runs its own legal aid scheme. Every member of the Malaysian Bar is required to contribute RM100 towards the scheme. As more centres open up and as the Bar Council reaches out to a larger audience, the yearly budget has begun to exceed the financial contribution of members. Thus we are now looking for alternate sources of funding so that we can remain effective.

IE: Is there a clash of interest between the two?

Ram: No, the Bar Council scheme complements the Government Legal Aid Scheme. The Council believes that access to justice is an important and integral part of the Rule of Law. Section 28A (4) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) and Article 5(3) of the Federal Constitution guarantee an arrested individual's right to access a legal practitioner of his or her choice. This is what the Bar Council defends tirelessly. This scheme also responds to the lack of support in cases of public interest litigation by assisting individuals or groups seeking justice, especially marginalised groups.

The Bar Council believes that legal aid is a fundamental human right. Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that all are equal before the law and Article 10, which says that everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing are empty platitudes if the public have no means to engage a lawyer.

IE: Who qualifies for legal aid and what are the criteria?

Ram: The eligibility of a person is subject to a simple 'means test'. The net monthly income, after deduction of expenses, must not exceed RM500 for a single person and RM800 for a married couple. That is the Bar Council's threshold figure, subject to the exercise of discretion. The other criteria are a house worth not more than RM25,000 (low-cost house), car worth not more than RM7,000, motorcycle worth not more than RM4,000, and savings not more than RM5,000.

The service is free. However, clients are urged to contribute travelling expenses if they can afford, as Perak is huge and the courts span from



Tanjong Malim to Parit Buntar.

IE: What types of cases does the centre handle?

Ram: We handle all types of cases – criminal, family and labour/employment matters. There are, however, restrictions on certain cases like debt collection, motor accidents and bankruptcy. Together with our dedicated volunteer lawyers we provide both legal representations in courts in civil and criminal matters, as well as legal advice on problems faced by the poor.

In addition to this, the Perak Legal Aid Centre also conducts out-reach programmes where we help educate ordinary Malaysian about their rights. To me a truly effective legal aid programme is not just passive but pro-active; it not only takes up individual cases on behalf of affected parties but also educates the community at large on its rights and liberties. We are also partnering with NGOs in order to reach out to specific groups of disadvantaged persons by conducting forums, talks, seminars, law awareness programmes and legal aid booths.

We are also in the forefront of promoting law awareness among the Orang Asli communities. Since starting the project we have travelled extensively throughout the state and observed exhaustively the conditions of these people in order to help improve them.

IE: Poor publicity is a bane. What are your comments?

Ram: Publicity has always been an objective matter because often one reads about us today and forgets the next day and on the day when they need our assistance they go looking for us. I believe a community newspaper such as the IPOH ECHO is the best solution for this as people can be reminded of our services every fortnight.

IE: What about funding?

Ram: Like I stressed earlier, due to limited funding this is the maximum we can do for now. However, I feel there's more we can do for the community provided we have an alternate source of funds. We hope well-wishers would respond in kind.

M. Gokoolaram Naidu (Ram) can be contacted at his office
05-2550523.

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WESLEY METHODIST SCHOOL IPOH – The Parents' Choice

Many people in Ipoh have mistaken Wesley Methodist School Ipoh (WMSI) for the former Methodist High School (MHS). Wesley Methodist School Ipoh is a re-branded school under the management of the Council of Education of the Methodist Church of Malaysia. It is modelled after Wesley Methodist School Kuala Lumpur, a much sought after school with a 27-year history.

Dato' Chin Lean Keat, Chairman of WMSI Board of Management said, "The birth of Wesley Methodist School Ipoh (WMSI) in January 2009 and subsequently the primary school in January this year was borne out of a conviction that it can provide quality education, being focused on its mission of 'Academic Excellence, Transforming Lives'. WMSI seeks to bring back the time-tested practices of discipline and character development based on Christian values and principles."

At a recent hand-over ceremony of a donation of RM350,000 from philanthropist Mr. Koon Yew Yin for the renovation of the last of 4 blocks in the school, the Kesselring Block, Mr. Koon said, "Schools impact lives, and education is the best way to look after our future generations."

Mdm Goh Kai Lian, Principal of the school, added, "WMSI affirms the value of a child and his potential to excel. We believe that every child can learn. So, at



Mr. Koon Yew Yin (left) and Dato' Chin Lean Keat

WMSI, he is taught to be responsible and accountable for his own learning. He is expected to finish his homework/project within the stipulated time, failing which he will be detained after school to complete it. The school works closely with the parents to keep them posted about the children's progress. There is no Parent Teachers Association in the school. Instead, there is an open-door policy where a parent has easy access to the Principal."

The school also cares for the emotional and social development of the child. Difficult students are referred to counsellors who are volunteers; they come in regularly to lend a listening ear to the students and guide the students through the turbulent times of adolescence. Parents are alerted with regards to any misbehaviour and together with the counsellors, work on remedial options. At the same time, praises and affirmation of the student are often practised in the school to reinforce good and acceptable behaviour.

Set teaching for BM, English and Maths classes is another feature of WMSI. Students are taught according to their own level of capability and in smaller classes. This makes it easier for teaching and learning to take place. More personal attention can be given by the teacher to the students and the teacher gets to know every student by name and therefore is able to manage the class more effectively.

Compulsory involvement in two key youth movements in WMSI namely: Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade, is also a tool to shape their students into disciplined young people who are taught to follow instructions and learn teamwork. It is no wonder that waiting lists for enrolment are beginning to form for this independent school.

See Foon Chan-Koppen

A Palliative Care Unit with a Difference

The Palliative Care Unit (PCU) in Batu Gajah Hospital, which admits those with terminal illness – especially cancer, is being described as the best managed centre in the country.

Opened about three months ago, the PCU provides various facilities to make patients' stay as

comfortable as possible.

Following this claim made by various readers, Ipoh Echo visited the centre to verify it.

There are eleven full-time staff and the services provided are free. Hospital's director Dr. Premavathy Balakrishnan who planned the layout

of the building with engineers said that the ward has 18 rooms both with or without air-conditioning, including two for children. Given names of flowers such as Bunga Raya, Teratai, etc., each room also has a reclining bed for the caregiver who may stay with the patient. The bathroom is big enough to accommodate a bed so that bedridden patients can be taken inside for baths.

The ward has a specialist room, dressing

room, medical store and kitchen including sitting room for visitors. There is a lecture hall as the PCU will be used as a centre of training for staff and caregivers of the patients.

Palliative Care Specialist, Dr. Yit Choi Ling from Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, visits the ward twice weekly. To be admitted, the patient must be referred from Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun.

Cik Hajat Tun Zahira,



an Occupational Therapist, said her duties include rehabilitation and providing psychological support. She encourages them to draw and provides creative ac-

tivities that make use of their hands. She helps them to maintain their memory. She added that the caregivers are very supportive.

A. Jeyaraj

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Letters

Greed Can Blind One's Vision But At What Price to One's Soul and Peace of Mind?

I refer to your front page article 'Kampar-From Tin Mines to Tertiary Education' published in issue 103 on August 16, 2010.

Every past issue of the Ipoh Echo during the past several months has carried an advertisement of my offer of scholarships to help poor students whose family income is less than RM2,000 per month. In the last three and half years, I have given scholarships to about 70 really poor students and most of them are studying in UTAR Kampar. Scholarship recipients do not need to pay me back the money I give to them nor do they need to work for me, but they have to promise me that when they are financially solvent, they will help other poor students. In this way, I believe many who have benefitted from my charity, will continue to do charity after I die.

After receiving confirmation that UTAR has no plans to build hostels, exactly one year ago, on August 20 last year, I offered a RM30 million donation to UTAR to build hostels with all the net profit to go towards building more hostels. I have openly declared that my intention is to help the students and I do not want any part of the profit for myself.

Koon Yew Yin

To read more of this letter to the editor please go to: <http://ipohecho.com.my/v2/2010/08/16/kampar-from-tin-mines-to-tertiary-education/>.

Of Wild Cats & (Un)Tarred Roads

I wish to highlight a few issues that are a concern to the residents in my area (Jalan Kakaktua, Ipoh Garden).

There are around 50 stray cats in this area roaming everywhere. They defecate in our compounds leaving an awful smell. They give birth in our ceilings and when the kittens grow up they run and jump about disturbing our sleep at night. Some die in the ceiling and in the drain; this is a health hazard. These cats keep multiplying due to some irresponsible residents feeding them.

When we moved into our house in 1973, the developer tarred the roads right to the front of our houses up to the drains. After 20 years, that portion of the road in front of our houses started to break and that left the pebbles surfacing.

Some years ago, during the former Barisan government, MBI had resurfaced the roads here but they only tarred the centre portion of the roads and refused to cover up to the drain. I went to make an enquiry but the officer could only give a lame excuse. After that some workers came with a lorry loaded with tar and pestered me to pay RM80 to resurface. These portions of the road do not belong to the residents but is in the jurisdiction of MBI. Why should we pay assessment and do the work of MBI?

Lee Hock Siew
18 August 2010

IPOH HISTORY

Spawled in the valley of looming limestone hills is Ipoh. Lonely Planet describes the city as largely a 'transit town' for tourists. Its convenient location makes this inevitable. And this is not necessarily a bad thing. Of course, for the more discerning traveller and for Malaysians far and wide, Ipoh is more than this: it is a land of unsurpassable cuisine. *Makan-Makan* and all that. How I crave the *fried kway teow* and the *popiah* as I sit in a small corner of rainy England!

But Ipoh is even more than food. I know this because I spent a couple of weeks in July, helping and observing the work of the Perak Oral History Project (POHP). As a history undergraduate at the University of Durham, I was interested in observing the process of interviewing people and of compiling a local and incredibly valuable archive. Back in Britain, history is big business. University courses are oversubscribed; television channels battle with oral history and genealogy programmes. So, I have to admit that I was slightly surprised, when I came to Malaysia, a country of colourful traditions, that there was relatively little emphasis on conservation and heritage. Progress is undoubtedly important, but one can only confront the present and the future with an awareness of what has come before.

It was, therefore, fantastic to see the enthusiasm and dedication of the POHP team. They had already collected an archive of memories of the Japanese Occupation, and were working on researching the Emergency (1948-1960). I attended three interviews, which illustrated the varied experiences of people who lived through the latter - from exciting jungle encounters to descriptions of daily life in bygone Ipoh. In fact, for me, the more mundane details of schooldays and errands, of opera and ronggeng were the most fascinating. History is not just dates, or major events; it is about the ordinary lives of people.

In between glasses of teh tarik and quite divine longan juice, I also had time to explore the area with my family. One of our best mornings was spent following the Ipoh Heritage Trail, led by our passionate guide, Raja. From the grandiose arches of the Railway Station to the atmospheric alleys of the Old Town, we saw a different Ipoh to that of gargantuan shopping malls. Certainly, I happily frequented those beautifully air-conditioned atria. Nevertheless, I was very glad to see that some of the old streets and buildings still survive. Although faded, the façade of the F.M.S. building, and the elegant bird cages and shadowy shutters of Panglima Lane are still wonderfully evocative. We even made a visit to the long established Star barber shop! It seems right that these places are remembered. Ipoh has impressive architecture and a rich, multicultural history. For visitors, especially, these places (along, undeniably, with the people...and the food!) mark out Ipoh's appeal.

It was not my first visit to Ipoh, but I feel that it was the first time that I saw Ipoh properly. I felt privileged to be part of a small, budding project that is striving to raise the prominence of Ipoh's past.

Tessa Dagley



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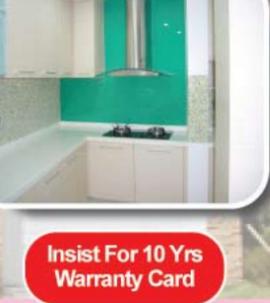
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community By Jerry Francis

Upgrading Training in Disability Management

Yayasan Sultan Idris Shah for the Disabled (YSIS) is preparing to take on a bigger role in the training of skilled and competent workers in the right techniques of disability management.

The Jeyaratnam Campus, which was launched by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Zambry Abdul Kadir at the existing complex in Bercham, recently, will provide the facilities for its skills training to be upgraded to diploma level.

Estimated to cost RM4.2 million, the campus will have a unique and iconic structure of the shape of a man on a wheelchair – the international logo for disability. The campus is named after the foundation's chairman Tan Sri V. Jeyaratnam.

It will have all the facilities of a college-type skills training centre with hostels, lecture halls and amenities. These include a multipurpose hall for seminars, conference, graduations, workshops, vocational training and sports and Paralympics' training.

"It will be twinned with international bodies with foreign lecturers for course of study in the field of human service training", said Jeyaratnam.

"It is a great challenge to raise the standards in disability care and management but we will do so. Yayasan services reach out to all, irrespective of age, race or religion."

"Our policy is to also provide all services free of charge because we should not add to their suffering and ask for payment for being disabled."

"We want the world to know that we are equal to international standards right here in Ipoh. Though we are well established and well known in various parts of the world we are edging to be a leading NGO in this country as well as South-East Asia."

He said it was YSIS's contribution to Perak and the nation in bridging the acute shortage of skilled and trained caregivers in the country.

"We are grateful to Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn Bhd who continues to support us in this training course, which is free to encourage potential caregivers from all over the

country to attend."

YSIS is the first NGO in the country to start the skills training course by bringing in experts and specialists in the area of community based rehabilitation from Upsalla University in Sweden.

These experts and specialists recognised by the World Health Organisation gave training to YSIS's professional staff first in community based rehabilitation for two months.

They then moduled a training course in community-based rehabilitation following the WHO training modules and provided the certificate course in community-based rehabilitation and have successfully trained 900 caregivers, staff from the government run Persatuan Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti centres in the country, and special education teachers, trainees from nursing colleges and other caregivers.

The YSIS was established in 1982 and headed by Jeyaratnam as its chairman ever since. Its sole purpose is to improve the socio-economic well-being and quality of life for adults and children with disabilities.

From the humble beginning of a wooden building, it moved into an eight-acre site in Bercham donated by the State Government 10 years later and gradually set up a state-of-the-art main centre, Pusat Permulihan Sultan Azlan Shah and 11 other independent centres throughout the state.



Model of Jeyaratnam Campus

Mariaville's 30th Anniversary



Mariaville Nursery & Kindergarten, which is run by the Good Shepherd Sisters, celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a Family Carnival recently. Chairman of the Perak Turf Club, Tan Sri V. Jeyaratnam, was the Guest of Honour. The support from parents and friends was tremendous. Staff from Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd HQ and their sister school Villamaria Kindergarten came all the way from Kuala Lumpur to help at the stalls. The stall run by the Sisters, staff and volunteers of Rose Virginie Crisis Centre netted more than RM30,000. Proceeds from the Carnival will go towards helping to run a Daycare Centre for very poor children in the Kipsongo slum area in Kitale, Kenya, which is run by the Good Shepherd Sisters there as well as to upgrade facilities in Mariaville Kindergarten.

CORRECTIONS

Reference Ipoh Echo Issue 103, we wish to make the following corrections:

Pg 9 - News Roundup "Jayaratnam Campus". The Jayaratnam Campus was officiated by Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir not by Tan Sri V. Jayaratnam, as reported.

Pg 12 - Community "Perak Malayalee Building". The lunch with the Prime Minister scheduled for Saturday, September 25 has been brought forward to Sunday, September 19 at Mines Resort City, Seri Kembangan.

Special Announcement

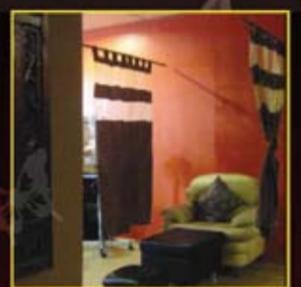
Draft Local Plan's Deadline Extended

The deadline for the Ipoh Draft Local Plan 2020 has been extended to September 22. MBI Planning Director Azizuddin Alias stated that the extension is "due to requests from the Public, NGOs and Political parties to have a more thorough review".

It has been on display since July 23 at the foyer of MBI and at the Town and Country Planning Department at the 7th floor of Bangunan Seri Perak, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily (working days). It was originally scheduled to end on August 22.

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heritage • By James Gough

KINTA VALLEY'S FADING HERITAGE



Demolished. The block of townhouses on Jalan Chung On Siew

Ipo and the Kinta Valley are in danger of losing its branding and outstanding universal value as a Tin-Mining UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Rampant demolitions of heritage structures and pre-war buildings over the years have raised the fear among the heritage community namely: Perak Heritage Society and the Kinta Heritage Group.

The community are saying that the "indiscriminate" removal of the old structures if not controlled would result in nothing left to show for the tin-mining heritage of the Kinta Valley.

Perak Heritage Chairman Mohd Taib has inquired whether there is a plan to initiate "legislation related to heritage conservation. If there is, what kind of enforcement is in place before property owners are allowed to demolish their buildings?"

Director of Kinta Heritage Group, Mr. Jek Yap, has similar sentiments. "A list of important heritage sites and buildings has already been established. Now clear and precise guidelines must be established before these 'gems' can be protected."

Among the old structures demolished were two pre-war buildings in the city. One building at the junction of Jalan Theatre and Jalan Tahwil Azhar (Osbourne Street), and the other was off Jalan Sultan Iskandar (Hugh Low Street), in the New Town sector.

Another structure removed was a block of pre-war town houses along Jalan Chung On Siew. Boxed in between Jalan Chung Thye Phin, Jalan Ali Pitchay and Jalan Chua Cheng Bok this block was the set for an Ang Lee film, "Lust Caution" depicting a Shanghai scene.

Last portion of the Gopeng pipeline, located across

the trunk road south of Gopeng Town, an icon of a glorious tin mining industry which had a global story behind it involving Asian and European participation, was also removed.

Although the company that originally purchased the entire pipe had given an assurance earlier that it would not remove the last portion of the pipe nevertheless it came down citing "reasons of safety for the public" as why it had to be removed.

The value of these pre-war structures like the Gopeng pipeline and pre-war buildings are actually legacies of administrators, Malay aristocrats, millionaires and workers who financed and built Ipoh city. Hence these old buildings contain immense historical significance and cultural value. Let's not forget that Ipoh is the 'City that Tin Built'.

It is apparent that the intention of all parties is to preserve our heritage. However without any guidelines or legislation, which only the state authorities can initiate and enforce, 'heritage vandalism' will continue to be rampant.

So let's not forget that heritage statement, "Once Gone, It's Gone Forever."

More information about Ipoh's heritage can be found at Perak Heritage Society's website: <http://perakheritage.wordpress.com> as well as Ipoh World blog site: <http://www.ipohworld.org/blog>.

young perak

CASH AWARDS



Three students from SMK Methodist ACS Kampar won cash awards for their outstanding achievements in

sports. They were rewarded at a simple ceremony organised by the Parent Teacher Association at the school hall on August 7.

"It's a form of recognition for these students who have brought fame to the school at the recent Majlis Sukan Sekolah-Sekolah Malaysia meet," said Lai Mann Kheong, the principal. V. Jeeventhiran received RM1,000 for his gold medal in the Under-15 Cross Country Run. Fong Yit Ho got RM800 for winning the chess crown while his younger brother, Fong Yit San, RM200 for being placed sixth in chess. Association president, Tai Mun Hong, gave away the awards.

RN

CITIZENS AT LAST



Mumtaj Walika Kannan Mohamed (pic), 45, was beaming with joy when met at the Ministry of Home Affairs hall in Jelapang. She had just got her Malaysian citizenship after a wait of over 20 years. "This is the best Merdeka gift ever," said the mother of three who was accompanied by her husband, Amir Bashar Sheikh Mohd, 55. Mumtaj was among 132 applicants from Perak who received their citizenship at a ceremony graced by the Deputy Home Minister, Datuk Lee Chee Leong. She was an Indian subject before marrying her husband, Amir and had joined him here in the mid-1980s.

T. Puspavathy, 52, was elated like the rest. Her application, which she submitted in 1979, was finally approved. "We can celebrate Merdeka like all other citizens this year," said her husband, N. Thamalingam, 62, a former hospital attendant. Puspavathy, an Indian subject migrated here after marrying her husband.

Datuk Lee told reporters that 15,498 applications are currently being processed by his Ministry out of the 29,677 received from 2007 to 2009. A total of 32,927 applications made from 1997 to 2006 had been approved. "The Ministry will consider all applications based on merit. Those above 21 and have been domiciled in the country are eligible to apply," Lee said.

RN

FORUM GETS GOING

The forum to discuss "media's role in enhancing non-governmental organisations' ability to serve the community" co-sponsored by Perak Women for Women Society (PWW) and Ipoh City Watch (ICW) was well received by Iphites. Over 60 participants attended the forum held at PWW's one-stop centre along Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, Ipoh recently. The panellists consisted of media experts from the various print and electronic media organisations in the country – community, mainstream and online. Each spoke on how best to



get the media to promote NGOs' activities.

From the speakers' standpoint it is obvious that the pull and push factor is not about what the NGOs stand for but what they can offer.

Incidentally, the participants represented some

16 NGOs in Ipoh. It was a record of sorts, as never before had such a large number of non-governmental organisations assembled under one roof. It augurs well for those concerned. A follow-up action is in order so as not to kill the enthusiasm generated.

FZB

Free Health Screening

Perak Community Specialist Hospital (PCSH) Mobile Health Clinic co-ordinate with KRT Taman Badri Shah/Taman Pasir Emas held a free health screening at KRT Taman Badri Shah/Taman Pasir Emas Centre recently.

Free screening included Blood Pressure Check, Blood Glucose Test and consultation and counselling by medical officer. The response from the public was very good.

PCSH Mobile Health Clinic will be providing free services to various villages continuously.

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news roundup

Kinta Swimming Pool Opens

The Kinta Swimming Club (KSC) which was under construction for quite some time has finally opened its Olympic-size swimming pool to members. KSC is located in Silibin Road next to the Kinta River Bridge. For the soft launching, Mr. Hong Weng Kuen, President of KSC invited all schools for their students to make use of the pool.



KSC is not an Elite Club, but only a Swimming Club with an Olympic size fresh water pool including other facilities for the Family-In-The-Street. There are three Lifeguards; however it is also the responsibility of parents with small children to look after the safety of their children. The club will be conducting swimming classes and plans to train athletes to compete in the Sukma games.

The club is recruiting Transferable Subscribing Members with the motto 'A Place Where Family Play Together and Stay Together'. The membership fee is RM5,000 and monthly subscription is RM45. Currently there are about 100 Life Members and 300 Ordinary Members.

AJ

TAXI DRIVERS' WOES



The Kinta Taxi Owners' and Drivers' Association is seeing red over MBI's seeming lack of interest in approving its application for waiting spaces in front of Yik Foong Complex. Each time members wait or stop to pick passengers in front of the mall they get booked. The association applied to City Council six months ago but has not received any response.

Association members sought the help of Dato' Lee Koon Yin, Chief of the BN Service and Complaints Bureau, to resolve the matter. Lee met the Mayor for clarification. The Datuk Bandar will raise the matter at the coming monthly full-board meeting.

Lee revealed that there are bogus officers claiming to be members of his bureau. "They would volunteer to help for a fee." He warned the public not to be duped by these comen. He reminded them to come to the centre at 17B, Jalan Seenivasagam personally to lodge their complaints.

RM

HIGH PROFILE POLICING



Perak Police is conducting several programmes to encourage better interaction between the people and the man-in-blue. "The success of these programmes depends on how well they are being received and perceived by the people," said Perak Police Chief, DCP Dato' Pahlawan Zulkifli Abdullah. He told this to the media at the launching of the "High Profile Policing" programme initiated at the Al Muttaqin Mosque in Taman Meru, Jelapang recently. This new initiative requires police officers in uniform to interact with the masses during prayer times at mosques and temples. "This is one way to communicate directly with the people," he said. Zulkifli felt that there was still a gap between residents and the police largely due to miscommunication. He hoped that the meet-the-resident sessions would help bridge this gap.

RN

MAN OF THE YEAR

Former Senior Assistant Director of Customs Malaysia, Tan Eok Chye, was nominated President of Y's Men's Club of Ipoh for the third time. The installation ceremony, held at the Excelsior Hotel Ipoh on Saturday, August 14, was graced by Dato' Chang Ko Youn, special adviser to MB Perak and over 200 well-wishers and guests. Chang in his return speech praised the club for its charitable services to the community and the less fortunate.



The highlight of the evening was the naming of the Y's Man of the Year. The title went to K. Letchimanan, the man behind the many success stories of Y's Men's Club of Ipoh. Letchimanan was the organising chairman of the event and is also a serving director of the club. The President Award was won by K.N. Chandran while the Dato' Dr Majumder Challenge Trophy went to SMK Main Convent.

FZB

NINTH CAMBRIDGE CERTIFICATES PRESENTATION



Tuanku Zara Salim (centre), on her left - Dato' Richard Small & Thomas Kok; on her right - Dato' Ir C S Chew

Ipoh Learning & Training Institute's 9th Cambridge Certificate Presentation Ceremony in conjunction with the Silver Jubilee Celebrations was held recently.

One hundred and twenty-one students took the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations at the end of last year, and 85 of them received their prestigious Cambridge certificates from the guest of honour, DYTM Raja Puan Besar Perak Tuanku Zara Salim. Among the recipients were 27 students with excellent results.

Tuanku Zara Salim stressed the importance of learning English as the international language of knowledge, particularly in this era of Science and Technology.

"We are extremely proud that this year's ceremony was graced by our ex-student, Her Royal Highness, Tuanku Zara Salim," said Principal Thomas Kok.

Ipoh Learning & Training Institute (ILTI) was the first language institute in Malaysia to conduct the ESOL examinations in Ipoh in 2001 with 23 candidates. Since 2004, the number has increased to over 100 every year.

Apart from parents, relatives and friends, the Ceremony was also graced by the founders of ILTI, Dato' Richard Small and Chin Yoong Kim; and the managing director, Dato' Ir C.S. Chew; and past and present principals and headmasters/headmistresses.

FREEHOLD VIRGIN LAND

SJK(C) Padang Gajah is now in operation. Interested parents can contact the school at 05-312 6813 for information on student enrolment.

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Anak PERAK

• By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen

Dynamo Doctor

Blazes Trail in Leadership and Service

They say that actions speak louder than words and when the entire staff and consultants of the Pantai Hospital Ipoh, conspire to throw a surprise party for CEO Dr. Dilshaad Ali, going to great lengths to track down old classmates, teachers and colleagues for their birthday messages, you know that this young chief executive has won not only their respect but also their hearts.

Born in Taiping and with an early education in Ipoh first with La Salle School, followed by St Michael's Institution, Dr. Dilshaad received his first medical degree from Pakistan followed by a Masters in Neurosurgery from USM. He came into his management role only two and a half years ago having practised till then. A stint as Acting CEO of Pantai Ampang in Kuala Lumpur saw him being transferred back to his hometown of Ipoh to head up Pantai Hospital here. With no previous management experience but with the encouragement and backing of then Chairman of Pantai Holdings, Tan Sri Mohamed Khatib bin Abdul Hamid, Dr. Dilshaad set about realigning the business model and re-branding the Pantai brand in Ipoh.

Good Values

With a vision of basing the whole value stream on clinical outcomes and service quality and with no training in human resources management, he intuitively knew all about creating a strong team by applying the basic values he learnt at a very young age, both from his parents as well as from the La Salle brothers from whom he received his early schooling. With a deeply ingrained motto of doing no harm and caring for his fellow-man, he set about meeting and talking to every single staff member on his arrival in Pantai Hospital Ipoh.

It is almost unbelievable that all 400 staff of the Pantai Hospital Ipoh have his personal mobile number and have permission to call him even on private issues. It is no wonder that all staff happily comply with fulfilling the new KPIs (key performance indicators) which he set,

of participating in 12 social projects a year, all on a voluntary basis with no overtime.

On the subject of community projects, Dr. Dilshaad's eyes lit up, saying, "All the work they perform on CSR (corporate social responsibility) projects just translates into better care in our hospital. The more care they show outside, the more care our patients get inside our hospital. All I do is bring out and nurture the caring side."

Strong Drive for Caring

This strong drive for caring for his fellow man has probably been honed by the years he spent as a volunteer with Mercy Malaysia of which he is now a Life Member; where his drive and initiative soon earned him the position of Director of International Relief and a member of the Rapid Assessment Team which goes into any country requiring assistance within 24 hours.

The most poignant memory he has of his time in Afghanistan, where he spent many weeks, was that of a woman who had walked three days across the desert in Kandahar to reach medical aid. On arrival she complained of stomach pains and on further questioning revealed that she had eaten rocks to just fill her stomach to stave off hunger pangs. "That mental image of her has never left me and will always remind me of how fortunate I am – an enduring reminder for me to help others less fortunate."

Medical Relief for Underprivileged

Today with the Pantai Hospital Ipoh in the throes of a complete make-over and new sub-specialities being added, Dr. Dilshaad has set his sights on new ground to traverse. Not content with working on an MBA which will be completed in a year and which entails his travelling to Kuala Lumpur every weekend for classes, he is in the process of spearheading the setting up of a medical relief outfit for the underprivileged in Perak. To be comprised of all volunteers, he plans to recruit doctors, nurses and laypeople to form the core team which will provide outreach assistance to more isolated areas of Perak.

He also plans to work with the Welfare Department on



mentoring kids in welfare homes.

Leadership and Service Awards

With so much dynamism and so many projects in the pipeline it is little wonder that Dr. Dilshaad recently won the Leadership award category in the Asia Pacific Entrepreneur Awards, currently in its ninth year of operation. One of 47 winners from a nomination of 680 throughout the Asia Pacific region, Dr. Dilshaad has the distinction of being the youngest to receive this award. Additionally the Pantai Hospital Ipoh received the award for Service, the first hospital to receive this prestigious award, competing equally with the hospitality industry.

With so many accolades under his belt, this *Anak Perak* is blazing a trail through caring and sharing and Perak state can look forward to much more new ground being covered in health care and corporate social responsibility.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements must be sent by fax: **05-2552181**; or email: announcements@ipohecho.com.my, by the 9th or 23rd of every month in order to meet deadlines. Announcements by phone will not be entertained. Ipoh Echo reserves the right to verify any announcement before it is published.

St Peter's Church Blood Donation & Health Screening Campaign and health talks – September 4 from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. at St Peter's Church, Fairpark (05-5460444), Ipoh. Health talks: (1) 'Prevention & Treatment of Heart Disease'; (2) 'Diseases of the Elderly'; (3) 'Wholesome Health'. Free blood tests for all blood donors; free tests for BP & Diabetes; other tests at discounted rates.

Persatuan Brahma Kumaris Ipoh Public Talk 'Facing The Future Without Fear' – Tuesday, September 7 at 7.30 p.m. at Royal Ipoh Club, Jalan Bukit Gantang Wahab. Speaker: B.K. Amir Chand from Mt Abu, India. All are welcome. Enquiries: **012-5654591** (Ms Sethu) or **017-5575770** (Ms Revathy).

Perak Malayalee Association (PMA) Youth Wing Children Colouring Competition. Theme "1 Malaysia" on Sunday, September 12 from 10 a.m. to noon at PMA Building Medan Istana, Bandar Ipoh Raya. For details call: Thatatreat **012-5279650**.

Perak Academy – 'An Evening with the Penang Symphony Orchestra' on Thursday, September 16 commencing at 8.30 p.m. at Syuen Hotel Ballroom, Ipoh. For details call: Mrs. Lee **05-5478949** or **016-5518172**.

Perak Malayalee Association (PMA) celebrating Onam and Malaysia Day on Thursday, September 16 commencing 12 noon at Ipoh Town Hall, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab. For details call: **012-5257894/012-4502620/012-5381939**.

'Memory Walk' to create awareness about memory problems in the elderly will be held at Taiping Lake Gardens on Saturday, September 18, from 8.30 p.m. to midnight. Free gifts for the first 300 registered participants. For details call: Pn Zainab or Pn Wati at **05-8408122/125**.

KAMI Promotion of Mental Health Workshop 'Stress Management' (in English) – Friday, September 24 from 2.30-5.30 p.m. at KAMI Wellness Centre, 4 & 4A Lebuhr Perajurit 3/2, Taman Ipoh Boulevard Timur, Ipoh. Speaker: Dr. Cheah Yee Chuang, Consultant Psychiatrist Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta. Free admission. Refreshments will be served. Limited seating – please register early. Contact: Su 016-5468003 or Grace **012-5205793**.

Olympia College Career Fair – September 25 from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at its premises: 18 Jalan C. M. Yusuff, 30250 Ipoh. Open interviews will be held by multinational companies from Perak, Penang and Kuala Lumpur. For enquiries, contact: Mr Nirmal at **05-2433868** or **012-5390020**.

Persatuan Daybreak Charity Food & Fun Fair – September 25 from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. at its premises: Lot 75242, Jalan Pulai, RPT Pengkalan Pegoh, 31500 Lahat (opp. Pinji Perdana & Poi Lam Suwa High School). Stall sponsorship, donations & volunteers are most welcome. Coupons are on sale. For details, contact Linda, Carol or Ita at: **05-3235908, 3235909**.

Story Telling Workshop by Autism Asperger's Help Association on Saturday, September 25 from 3.00-6.00 p.m. at Dewan Serbaguna, State Secretariat Building, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab, Ipoh. Oral story-telling is a unique art as it is interactive and brings the story teller's personality into it. It helps in the bonding process between the story teller and the listener. Suitable for parents with kids and teachers. For details call: Michelle Cheah **012-5121897** / Emily Gik **019-5582633** / Shanta. **05-5461345**.

Perak Society of Performing Arts (PSPA): A Musical Delight with Flute and Guitar Duo Concert & Workshops. (I) Workshops – Monday, September 27 at 6.00 p.m. at PSPA Office: 28 Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, Ipoh. For further information contact: 017-5731069 (Yim Kam Ling). (II) Concert – Tuesday, September 28 at 8.00 p.m. at Taman Budaya. For details contact: **05-5487814** (PSPA/Sara) or **012-5088818** (Witzi Leong).

FREE MEDICAL SERVICE



A South Korean company in Manjong is providing free medical service to the town's residents and people are flocking to its treatment centre. On an average, about 300 people, who suffer from backaches, arthritis and stiffness of the limbs, visit the centre daily. The centre is managed by Madam Li Hui Lian and her husband.

According to Li, the non-invasive treatment, involving massage and lights, is geared to improve one's strength and slows down the aging process. "It's a form of therapy which is a mix of Western and Oriental medical sciences," she told Ipoh Echo.

Those who had undergone the treatment gave their thumbs-up. S. Kanamal, 71, from Pangkor Island suffers from swelling on her knees and ankles. "It's much improved now," she remarked.

Li said that the South Korean company underwrites the service and provides it free-of-charge. "It conducts similar programmes in South Korea to help the poor and the needy." There are 15 such centres located in major towns in Malaysia, including one at Gunung Rapat, Ipoh. The company has centres in 72 countries worldwide.

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my say



By Jerry Francis

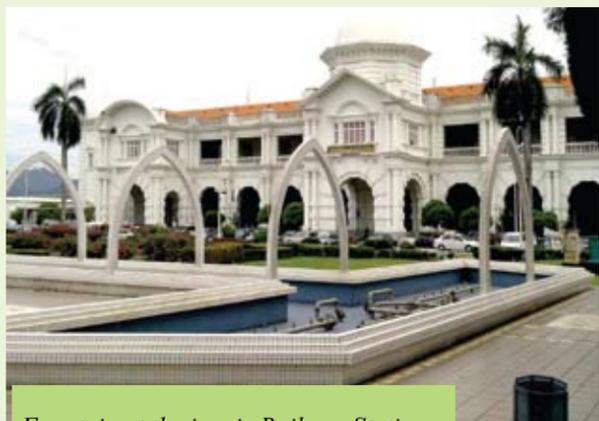
Recently, there has been a lot of talk about promoting Ipoh – the City That Tin Built, as a tourists’ destination, all of which was looking at a bigger picture of some ambitious plan or project. What these plans failed to do was to take note of some of the seemingly minor details that needed to be urgently fixed first.

For instance the iconic Ipoh railway station, which will certainly become an important entry point for tourists with the introduction of the fast inter-city electric passenger trains.

Although the railway station has been renovated as part of the Ipoh-Kuala Lumpur dual-tracking project, its surroundings are yet to be spruced up. The Moorish architecture, albeit impressive, appears desolate and lacks public transportation, unlike most entry points for tourists.

Mini Garden of Taj Mahal

The Ipoh Map and Guide produced by the city council some years ago described the railway station as an



Fountain at the iconic Railway Station has stopped gushing and gurgling

Minor Details of MAJOR IMPORTANCE



Fountain at the edge of Ipoh Padang in need of some scrubbing

impressive structure “fronted by a beautiful floral garden which serves as a charming welcome for tourists”. This garden which is right in the middle of the “Heritage Walk” being promoted in the city and also the location of Pokok Ipoh (*antiaris toxicaria*) from which the city got its name, was fondly referred to as ‘a mini garden of Taj Mahal’. Today I wonder if it still serves as a ‘charming welcome’ for tourists as the area reeks of neglect.

The beautiful fountain has stopped gushing and gurgling for some time and is collecting rubbish. Who knows, even Aedes mosquitoes may be breeding should there be stagnant water inside the empty fountain.

The Medan Stesen and its fountain need constant attention. We cannot adopt a “tidak apa” attitude as maintenance and minor repairs must be constantly carried out if we are serious about attracting tourists, whether local or foreign.

Even the fountain at the edge of Ipoh Padang appears to be in need of a good scrub, while those on the roundabout in front of the Menteri Besar’s residence and Jalan C.M. Yusuf also need some attention, although water is spouting from the fountains.

The city council appears to be unable to sustain its maintenance works. A project in the city is attractive as long as it is new. Like the fountains, there are many other minor repairs, which if not attended to quickly, will only cost the city council more later as well as become “eyesores” through poor maintenance.

Flying Squad With Special Fund

All attention seems to be concentrated only along Jalan Gopeng, where Istana Kinta is located. The city council’s parks and gardens section has failed to continuously beautify the city with landscaping, planting and pruning of shrubs and flowers on roundabouts and road-dividers. Certainly a study tour to Melaka can be useful to the staff?

I am sure city council is not hit by manpower shortage. Is it just waiting to tender these minor repairs to contractors later? Why not set up a special fund for repairs to public property and infrastructure without delay? It may be necessary to form a flying squad with a special fund to carry out such repairs and maintenance work quickly.

Taxpayers’ money is often wasted just because minor repairs are not carried out regularly, allowing the situation to deteriorate until an allocation is needed for a contractor to do the job.

There is no doubt the city council is gradually carrying out improvements to the city’s infrastructures, but if timely minor repairs are carried out, then pavements do not necessarily need to be replaced just because there are some broken tiles. This is at the expense of developing other areas.

Remember, the first impression is very important. A city needs to show it is well managed, clean and beautiful.

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