

IPOH **echo**

PUBLIC FORUM
APRIL 20, 2008 9.30 AM
SYUEN HOTEL IPOH

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ISSUE **48**

PP 14252/10/2008(007226)

April 16 - 30, 2008

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BAG SNATCHING CAN (AND DOES) KILL!

- THIS CRIME IS FRIGHTENINGLY ON THE INCREASE

- IT MUST BE STAMPED OUT BEFORE IT KILLS HERE IN PERAK

For the past four months the *Ipoh Echo* has been carrying out a local survey of the bag snatching threat. Our findings reveal deeply disturbing trends. The first of a three-part series begins this issue.



Nisha Devina Roy's story - page 2

Photos by Rosli Mansor

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PEOPLE ARE INCENSED!

Not a day passes without criminals snatching bags on the streets of Ipoh.

ACTION MUST BE TAKEN.



Bag snatching - part 1
of our survey by
Nisha Devina Roy

Bag snatching crimes are reaching epidemic proportions in Ipoh while Federal authorities fumble with promises to introduce hard-hitting new legislation aimed at cracking down on the snatchers.

Not a day passes without snatching incidents in the greater Ipoh area. So common have they become – and so frustrated are Ipohites with the lack of effective counter-measures – that few of the outrages are ever reported to police.

“Why report?” retorted one incensed victim when interviewed by the *Echo* recently. “Unless you’ve actually captured the culprit, the police don’t seem to be really interested. The reporting process is tedious and usually pointless.”

Police reaction is understandable: “To be effective we must have cooperation from the public.” So it becomes a stand-off, a stalemate, and little gets done to tackle the growing menace of snatch thieves.

NO LONGER SMALL MATTERS

Reality is that snatching crimes are no longer mere matters involving small amounts of stolen property; what police refer to as “petty criminal activity”. Records from other Malaysian centres indicate victims have died as these so-called petty criminals ply their terrible trade. In fact, the death toll from snatching has been mounting for nearly a decade.

While Perak state has yet to record a snatch-theft death, concerned citizens understandably fear that unless action is taken and taken quickly by the authorities, it will not be long before local police are investigating their first case.

A four-month enquiry by the *Ipoh Echo* into local snatching activities has uncovered some extraordinary and, at times, hair-raising accounts.

One housewife we spoke to has been targeted by snatchers on no less than three occasions in a 12-month period. The first of these occurred directly opposite the Jelapang police station.

As the woman and her husband, following lunch at a nearby stall, walked towards their car parked in full view of the station, a motorcyclist, facial features covered by helmet and dark visor, drove towards them at high speed. As he drew abreast, the cyclist skilfully lent across, hooked his fingers beneath the handle of the woman’s handbag and

the irate thief screeched to a stop, lept from his motorcycle and pointed a finger menacingly at the woman who, by then, was struggling to her feet with the aid of her husband.

‘I’LL GET YOU ...’

While husband comforted wife the brazen criminal, in a final gesture, shook his fist defiantly at the distraught woman. The meaning was quite clear: “I’ll get you or your bag next time!”

The housewife concerned was able to retain the contents of her bag this time. It was a very differ-

ent thief was back on his bike, speeding into the anonymity of traffic with his stolen loot. On the third occasion, the same woman became a snatch victim while she was walking outside a shopping row in Bercham. Again the thief functioned from a motorcycle. Again he was masked by helmet and darkened visor.

Snatch-thieves are today demonstrating a variety of operational techniques and spare no thought whatever for the physical condition or age of their intended victims.

A 70 year-old woman recounted for us how she

social order for some time. As long ago as April 13, 2006, concerned citizens organised a meeting at the city’s Hotel Excelsior where the topic was “Public and Private Sector Co-operation to Prevent Snatch Thefts”.

IMPEDIMENT TO TOURISM

Participants included senior police officers, state government figures, tourism experts and local hoteliers. The crime was, and still is, regarded a serious impediment to the flow of tourism.

A list of suggestions and proposals put forward by participants was drawn up. Copies of this were forwarded to the Menteri Besar, Datuk Bandar and Ketua Polis Perak “for information and follow-up action”.

Regrettably, the resulting “follow-up action” has measured from “negligible” to “nil” on the achievement scale

The snatch-theft picture, bad as it is at the State level, is even worse when regarded in an overall Malaysian context. So it is difficult to escape the conclusion that responsible authorities – Federal, State and Police – have all failed dismally when it comes to taking effective counter measures against what has now developed into a huge, nation-wide problem.

‘TIP OF THE ICEBERG’

According to official statistics 11,127 snatch thefts were recorded in Malaysia between January and December last year. A particularly disturbing aspect is that this figure represents only those cases reported to police and thus must be regarded as the “tip of an iceberg”.

It is impossible to give an accurate figure for annual snatch-theft incidents across the country.

But knowledgeable sources suggest official statistics could easily be multiplied by four providing perhaps a more realistic figure in excess of 40,000.

LESS THAN HALF CASES SOLVED

Equally troubling is the fact that of the 11,127 reported snatch theft cases, less than half – 4,339 to be exact – were solved.

One senior police officer, interviewed by the *Echo* on the categorisation of snatch crimes, commented: “They do not fall into the same category as, let’s say, murder.”

While perhaps accurate from a legal standpoint, it was a curious if not telling statement, given the fact that snatch theft victims are winding up dead. Late last year, the then Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, Datuk Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, announced that a bill covering snatch-theft offences would be tabled in Parliament by July this year – three months from now.

PRISON TERM PROVISIONS

The new law would provide for prison terms of between seven and 20 years for offenders along with the possibility of a whipping as part punishment. In effect, it would seek to place snatch theft activity within a far more serious crime category.

“If everything goes smoothly, the law will be effective by the end of next year (2008),” declared Mohd Radzi. Little has since been heard on the progress of these plans and it is to be hoped that the recent elections and resultant reshuffling of posts in the Federal capital will not cause further delays to the legislative process.

Meanwhile, officially compiled details of bag-snatching incidents are providing important insights for those who must inevitably institute the desperately needed counter-measures. Sixty per cent of the snatchers, it is now recognised, are drug addicts. Eighty per cent of the perpetrators employ motorcycles in carrying out their crimes. And, not unexpectedly, eighty per cent of the victims are women.



It takes a certain confidence to pull off a snatch theft right in front of a police station. But that’s exactly what one young thug did right here outside Jelapang Police station - and got away with it!

accelerated away.

HURLED TO THE ROADWAY

The impact hurled the woman instantly to the roadway. But, as it happened, the would-be thief had miscalculated. The pressure of his acceleration snapped the handle off clean. While the housewife found herself rolling on the ground still clutching the main body of her handbag, the cyclist thief found himself somewhat ignominiously holding a useless handle.

There followed a brief but highly disturbing episode that underlines the degree to which bag-snatching has become a major threat to personal safety on our streets. Again within full view of the police station,

ent story the following two occasions she fell victim to snatch thieves.

At Gunung Rapat, again in the company of her husband, she was sitting at a Chinese restaurant’s roadside table when a motorcyclist, seemingly encountering mechanical trouble, came to a stop close by. Neither husband nor wife was alarmed as the helmeted man, his engine still running, bent forward, appearing to make adjustments to his vehicle.

SPLIT SECOND ATTACK

But suddenly the cyclist lunged forward, wrenching away the handbag the woman was holding snug beneath one arm. Within a split second

was parked outside her sister’s gate when the car door was pulled open and a hand reached in to tear a gold chain from her neck. Not satisfied with just the gold chain the thief then went for the elderly lady’s wrist bracelet.

WOUNDING THE THIEF

It was a mistake. She bit the thief’s bare arm as hard as she could and the man ran off holding both his wound and her necklace. “Sometimes if you can defend yourself, you should,” she mused.

While the momentum of snatch thievery has increased alarmingly in recent months, community leaders have actually regarded the crime a serious threat to Ipoh’s

From the Editor's Desk

by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

TRANSFORMING PERAK INTO A "FAIR AND JUST" STATE



Ipho Echo Editor, Fathol Zaman Bukhari, interviewing Mohammad Nizar, Perak's new Menteri Besar.

OUR NEW MENTERI BESAR SPEAKS TO THE IPOH ECHO ABOUT HIS GUIDELINES FOR THE TASK AHEAD

"By all means be critical. I am for critical, objective reporting, as this is a form of check and balance which was grossly absent in the former administration." - Mohammad Nizar

Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin, Perak's newly installed Menteri Besar, certainly appreciated the irony. There he was at his State Secretariat office, talking to me broadly about policies for the future and seated in the very room from which he had been effectively barred for so long by his predecessor. Dato' Seri DiRaja Tajol Rosli.

"I waited for two and a half years for an appointment with the former Menteri Besar and was unsuccessful till the end," mused Nizar, a wisp of a smile fleeting across his face.

All those months he had wanted to discuss the old State Government's proposal to corporatise the Perak Water Board – Lembaga Air Perak (LAP). In fact, he had wanted to present the strongest possible arguments against the whole idea of corporatising that body.

NO NECESSITY

"You see," explained the new occupier of the MB's work premises, "there is no necessity to turn LAP into a corporation. Why waste taxpayers' money for nothing?"

"LAP makes an annual profit of RM50 million. The money should be ploughed back to the rakyat."

Perak's tenth Chief Minister – the first from a non-Barisan Nasional Party – had been proclaimed Menteri Besar by the Regent of Perak, Raja

Nazrin Shah, on March 12, 2008, four days after the rakyat made known their desire for a change in the administration of the state.

He took his oath of office at Istana Iskandariah, Kuala Kangsar, on March 17 – his 51st birthday. The newly minted chief minister won the Pasir Panjang state seat constituency with a majority of 12,000 votes.

An optimist at heart, Nizar envisions a Perak that is competitive both nationally and globally.

NO BETRAYAL

"We need to bring back the shine lost through neglect and apathy," he told me with obvious candour. "There is much to be done and we must be seen to be doing what we have set to do. The rakyat have placed their faith and trust in us to administer the state. I shall not betray this trust," said Nizar, not mincing his words.

He maintained he will not be participating in a witchhunt and does not believe in vengeance. "This is sinful and Islam forbids such thought."

He wants to make Perak investor-friendly. "There are many Perakians and Ipohites who have made it big in the business world both locally and internationally," he said.

"I'll be targeting these captains of industry, whose companies are listed on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, to come and invest in Perak. They definitely have a major role to play".



The State Secretariat, headquarters of Perak's state government and offices of the Menteri Besar.

I suggested that creating a climate conducive for these soon-to-be transient investors may require more than just a simple blueprint on a drawing board.

"The new exco members are professionals and are capable of undertaking jobs entrusted to them," assured Nizar.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

He plans to establish a committee to oversee investment – both local and foreign. This body, he emphasized, would conduct itself professionally and transparently.

All its transactions would be totally above board. Prospective investors and the Perak population at large, he recognized, harboured doubts about the way state authorities had handled certain transactions in the past. Such doubts should be dispelled as quickly as possible. There was a new team at the controls. Tourism, he

concluded, still presented a potential major money-spinner. However, the RM7 million tourist revenue projected for during Visit Malaysia 2007 had fallen well short of expectations. Still, for the time being he intends maintaining the tourism products put in place by the State Tourism Action Council.

"But I may need to repackage these products and promote them more vigorously," Nizar said, explaining he had set his sights on making Perak a true cultural and heritage centre.

"I want the Indians from India, the Chinese from China and the Indonesians from Indonesia to feel at home in Perak. They must feel free to exercise their heritage here."

According to Nizar there are 14 local Malay dialects in Perak which, through the passage of time, have been ignored by the Malays themselves. Reviving these dialects and making them accessi-

ble to the young and those abroad would be a plus.

When asked about making himself accessible to the rakyat, the fledgling MB alluded to an admission by a former two-term Barisan Nasional representative.

NO PROBLEM CONNECTING

"The guy was overjoyed to be invited to my office. That was the first time he had ventured into the MB's office." An easy-going man, Nizar feels he has no problem connecting to the rakyat. He is certainly articulate, possesses a good sense of humour and is well read, qualities necessary for a man of his stature.

On media reporting he has this to say. "In order to remain relevant, journalists must execute their duties professionally. People will resort to the Internet to source for unbiased news

Continued - page 11

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Editorial

AWAITING AN
ELECTED COUNCIL

An elected Ipoh City council is not going to be realised anytime soon. Pointedly, the hope that this might have been possible figured largely in electoral statements made before the current Perak government was voted into power. The problem is this: Federal laws need to be amended before our council can be elected and this requires the National Front government's support.

Still, it is hoped that the People's Alliance, through their legislators in Parliament, will take the necessary steps to at least attempt getting this piece of legislation in place. In view of the changed political landscape nationwide, is it too improbable to expect the National Front Government to be supportive?

The central authorities must now appreciate a salient fact of Malaysian political life. Local government members are the politicians enjoying the most direct contact with the populace. They have the real day-to-day opportunities of addressing day-to-day problems at the community level. There can hardly be a stronger argument for their electoral appointment.

In fairness, Dr Goh Ban Lee's thoughts on this matter might briefly be considered. Just because local councillors are elected, he muses, gives no guarantee good governance will follow. If that were so, of course, there would be no ineffective members in either Parliament or the Assembly. Reality is that life seldom presents perfection and when it comes to governance, it never does. Societies can only strive for the best possible improvement. In the meantime, perhaps a council of effective managers can be realised by the State government's appointment of those who are not only willing but able to serve with vision and commitment.

Everything begins with an objective and in this there is no necessity to reinvent the wheel. There are several factors that go to make an urban environment liveable. They are well defined and are frequently used as benchmarks in selecting the most liveable cities in the world.

Thus, it is a matter of conducting an audit of our City in relevant terms and coming out with a mission of the type and quality of city we desire. Thereafter we must structure a formula to achieve our goals within defined time frames.

City management is a task that requires public and private sector effort working together in concert, in planning, implementing and ensuring compliance. The need for this has acquired a new magnitude of importance brought about by past and current unmanaged development. Our society has been left with appalling environmental damage. Conservation of the environment and sustainable development has, therefore, become the most critical issue of the modern world.

As far as approach is concerned, there is, once again, no requirement to reinvent the wheel. A system to harness active public-private sector participation for sustainable development exists under a programme called Local Agenda 21. It has been implemented in several communities with remarkable improvements in urban management. In fact an attempt was made to implement such a programme in Ipoh some years ago but was abandoned prematurely. It is time it was revived and implemented.

A community newspaper like the *IPOH ECHO* which publicises the problems of the city, highlights complaints of members of the public and serves as a platform for the local community to share concerns, exchange information and suggest solutions, is ideally positioned to play a meaningful role in this programme.

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Thumbs Up

GOTONG ROYONG
WITH A DIFFERENCE

This is one fine example of what people refer to as a 'win-win situation'

By our own correspondent

The mention of Dahikmah Orphanage does not usually elicit immediate recognition. As Dahlia Din, its administrator admits, they are "not well-known". I had not heard of the place myself until very recently when I was asked to observe a gotong royong there. I came away impressed. Here is a selfless private initiative that has been quietly going on for years. The Dahikmah Orphanage has been shaping lives that could otherwise be misled by want and deprivation.

It is in Gopeng and it is 23 years old. It was started by a modest couple with a dream and a belief:

house next to the family home and took in ten children. Dahikmah was born. The beginnings proved very promising and rewarding. Haji Din and Embun expanded their plans.

THEN IT GREW AND GREW

From its inception in 1985, the orphanage has grown to include a Surau, four hostels, a study area, an assembly hall, a library, a football field and a badminton court. The Mosque and a canteen are the more recent additions.

The couple wanted their project to be self sustaining so they also

ferry the children to and from school.

Dahikmah is now managed by Dahlia Din, daughter of its founders. Haji Din died in 1992 when most of the facilities had been completed. The administrative duties were then passed on to his son-in-law, Ismail Bidin. But Ismail himself passed away in early March this year. Two years ago, Embun, sadly feeble, was awarded the NST-PWC Lifetime Humanitarian Award for her dedication to the plight of orphans and poor children. She remains an inspiration to her daughter and to the orphanage she co-founded.

Presently, there are 42



The original home of Haji Din and Embun

give a child a proper childhood and it will grow into a responsible citizen.

In 1985, Haji Din bin Kimi and Embun bte Mohd Ali pooled their pension funds together and decided they would do something for the community. Retired, they began to focus on the abject poverty that prevented many struggling parents around them meeting the basic requirements of their families – sustenance, provisions for health, schooling.

Haji Din and Embun were particularly troubled by the plight of orphans – what would happen to those children? They needed support, guidance, discipline and encouragement. Something had to be done for them. And done fast.

Not wishing to have their objectives delayed by interminable organisational haggling when other parties got involved, the couple decided to do everything on their own

They built a small

donated their *tanah wakaf* amounting to 32 acres to the orphanage. Apart from the buildings, Dahikmah owns four fish ponds which contribute the primary item on the children's menu. There is also a small orchard of honey jack fruit and durian trees which should be a source of income at harvest time. All the children attend kindergarten, primary and secondary classes in the Gopeng area. The orphanage has two vans to

orphans at Dahikmah. The property can accommodate up to a hundred children. The charges are recommended by Government bodies or village Penghulus but, as Dahlia Din says, "We are not well-known". Which is one way of saying that Dahikmah has been functioning quietly and doing well for the community without much fanfare.

The orphanage has a 'staff' of



Dahikmah's present administrator, Dahlia Din

continued on opposite page

continued from left page



Apart from working on small chores assigned to them, the orphans at Dalikmah have their exercise periods. The badminton court is a source of much fun.

seven - 1 Ustaz, 2 cooks, 2 wardens and 2 plantation labour. All live on the premises and multi-task. They also help out in guiding the children and maintaining harmony and discipline at the orphanage.

The children are well-trained. Everybody is expected to help with little chores and everyone does without having to be cajoled. The bigger boys do a bit of grass-cutting.

DAHLIA'S LAUNDRY LIST

Running Dahikmah is a full-time and demanding job and the orphanage is run on a tight budget. RM120,000 is needed for its annual maintenance and of this, only RM20,000 comes from the government. The rest is sourced from corporations, individuals and activities generated by the orphanage itself.

Needless to say, Dahlia Din is constantly beset by project requirements. For instance, the bathroom facilities which had been



Dahlia with some of her younger charges



The children learn multi-tasking early. Above, an older ward gives a younger inmate a haircut.



RM20k is needed to upgrade the bathrooms



Been there... done that. Feeling good after the gotong royong at Dalikmah, the students from Singapore's Betty Secondary School are off to Gua Tempurung.

School and they had a *gotong royong* of gardening, cleaning and painting the dormitories at Dalikmah.

In Singapore these days, Secondary 3 students (usually 14-15 year olds) are required to participate in a Community Involvement Programme (CIP). There is another activity Youth Expedition Project (YEP) meant to encourage volunteerism for youths of 17 years and above. This year, Mr Tham, the CIP coordinator, decided to merge the two programmes. He and four other teachers did a recce of sites that would combine service awareness for community service and adventure. Gopeng proved suitable to accommodate 300 participants and Dahikmah, an ideal focus for the awareness project. The students worked and then managed to explore Gua Tempurung and raft down the Sungai Kampar.

Dahlia Din was as happy. The premises were spruced-up; the rooms got a thorough scrubbing and the walls of the dormitories were painted.

Since actions are better than words, the reticent orphans at Dahikmah would have seen that there are people "from outside" who care about their world. And the more carefree students from Singapore would have earned a kernel of awareness about how other people live.

The *Ipo Echo* lauds the Gopeng exercise and wishes there were more of such activities. Perhaps, local schools should participate when something like the Betty project is broached.

Students from both sides of the Causeway could interact and learn more lasting impressions. They could mix and exchange ideas on how they can contribute to just causes, like Dahikmah Orphanage in Gopeng.

set up for a much smaller headcount need to be upgraded. She needs RM20k for this wish and has to rack her brains to speed up the generation of funds for its realisation. The ageing 15-seater vans need replacing. She has to find the money to pay for new ones.

'GOTONG ROYONG'

It goes without saying that every little help matters and is appreciated. And the assistance may not necessarily be financial. This is what Dahlia thinks. So, when a group of students from Singapore came up with the idea of using Dahikmah as the focus of their community project, she was only too happy to cooperate.

The teenagers, led by Mr Tham Shieh Ping, were from Betty Secondary

THE WAY IT WAS ... 100 YEARS AGO THIS FORTNIGHT



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newspaper in the
F.M.S'

Wednesday,
15th April,
1908

Local & General

**The Ipoh
Convent**

In these hard times donations and benefactions cannot be wrung out of the reputed wealthy citizens of British Malaya even when these funds are for the construction of an orphanage and the completion of the classroom buildings of the Ipoh Convent.

These can no longer be delayed so it was decided that funds be raised by a money lottery.

Fifty thousand tickets at one dollar each will be sold of which over \$23,000 will be paid away in prizes.

The remainder will be devoted to the purpose for which the lottery has been organised.

There are 56 prizes varying from \$25 to \$10,000. There is therefore ten thousand dollars awaiting some one who expends the modest sum of one dollar.

There are a host of willing helpers in every town in Perak.

So far as Taiping is concerned tickets can be had at all the principal clubs and from Mr Ashby.

* * * * *

Tuesday,
16th April,
1908

Local & General

Aeroplanes, guaranteed to fly not less than a mile, can now be bought like motor cars. Clarke's Flying Machine Company Ltd. are now offering to the public to construct for £1,000 a thoroughly reliable aeroplane with a guarantee that it will fly not less than one mile!

Prospective purchasers, says the company, are not desired to pay down one penny 'unless they are absolutely satisfied that the machines will do what we claim for them.'

* * * * *

Wednesday,
23rd April,
1908

Editorial

A highly interesting, if slightly academic discussion has been raised by several of our contemporaries, on the subject of the status of the Rulers of the Native States.

The points at issue seem to have been narrowed down to the one cardinal question, as to whether it would be

preferable to extend still further the scope of British Rule in these States, or allow their Rulers to retain the small modicum of power and privileges yet left to them. The Free Press, as upholding the latter view, appeals to the faith and sanctity of treaties, and draws attention to the memorandum of Lord Carnarvon, who sought to check the undue activity of British Residents, by reminding them that it was their duty to advise and assist and not to administer.

But nobody acquainted with the actual conditions prevailing in the F.M.S. administration, will have any hesitation in arriving at the conclusion that the Residents have long since become administrators, and that their advisory functions have long since been merged into those of the actual heads of the Executive Government of the respective States.

Every Enactment that has been 'passed' during the last seven years, bears ample evidence of the steady and unswerving process by which the sultans' rights have been taken away.

It may be argued, on the other hand, that all these steps have been taken for the good of the Rulers and their subjects alike. Opinions are however bound to be divided as to the alleged unquantified nature of the blessings accruing to the natives of the Protected Native

States, by being placed under one cast iron model of administration, though it be based on the excellent pater of British Colonial administration.

We may add that incongruously enough the staunch advocates of a closer assimilation of the administration of the Colony and the F.M.S. are extremely chary of urging the expediency of conferring upon the inhabitants of these States, the three undoubted advantages of Colonial Government viz trial by jury, elective municipalities and the formation of a legislative council, with the same powers and status as those vested in that of the Straits Settlements.

The Johore State is rapidly drifting in this connection, to the position of the vineyard of Nabboth. The prospective acquisition of the Malayan States of Kelantan, Trengannu and Kedah on such easy terms has evoked the British Imperialist's keep earth-hunger.

To his patriotic eye Johore stands in the way of the constitution and consolidation of a great Malayan confederation under British hegemony.

The Sultan of Johore is being magnanimously offered the continued enjoyment of his present 'status' and emoluments, if he would only enter the alluring web of the Federation.

But we have every reason to believe, that

the present Ruler of the State, will not so readily be induced to part with his present independence in return for retaining what is not already his own.

* * * * *

Friday,
24th April,
1908

Telegrams

The Yellow Peril

Mr Price, the Premier of South Australia, speaking at Liverpool said that the Australians are getting ready to face the yellow peril, and he hoped that everybody under 30 will soon be able to use a rifle to resist the advance of the yellows when the time comes.

Kinta Notes

Matsuio's Japanese Aerobic Show opened in Ipoh last evening before a crowded house, the entertainment was an exceedingly interesting one and capially carried out from start to finish, the trapeze acts being particularly sensational and daring.

The company are likely to do good business here for three weeks, their next point of call being Perak's capital. The tent is a very large one capable of seating 3,000 persons.

* * * * *

Since the Sanitary Board took over the street lighting of the 'Lux' installation at present in force in Ipoh, there has been a marked improvement in the lighting of the town and suburbs, though it could still do with further attention from the responsible authorities.

* * * * *

The F.M.S. Hotel, recently opened here in Belfield Street and entirely run under Chinese management, continues to be largely patronised by visitors and local residents.

Unless Messrs Sarkies brothers hurry up a bit faster than they appear to be doing in the way of building their palatial edifice, they will probably find that a good deal of the gilt of the venture has vanished.

* * * * *

The motor car and cycle furious driving goes on daily, and it is certainly astonishing no prosecutions result therefrom. In one of Ipoh's busiest thoroughfares on Tuesday morning, there were no less than three collisions by riders on three speedy vehicles. In each case the collided-against person was very badly knocked out of time, though not seriously hurt. But before any remedy could be taken against the aggressor he had gone gaily out of sight. This is really too bad.

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Ipoh: Facts and Fancies

by Ho Tak Ming

The Richest Chinaman In The World

Many of the early tin miners made fabulous fortunes. Ipoh was at one time known as the "Millionaires' Town". Certainly the country's foremost tycoon in the late nineteenth century was a tin miner, the famous Capitan China, Chung Keng Kwee of Taiping.

He owned the largest alluvial tin mine in the world, the Kwong Lee Mine, which employed 5,000 mining coolies. He was also the long-term holder of the Perak Revenue Farms and had business interests and property in Penang and Hong Kong. When he died in 1901, his estate in Penang alone was worth seven million Straits dollars.

After Chung Keng Kwee's death, the mantle of Richest Man in the FMS was passed on to Loke Yew of Kuala Lumpur. Loke Yew had first started as a tin miner in Kamunting, on the opposing camp as the Capitan China but lost everything during the Larut Wars. He recouped his losses when he was appointed government contractor during the Perak War of 1875.

Loke Yew made his first mining fortune in Kinta in the early 1880s but in 1885 turned his back on Perak to concentrate his business activities in the other States of the FMS – Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan.

Perak was not bereft by the loss of Loke Yew's entrepreneurial spirit, for he was given a run for his money by Ipoh's mining magnate, Foo Choo Choon.

MIDAS TOUCH

Foo was born of Hakka parents in Fujian province, China in 1860. Aged 13, he came to Penang with his father after receiving only a few years of traditional Chinese education. In Malaya, he worked for an uncle who was a tin miner in Taiping. Foo married a niece of Chung Keng Kwee whom he accompanied to Lahat in 1889 to work the mining concessions Capitan Ah Kwee had acquired.

If anyone had the Midas touch, it was Foo Choo Choon. His concession at the Sorakai valley in Lahat made him

a prosperous man. In 1897 he struck a fabulously rich vein at Tronoh, a small village nine miles south-west of Batu Gajah. He employed John Addis, an experienced Australian miner, as his manager. Addis used modern machinery to get out the tin ore, which was buried below twenty feet of tough clayey overburden. Tronoh became the richest mine in Kinta (until the Tambun Mine was opened in 1902).

The introduction of machinery at the mine, ensuring a steady and sustained output, coincided with the tin boom at the end of the nineteenth century. Foo Choo Choon took advantage of it to expand his mining interests. He formed a syndicate in Penang with a capital of \$200,000 to obtain further mining concessions. He went to China personally to import 1,000 sinkhehs to work his Tronoh mine. By the close of the century, Foo Choo Choon had emerged as a mining magnate, employing thousands of coolies and issuing his own currency notes. He was replicating in Kinta what Capitan Ah Kwee had done in Taiping twenty to thirty years earlier.

SOLD OUT... BUT

In 1901, to everybody's surprise, Foo Choo Choon sold his Tronoh mine to British interests for \$1,000,000, one half in cash and one half in shares. At the same time, he sold another concession for \$600,000. He became an instant millionaire. Those who thought he was cashing out of the tin mining industry were mistaken. The cash-rich, Foo went on an acquisition trail that was to make him the Tin King of Malaya. He bought the Sunudong Mine at Kampar, the Bukit Mas mine at Tapah (which also produced gold), and several other concessions in Kinta, all managed by the able John Addis. Finally, he acquired the Sungei Besi mine in Kuala Lumpur, which became a second Tronoh.

As for Tronoh, it became a limited company, registered as the Tronoh Mines Limited in 1901. It was one of the earliest "Straits" mining companies to be floated in the UK, with a capital of £160,000 in £1 shares. The Managing Director was EG Edgar of Ipoh, a friend of Foo's. Foo Choo Choon

himself was a Director, the first Chinese Director of a company floated in Britain before the First World War. Foo was, of course, the majority shareholder, and together with other Chinese shareholders, the "pig-tailed gentlemen of the East" held over 50% of the capital of the company. Lamenting on the general lack of interest in tin companies by the British investing public, the Mining Journal said, "All the more pity, that the 30% dividends go mostly into Chinese pockets. It is truly deplorable that British investors pay so little attention to the potentialities of the tin mining industry." In five years Tronoh Ltd paid back its entire capital plus 27% beyond it. Foo Choo Choon was content to stay in the background, always ready to give the benefit of his experience and tact for the good of the company. As majority shareholder, he enjoyed princely dividends.

In 1905, the three leading tin producers in Perak were:

1. Tronoh Mines Ltd 41,209 piculs.
2. Foo Choo Choon's various mines 40,000 piculs
3. Societe des Etains de Kinta 39,710 piculs.

Tronoh Mines and the SEK were public-listed companies, but Foo Choo Choon was sole proprietor of his mines, and was still busy acquiring and selling tin concessions. His British friends in Ipoh floated two of his mining properties, Kledang and Lahat, in Cornwall, the tin mining centre in Britain. Foo was a Director in both companies. Foo Choo Choon's enormous fortune was made within a decade, from the time he struck a rich lode at his Tronoh concession in 1897, when the tin boom started, to 1907, with a short recession in between, in 1904. The year 1906 was one of the most remarkable ever known when the London tin market reached the highest price in its history – on May 14, at £215 per ton (\$128 per picul).

By this time, the great Foo Choo Choon, the Tin King of Malaya, forty-seven years old, had overtaken Loke Yew as the Richest Man in the Federated Malay States. At the height of the tin boom in 1907, the *Ballarat Courier* referred to him as "the richest Chinaman in the world".

Then & Now

There is an aspect of a man's life which can be subtitled . . .

About Me & My Barbers

This morning I went to have a haircut in town. My grand-daughter Ijan is coming back from KL and she complains when my hair is unkempt and not properly trimmed. Day after tomorrow there will be an important event at Villa Indera. Somebody is getting married. We have not had a wedding in the family since 2005. But that is another story.

kedai bawah Gunung Pondok just at the foot of, yes, Gunung Pondok. Pekan Gunung Pondok was then a tiny, thriving world. People going to Kampong Lalang, Setor, Sungai Ati and Paya Rangkap and beyond to Lanoh passed through these little village-shacks where they could buy local cooked food and vegetables. And, if they wished or needed one, they could drop and

two hair-dressing chairs and when the kids came, a plank of wood was placed over the "arms" for them to sit on. Sometimes, I would doze off in the barber's chair. It was so pleasant having my face massaged. But there occasions I would suddenly sit up with a jolt, thinking the barber might, out of the blue, lose his mind and cut off my ears or nose! This phobia remains with me to this day.



The relationship between a man and his barber is special and unique.

Today, I am preoccupied with memories of trips to the barber shop. My father had been pretty strict about haircuts himself. He made a point of supervising this regular cutting and trimming himself.

It was quite an outing, us packed like sardines in the small – we called it a "baby car" – Austin 7 (PK 2037). I had an older brother, two younger brothers and there were our two sisters, the last two additions in the family. Being "special" they always sat in front, beside our father who drove. Our mother Akidah had died when the girls were mere toddlers. I am talking of a time in the 1920s.

GREAT FUN

We enjoyed getting our hair trimmed except for Tum, the youngest. She would cover her face with her arms and needed much cajoling from both our dad and the Indian barber.

It was the protocol of the day that my older brother and I should be last in the haircutting queue. This gave us sufficient time to kill and be entertained. The barber's shop was one of six or seven little establishments – they were no more than shacks - at

have their trim in the shop where two Indian barbers worked.

A few yards away going into Pekan Padang Rengas, about a quarter of a mile away from the row of shops, was a railway gate that was closed whenever a train - a passenger mail train or goods train - would chug its way up north through the famed Bukit Berapit tunnels.

MY TURN

Waiting for my turn at the barber's, I was intrigued to watch the huge locomotive-engines chugging away, white steam or smoke spiralling up and over their funnels. In those days, Padang Rengas Railway Station was a must for all trains going up north or south. The locos sometimes needed power to push them up Bukit Berapit or required "controlling" any long line of the mail or the good trains sliding down the rails from the hill after a very heavy downpour. This happened a few times.

Suffice to say I was never impatient while I waited to be called to have my hair cut. The barber shop of my childhood was quite cosy. It had only

We had a different type of "air-conditioning" then. We had *punkahs* - a broad cloth attached to a frame with a cord operated manually by a man-servant called a *punkawallah*. It worked for many of us. In fact, it made one so drowsy. Later, a radio was added to the set-up and it naturally played Tamil songs!

TIME PASSES

In the 1960s, I worked in the big city's State Secretariat and found myself a barber that suited me. His shop was on a river bank, behind the Secretariat building. There was nothing posh about the establishment but it was tidy and everything was in order. The Indian music was perpetually on! This barber shop introduced me to Bay Rum, a hair tonic that was very popular in those days. It was French. Your head was massaged using this tonic; sometimes it was rubbed gently all over your face. It could last on you for as long as three weeks! I paid the princely sum of between \$1.50 and \$2.00 each time I visited that river bank barber. An extra 50 sen was levied for a shave if you needed one and for the Bay Rum rub.

continued on page 9

Musings by See Foon Chan-Koppen



See Foon

MASSACRE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

It is bad enough as it is with the Americans turning nouns into verbs as in concretising ideas, and impacting the environment but we Asians are massacring the English language.

I'm resigned to being told to "on" or "off" the lights. The word "switch" has died a natural death. Recently, on a Malaysian Airlines flight, a stewardess came up to me before landing and told me to "up" my seat.

As I sat there bemused and wondering whether she'd understand if I had said to her, "And yours too"! I decided it was futile. Dry wit only works with a rich vocabulary.

The other expression my friends and I have a good chortle about is the good "Accuse Me" (when they actually mean "excuse me") and it is always on the tip of my tongue to retort back with a "And what are you guilty of?"

Listening to today's use of English is very educational for me. If the total extent of ecstasy one can conjure up in our present world is, "It's cool", then I shall be in my widow's weeds and mourning the demise of good English.

THE LAZY SUSAN

That round thing-a-me-jig on most Chinese restaurant tables otherwise known as a Lazy Susan

(now I wonder what Susan ever did to deserve that dubious eponym), is intended to assist diners around a large round table to help themselves to food without having to stand up and reach across the other side. Presumably the original intention was to place dishes at the edge and diners then turn the lazy Susan around for guests to easily help themselves.

What I have observed though is that waiters and waitresses, either through sheer idiocy or having been trained by someone equally unthinking, will inevitably place the dish right smack in the middle



of the said Lazy Susan. This results in diners still having to reach far out to the middle of the table, risking drenched sleeves or scalded arms.

I asked a waitress one night at Mun Choong in Pasir Puteh why she did that and her answer was, "Don't know, everyone puts it there!" So there you have it!

CARING FOR THE HANDICAPPED WITH HURDLES

Now that most major shopping malls and hypermar-

kets have handicap parking spots - well marked with signboards that warn of fines for trespassing if you use it when you're not - it should be a boon for the physically disabled. There are even wheelchair ramps leading to the lifts in a few places. But one huge mall I went to recently had one glaring anomaly. From the parking bay to the wheelchair access ramp, which was right next to the parking bay, there was a curb of approximately 6 inches to be negotiated by any wheelchair.

For the handicapped fortunate enough to have someone pushing him

you can loop back . . . are hidden behind branches of trees that have not been trimmed.

It is all very well to beautify the highways but do they need to plant trees just in front of road signs?



PEOPLE WHO CAN'T KEEP TIME

People who pretend they heard the wrong time when they show up late. The ones who gush, "Oh sorry I thought you said 12.30 instead of 12.00" That's why we have mobile phones: to call and say you'll be late!

QUEUE CUTTING

Have you ever been irked by someone who blithely cuts a queue in front of you and even doesn't acknowledge your presence? Not one to take what I perceive to be an act of aggression lightly, I would usually confront the person and, often, they'd meekly move to the back. However, there have been occasions - especially at airports - when one has to deal with "ugly" tourists who just would not budge. Sometimes it's a big burly guy and I can't find a sympathetic man to back me up. I, being the lone woman in the aggravating queue, will then just have to put up and shut up. Not happily, I might add.



Kafe Paprika's Lamb En Crouete

Ask the butcher to tunnel bone the leg of lamb for you. It can be seasoned and baked the day before required, cooled, covered and refrigerated. Allow the meat to return to room temperature before wrapping in pastry. Pastry can be wrapped around lamb 2 hours before cooking. Buy or make your own favourite pâté for this recipe. This recipe is not suitable to freeze or microwave. Serves: 6

INGREDIENTS

2kg leg lamb
2 tablespoons oil
500g packet ready-rolled puff pastry roll
1 egg, lightly beaten

SEASONING

100g pâté
125g mushrooms, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons red grape juice
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves (or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary leaves)
2 cups stale breadcrumbs
1 egg, lightly beaten

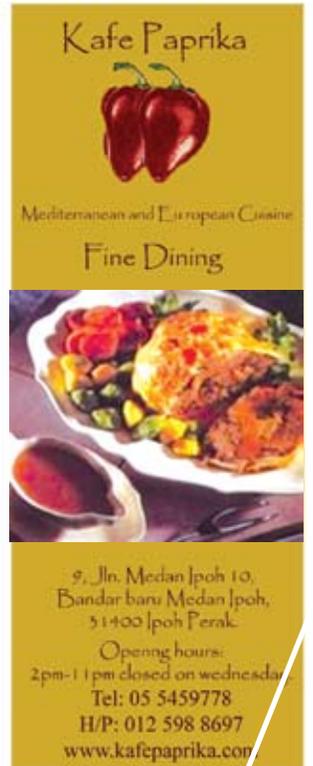
NURINA'S SAUCE

2 tablespoons plain flour
1 1/2 cups water
1 beef stock cube
2 tablespoons red grape juice
1 tablespoon red currant jelly

METHOD

Seasoning: Mash pâté in a bowl with a fork, add remaining ingredients; mix well. Spoon seasoning into cavity of lamb, push seasoning right to the end of the cavity.

Tie lamb with string to keep shape during cooking, place into baking dish. Rub lamb with oil, bake uncovered in moderate oven for 1 hour or until lamb is cooked as desired. Remove lamb, cool to room temperature on wire



rack over tray. Reserve 2 tablespoons pan juices for sauce. Pat meat with absorbent paper: remove string.

Unroll pastry, place lamb upside down in centre, fold one half of pastry over lamb, brush pastry with egg. Fold over other half of pastry, trim away excess. Press edges together to enclose lamb completely. Invert lamb so the pastry joins are underneath the lamb.

Cut fancy shapes from excess pastry, brush with egg, place on pastry. Put lamb into lightly greased baking dish. Brush pastry all over with remaining egg, bake in a moderately hot oven for about 25 minutes or until pastry is golden brown. Stand lamb 5 minutes before slicing and serve with brandy sauce.

Nurina's Sauce: Blend the reserved pan juices in saucepan with the flour, stir constantly over heat until mixture is lightly browned. Gradually stir in water and crumbled stock cube, stir over heat until mixture boils and thickens. Add red grape juice and red currant jelly, stir over heat until sauce is smooth and heated through.

Food Odyssey, part 3

IPOH TAKEAWAYS

Somehow one feels the need to leave the city with something nice, something edible

During festive seasons and other holidays, people travel to Ipoh. When they leave, many lug out take-away boxes of tasty chicken back to Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Singapore and wherever else visitors to Ipoh come from.

I am talking about the famous Ipoh Salted Chicken or Yim Kok Kai. A delicacy, this dish is basically a whole chicken baked in salt and herbs.

The chicken is wrapped in grease proof paper and "baked" in large woks filled with heated salt.

Anyone who knows anything about salted chicken will argue that Aun Kheng Lim serves the best recipe. This outlet is located along Jalan Theatre, opposite an off-licence that was known as the Martell House and is situated in the city centre. If you are in Ipoh, call 05-254 2998 and make a reservation to

avoid disappointment.

ROAST DUCK

What about roasted duck? How do you fancy biting into the crisp duck skin with the smallest hint of fat between the crackling skin and the succulent meat below? There are a few restaurants that sell this tasty dish. Many people go to Tuck Kee in Pasir Pinji for the duck and other Chinese style roasts (roast



pork, barbecue pork, roast chicken).

I am partial to roast duck from a restaurant called Yeong Wai. The owner's parents used to run a stall in Ipoh Garden East. The proprietor himself started out in Ipoh Jaya (behind Gunung Rapat) but has since moved to Ampang. There is a branch in the Greentown Business Centre but do go to the one in Ampang if

you want fresh roasted duck. And while we are talking about roasts, I offer you a tip - explore the Menglembu area and ask the locals where to get good roast pork. If you are not adventurous, head to the end of Jalan Bandar Timah, where the famous Ipoh White Coffee outlets are located. (I have talked to you about White Coffee.) The Menglembu roast pork is sold there in time for tea.

Lim Si Howe

barbers . . . continued from page 7

It was cukup berbaloi sekali.

Later, when I was in the State capital, I frequented a barber shop known as the 'Hollywood Hair Dressing Saloon'. It reminded me a lot of the shop in the Federal capital years earlier. This Hollywood Hair Saloon was manned by two or three nearly middle-aged barbers. They were very experienced, very gentle and very courteous. When they saw me coming up, one of them would wait for me at the door and usher me gently into a seat. The Hollywood Hair Saloon also had its brand of 'in-house' hair tonic. It was not as potent as the genuine Bay Rum - its fragrance would last only a week - but satisfying enough.

RECENT BOUTS

A few years ago, I tried two different barbers in our small pekan. My visit to the Chinese one was never repeated. His shaving razor was blunt: it hurt! The Indian entrepreneur was OK professionally in the beginning but he developed the tendency to push my head about; also, he enjoyed chatting loudly (and endlessly) with a friend who was loitering

about or talking to his wife who was in the kitchen.

More recently, I made a rewarding discovery when I visited Romeo Tukang Gunting in town. It was run by two youths from India both of whom confessed to me that they graduated from of a Barbers' Academy in their country - they spent eight years at the Academy to earn a Barber's Certificate!

I recall having a good look at the row of half-sized bottles arranged neatly below the big mirror in front of me. They contained a bright pink liquid very much like the colour of Bay Rum. I requested a splash. I was told by the barber that it was not Bay Rum - he quoted something about it in Indian! He had not heard of the long lasting fragrance. The hair-cut and the splash of liquid that was non-Bay Rum cost only RM7.00!

This brings me to my last memory of barbers and their shops. During the transition period called *interregnum* (the time immediately following the surrender of the Japanese and the period of the British Civilian Administration), I was, of course, jobless.

One fine day my father handed me a box containing a set of hair-clipper, a razor blade knife and other paraphernalia a barber needs. He said, "Rashdi, while you are waiting for a job- and it may take time for the country to settle down for you to find one - why don't you learn to be a barber? There's money in it! Everybody needs a haircut. People have to see you sometime!"

My father meant well but I just could not understand how he'd want me to be a barber - why, I'd attended a very well-established and well-known institution in the whole country! I was young and proud. At that time there were only two Malay barbers in the village-town. I would not mention their names here but in time the two would be remembered as the nucleus of the famous or as the infamous API Movement, forerunner of our modern Youth Movements!

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A UNIQUE OCCASION FOR CONCERNED CITIZENS

Come one, come all . . . see democracy at work

A forum is scheduled to be held in Ipoh on Sunday, April 20, for broad public discussion on the far-reaching subject of 'restructuring local councils'.

In view of intense public interest generated recently over possible future reorganisation of these local governing bodies, forum organisers are expecting a large and enthusiastic crowd of participants at this event. They are therefore requesting those intending to join the discussions arrive at the Syuen Hotel venue in plenty of time for proceedings. These will kick-off at 9.30 am sharp.

SPONSORS

The occasion is being organised by Ipoh City Watch (ICW), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) dedicated to educating and empowering Ipohites.

Public feedback is now being sought to provide the necessary reference for adherence by other states under Pakatan Rakyat.

Ipoh Echo is co-sponsoring the April 20

discussions but emphasises its involvement is devoid of any political persuasion or commitment whatever. Its role will be purely to study and evaluate all ideas put forward during the forum and to present these as cogently as possible to our reading public.

Clearly, there has been much debate lately regarding local council elections or what is being described as the "third vote" - the basic tier of any vibrant democracy.

BACKGROUND

Such elections were made illegal in Malaysia at the onset of "Konfrantasi" with Indonesia in 1962. This action was taken for "security reasons".

A Royal Commission of Inquiry, under the chairmanship of Senator Dato' Athi Nahappan, was set up in June 1965 "to inquire into the workings of all local authorities and to recommend as to the need for structural changes. . ."

The Commission submitted its report to the Government through the Ministry of Local

Government and Housing in January 1969. It concluded that local authorities "do serve a useful purpose being the agencies providing some of the essential services to the people and that they have an important



Venue: Syuen Hotel, 88, Jalan sultan Abdul Jalil, Ipoh

role to play. . . ." It was recommended that local council elections should remain.

But fate was to deal a heavy blow to hopes of a restoration. The racial riots of May 13, 1969, provided the government with an excuse to withhold all plans for re-introducing the "third vote". The decision was later promulgated in the Local Government Act,

1976. The whole concept of local council elections then became alien to a large section of Malaysians, especially those below the age of 40.

Reacting to the forum's chosen subject matter, Dr Loganathan,

nature could provide difficulties. Though informed opinion suggests the route ahead may not necessarily be impassable. They point to the current composition of Federal parliament.

"In the interim measures need to be introduced to liberalise the functions of local governments," said Loganathan. "If elections are not forthcoming some cosmetic changes are in order.

"Doing away with an appointed mayor and president is a step in the right direction," Loganathan insisted.

PRESENT SET-UP

Currently, mayors and presidents are picked from among senior government servants while councillors are political appointees. This arrangement has proven to be ineffective as mayors, presidents and councillors are not answerable to rate payers but to their political masters instead. And since councillors prefer to remain "invisible" state assemblymen and parliamentarians have to step into their shoes.

Speakers invited to the

forum are Dr Goh Ban Lee, an academician well versed in local government, Derek Fernandez, a prominent lawyer from Petaling Jaya and R Nadeswaren (Citizen Nades), a journalist with the Sun.

Goh Ban Lee and Derek will speak on the roles, functions and the legal framework of local governments. Nadeswaren will highlight anecdotal incidents relating to the failure of local councils in Selangor.

Please note that those attending will be charged a nominal fee of RM10 on entrance to defray organisational costs. Food and refreshments will be served.

The Perak Menteri Besar, Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin, will be in attendance. Party stalwarts from DAP, Keadilan, PAS and Barisan Nasional will also be there.

This will be a unique opportunity for all to help reshape and restructure the 15 local councils in Perak.

For more details please call Ipoh Echo at 05-249 5936.

Fathol Zaman Bukhari

YOUNG PERAK

A section of interest and action for the youth of our state

Students from participating schools are invited to share their thoughts with others. Contributors may write about or photograph things/events outside their respective institutions of learning. Human interest stories, observations and reflections are welcome.

E-mail articles to – editorial@ipohecho.com.my
attn: Peter Khiew



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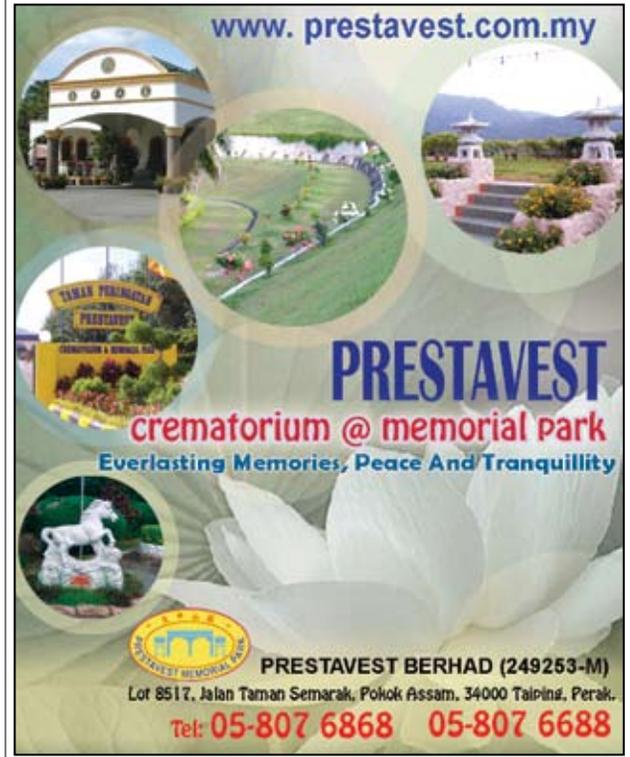
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TREASURE OUR CHILDREN

How a news report marred a beautiful morning

It was a beautiful and peaceful morning when I woke up so I went out for a walk around the garden. I carried a set of newspapers with me. I intended to enjoy the wonderful scenery, then have a peek at what was

but when we returned to where the bag was, I used a branch to poke at the plastic bag and was shocked to see a pair of tiny legs sticking out from the cloth."

The story had the City chief police officer

I have been thinking about this. I sincerely hope that all the citizens will take the issue of rearing children seriously. We must save them and protect them from harm.

Babies are wonderful gifts from God to us and

lor before you resort to a heinous act like dumping them. You can also seek the advice of your relatives and friends. I'm sure that they will somehow give you some useful opinion.

I conclude by hoping



Protect your offspring, urges Joceyln. Like the ones above, all children should be happy.



happening in the world. I was so relaxed and was having such a pleasant time until I came across this particular report.

My heart sank at what I read. I felt so many emotions tugging at me – sadness, anger, disappointment. I was left feeling both lost and confused.

'Joggers Find Baby In Bag' – this was the headline in one of the papers. It grabbed my attention straight away. It was about two women joggers who found a plastic bag with a stillborn baby in it. This happened at the Section 10 night market in Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur. The report said the infant was wrapped in white cloth.

One of the women, Salekhul Ishak, said: "At first, my friend and I ignored the plastic bag

Deputy Commissioner Datuk Muhamad Sabtu Osman stating that the initial investigations showed the baby was only a few hours old.

DOWNRIGHT CRUELTY

I was very troubled by all the details. How can we Malaysians be so cruel nowadays? Dumping babies is becoming a serious problem in our society. Stories of infants being abandoned are increasing. There are many accounts of babies being found along the roadside or, worse, among the rubbish.

No matter what happens, a baby is a living and adorable being. We cannot just abdicate our duties to them once they are born and we are finding it difficult to cope with their needs.

we should treasure them. They are more important than gold and pieces of jewellery.

I want to say this to my elders: when you give birth to a baby, you have to accept your big responsibility.

Always remember the word PARENTS.

Raise your children the best way you can. 'Parents' may be a simple word but it carries huge responsibility and a world of meaning.

I think family planning is also important. Can you afford to have a child – this is an issue. Paying attention to the financial side is a must.

SEEK ADVICE

What if you have the baby already and you are encountering problems? Please consult a counsel-

that my fellow Malaysians will stand up and fight for our next generation. There may be big, big problems in parenting but dumping babies and leaving them among the rubbish is a heinous act, a crime against humanity.

We cannot just sit around and let such awful things continue happening to 'unwanted' children. For those who are already parents or those who plan to start a family - stay strong no matter what difficulties you face.

Do not give up on raising your children. Look after them. Educate them as well.

They are your unique creation.

Yee Xiao Wei Jocelyn
Upper Six Science 4
St Michael's Institution Ipoh.

A SOBER LESSON FOR YUK CHOY STUDENT LEADERS

Teens pay tribute to upstanding citizens who would not have known about sms-ing

In a ceremony fraught with meaning, 50 SMJK Yuk Choy student leaders, in their immaculate uniforms, paid their respects to a significant slice of Perak history recently.

The ceremony was held in the school compound where the memorial for the Pacific war dead stands. The day's focus was the memory of those men and women who perished when Perak was invaded by Japan.

The students had been taught the background to the sober proceedings. They knew that the school buildings were evacuated in 1942

and the compound served as a Japanese military base throughout the occupation years. Yuk Choy re-opened on November 1, 1945, two and a half months after the Japanese surrendered.

BUGLE CALL

Two army personnel, Private Rahim Rahman and Lance Corporal Nor Mohd Ghulam, in full military regalia, were present. They played "The Rouse" and "The Last Post". So the students were also introduced to the bugle call which is usually played following the "The Last Post" at military services. Wreaths were later laid



Tribute to the Perakians who died during World War II, honoured in the monument in the Yuk Choy compound.



Contributing their share: time for "The Rouse" and "The Last Post".

Ipoh Echo speaks to the new Menteri Besar continued from page 3

and reports, as evident in the last election.”

Nizar feels that community newspapers, like *Ipoh Echo*, have an important duty to perform in disseminating local information vital to the masses but so often overlooked by the national dailies due to space constraints.

BE CRITICAL

“By all means be critical. I am for critical, objective reporting, as this is a form of check and balance which was grossly absent in the former administration,” he assured me.

I asked about the controversy that had followed his post-appointment cancelling of fines and compounds issued by local authorities.

He has this to say: “It’s a form of reward for the people for believing in us. It’s a one-off offer. The other concession I have in mind is to provide holders of Temporary Occupation Licences (TOLs) in new villages

and *kampong tersusun* (organised village) with permanent land titles.”

The predicament of these TOL owners is not something new. Some of the licences dated back to 1948 with leases over 30, 60 and 90-year periods.

“I’ll try to resolve this issue quickly based on provisions in the National Land Code and the Perak Land Rules,” he reiterated.

Meanwhile, the state government, Nizar explained, would adopt a gradualist approach in righting the wrongs and make Perak a just and fair society for all its citizens.

POLICY AIMS

“Policies will be in place to reform the administration, curtail cronyism and nepotism and, above all, promote transparency and accountability, he said, adding: “Open tender, creating jobs and promoting economic growth are some of my priorities.”

“I wish to see an active public participation

in the decision-making process.

“At local government level, 30 per cent of the councillors will come from NGOs and professional bodies.”

It is hard to escape initial impressions that having a CEO who is as open as Nizar bodes well for our state. If his promises are anything to go by, Perak could soon be administered very differently from the system we have become used to over the years.

GIVE ME 100 DAYS

“Give me a hundred days and judge me after that,” Nizar requested as my interview with him concluded.

The *Ipoh Echo* is more than happy to do just that.

We’ll be observing developments with intense interest. The 100 days will end on Tuesday, July 8, 2008. Then we’ll once again be knocking on his door.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

These are the leaders who are now answerable to you



YB Ngeh Koo Ham
Finance, Infrastructure, Public Utilities, Non-Islamic Affairs Committee.



YB Nga Kor Ming
Education, Local Government, Housing, Public Transport

YAB Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin
Economic Development, Land, Land Revenue, Natural Resources, Security, Rural Development



YB Thomas Su K. S.
Higher Education, Science, Technology, Communication



YB Chen Fook Chye
National Unity, Intergration, Consumer Affairs

March 29, 2008 marked officially the beginning of a complete, functioning government in the state.

Menteri Besar, Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin, remarked that the exco members were selected based on their individual qualifications, political backgrounds as well as political positions.

All 10 executive council members were then sworn in before the Regent of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, at the Istana Iskandariah in Kuala Kangsar.

Ngeh Koo Ham, the Setiawan assemblyman and senior exco member, said, “We will now make collective decisions by consensus among the three parties for the benefit of the rakyat”.

In a meeting held recently between exco members and other state personnel, Menteri Besar, Mohammad Nizar mentioned that Perak’s new government meetings are held in a “lively, friendly, homely” environment. He further declares, “This is a good start for the state!”

Here, *Ipoh Echo* presents the men and their responsibilities.



YB Seah Leong Peng
Culture, Youth, Sports



YB A. Sivanesan
Health, Environment, Human Resources



YB Jamaluddin Mohd. Radzi
Entrepreneur, Corporate Development, Agriculture, Trade



YB Mohd. Zainuddin
Religious, Islamic Education, Women and Welfare



YB Mohd. Osman
Tourism, Human Development, NGO's



YB Tai Sing Ng
Industrial Development, Information

GOPENG/KAMPAR RED CRESCENT IN POST DIPANG

Rehabilitation can be painstakingly slow.

It gets even slower when the bereaved had very little to start with. This is best illustrated in the plight of the Orang Asli settlers in Post Dipang.

Nearly a dozen years ago, on August 20, 1996, a mudslide after a heavy downpour flooded the settlement and left it covered in mud and debris.

Extensive logging upstream has been blamed for the ghastly episode that took 45 lives.

Members of the Red Crescent took part in the



Red Crescent members with Post Dipang settlers

relief work that followed.

Since 1996, the group has paid visits to Post Dipang to comfort the bereaved and give them as-

sistance.

During their most recent visit, members of the Gopeng/Kampar chapter distributed food parcels.

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Butik Pengantin SuperStar will put up a promotion fair at Giant Hypermarket in Sitiawan from 17th till 23rd April 2008. The first 10 lovely couples who sign up will receive a mystery gift worth RM 300.

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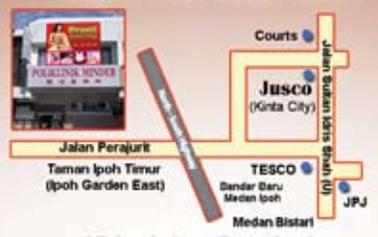
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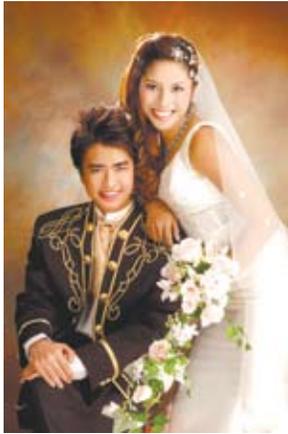
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THINKING ALOUD

On March 30, after launching an MIC divisional leaders workshop, Datuk Sri S. Samy Velu reportedly rebuked the new Governments of Perak, Penang and Selangor for following the National Front's policy of appointing only a single Indian in the State Executive Committees.

As if on cue, the very next day, Siva Subraminiam, newly elected member for Buntong, tendered his resignation from his party apparently for exactly the same reason. The resignation was, however, withdrawn within a few hours. The explanation: He had misunderstood his party's stand on Indian representation. He had apparently been ignorant of other opportunities for Indian representation in state government.

SUPPORTERS AND DETRACTORS

Siva Subraminiam's move found its supporters as well as detractors. One statement that came out during the affair spoke of the intention of appointing an Indian as speaker of the state assembly. This posting was described as 'much higher' than that of a state exco.

One would have thought that selection to positions would have been dictated by merit and ability and not according to race. The impression given is that the current members

of the state government are more interested in allocation of power and position than on fulfilling the promises made to the people who elected them.

Since the elections, focus appears to have been on dividing the spoils of war rather than on strategising solutions for problems that need addressing. If this, indeed, is the situation, one wonders if voters have, by their action, achieved a political cultural change or merely substituted one autocratic power with another.

ONE AUTHORITY FOR ANOTHER?

Perhaps the call to voters to support change was not a call for a change in the terms of relationship between the authority and the people, but merely a change of one authority for another.

Executive Committee positions – or for that matter any government position – should never be seen as purely providing benefits. There are associated burdens involved for those holding public office. These occur not only in the exercising of power, but also in the extended obligation to serve.

For too long, the relationship between elected members and those who elected them has been one of ruler and subject.

This feudal mindset cries out for change. The electorate must truly un-

derstand what 'Makkal Sakti' or 'People's Power' truly means. It is not giving a four year blanket authority to the elected to do what they like. Rather, it is ensuring that the elected devote each and every day of their four year tenure to fulfilling the people's aspirations.

The elected representatives must be made to feel that it is an onerous task they have taken upon themselves. Furthermore, they must understand it is their solemn duty to carry out their responsibilities transparently and, in the end, hold themselves accountable.

NOT RULERS BY SERVANTS

By daring to vote the former opposition into positions of authority the people have taken a bold step. Having moved out of their comfort zone, it is now their duty – indeed their obligation – not only to themselves but to future generations, once and for all, to establish that those elected are not their rulers but their servants who are obligated and accountable to them.

Today Perak has a government that has not been imposed from the top. This government owes its position to no one but the people of this State. If this government fails to deliver, the people of Perak have no one to blame but themselves.

By Siva Pragasam

If the people want to avoid disappointment they cannot wait for four years. By then it would be too late. The government has promised to perform and the people can help them to do this by constantly reminding them of their function and demanding that they fulfil their duty.

A RARE OPENING

Demanding compliance is the culture that separates first world and third world societies. If our society is truly desirous of acquiring a first world mindset they need to acquire this proclivity.

A rare opening has been presented to the people of Perak to redefine the relationship between the people and authority and, hopefully, they will not squander this opportunity.

The government, too, has this extraordinary opportunity to change the political culture of our society by genuinely empowering the masses. Society must be made to truly feel that it is they who ultimately hold the power and not those they have authorised its exercise.

If the current state government succeeds in this mission it would have forever changed our society in a most significant way. After all, what is a two party system but a structure that gives people the power to choose whom they want and to whom they want to delegate their authority.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

STOP THE IMPENDING BLOT ON OUR RIVERSCAPE

The Editor
Ipoh Echo
Ipoh.

Sir:

Ipohites had the first inkling of the Riverside Development project from the previous government's announcement. In time more information emerged.

Apparently, the developer intends to build miniatures of San Francisco's Golden Gate and other similarly famous bridges around the world.

What lunacy is this?

These proposed 'copies' will be a blot on the riverscape. It must pass as the most inappropriate development ever proposed – even by Ipoh standards – with its 'mickey-mouse' shophouses in Tambun and fibre-glass monument (the Stadium roundabout)

and fibre-glass boulders (when we have an abundance of natural rocks) at the Southern gateway to the city.

This "bridges" idea is beyond a joke. The miniatures will be no more than a twelve-month wonder. After that, they will be objects of curiosity. Finally they will become targets of ridicule like carnival freaks.

The Kinta River is one of Ipoh's great natural assets. But for decades now the government has used the it as an open sewer. This must stop.

The Kinta River can be rehabilitated. It can, once again, become a recreational facility as it was, say, forty years ago. Examples from other countries have proved that polluted rivers can be rehabilitated within ten years if proper measures

are taken.

Development along the river must be carried out sensitively. We cannot have piecemeal developments which become eyesores.

In the first place, the government should have invited submissions for the development of the whole riverside area and the winning submission adopted.

Developers should then be invited to build according to the accepted master plan.

To allow developers to propose their own plans is not always wise. Developers are businessmen and the community's interests will always play second fiddle to profit maximisation. While we should welcome investments it must not be development at any cost.

City Hall must make available to the public all

plans for development along the Kinta River. It is very costly if not impossible, to undo mistakes made in developing the riverside area. Therefore we must exercise extra caution.

NGOs and the public in general must voice their objections to this impending disaster.

Ipohites must take their objections to their members of parliament and state assemblymen.

It is about time Ipohites took responsibility for their city. Do not leave things entirely to appointed councillors. Either that, or stop whingeing!

I suggest that *Ipoh Echo* take the lead in getting a citizens' petition together to be presented to the new state government.

Yours truly,

Yin Ee Kiong