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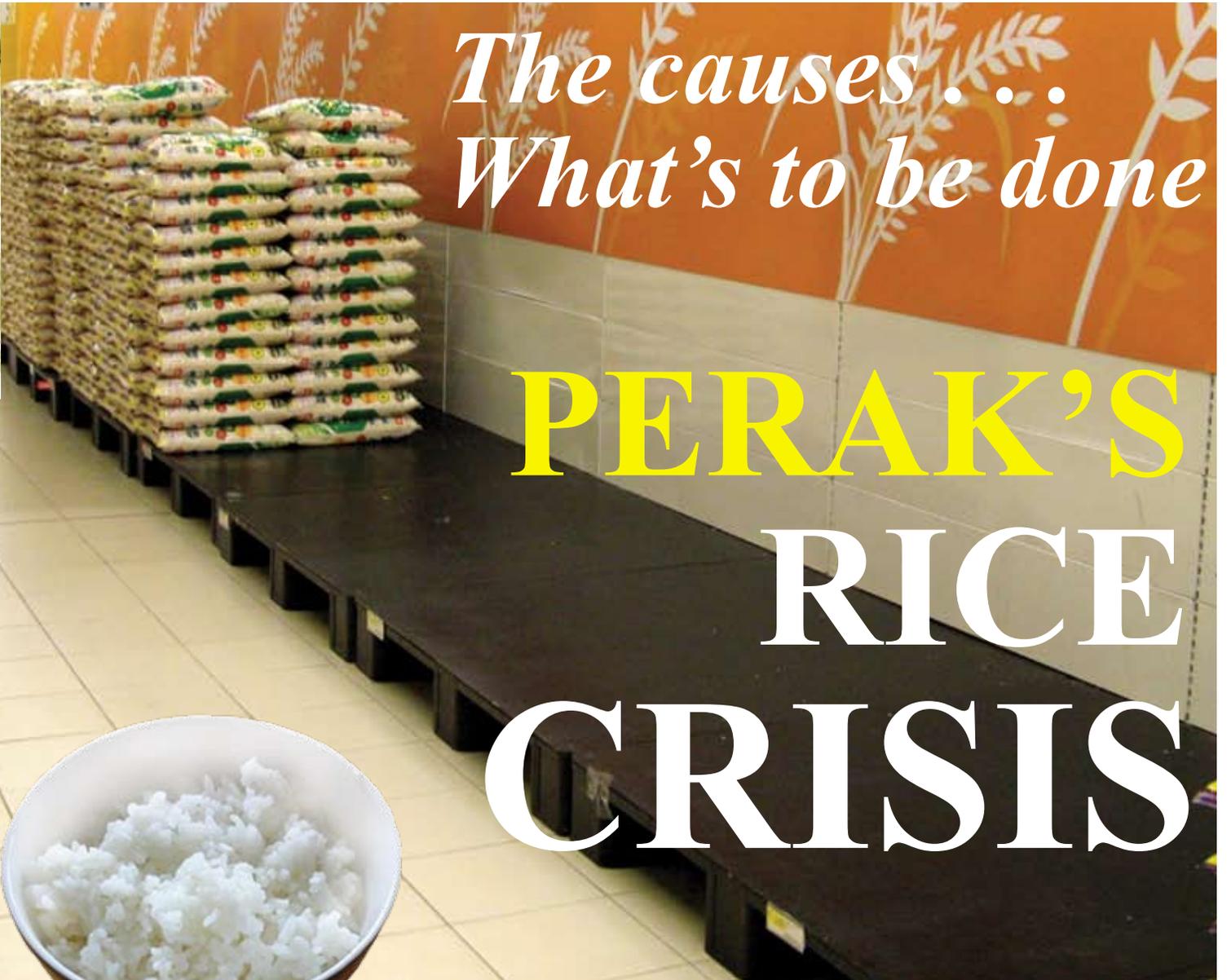
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*The causes . . .
What's to be done*

PERAK'S RICE CRISIS



Ipoh Echo's editor, Fathol Zaman Bukhari, explores the issue on page 3

Photograph by Rosli Mansor

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Snatch theft series, part 3
 By Nisha Devina Roy
 Pictures by Rosli Mansor



WE WARNED OF THE DANGERS. WE EVEN PINPOINTED IPOH'S LATEST PERILOUS 'SNATCH ALLEY' LOCATION NOW, JUST ONE STREET AWAY FROM JLN SEENIVASAGAM, A WOMAN HAS NARROWLY ESCAPED DEATH IN ANOTHER SHOCKING SNATCH THEFT ATTACK.

It was 11.30 am when the 38 year-old woman parked her car near the junction of Jln Leong Sin Nam and Jln Rajah Ekram and prepared to walk a few short steps to the coffee shop located right on that corner.

Having read recent stories on bag snatching published by the *Echo*, the woman realised she was but a street away from Jln Seenivasagam, the latest dangerous "snatch alley" identified by this paper. Instinctively, she held tightly onto her handbag as she made her way carefully around the front of her vehicle.

his left and, with what was obviously a well exercised manoeuvre, secured a firm grip on her handbag.

Instantly, the well practiced rider accelerated away. The resulting vicious impact hurled the woman several metres through the air and brought her crashing to the roadway on her back. Had she tumbled as she fled she might well have landed on her head. Her story, terrifying as it is, could then have been truly tragic.

The victim, an office worker, realising she had her passport, some important personal papers

down Jln Leong Sin Nam, dragging the plucky woman with them as horrified motorists and pedestrians looked on helplessly.

CRUELLY GOUGED

Twenty metres . . . thirty metres . . . forty metres . . . still the woman maintained her hold on the handbag. By this time, though, the rear of her clothing had been ripped away and the skin on her back cruelly gouged by the road surface. Fifty metres . . . sixty metres . . . now the pain of her injured back was becoming too much to bare. Crying out in

Passers-by rushed to her aid. Admitted first to hospital in Ipoh, doctors there advised she be transferred to Kuala Lumpur for more specialist attention. Thankfully, having narrowly cheated death, the woman will fully recover. But she will never forget that lunchtime attack.

THEY WON'T FORGET

As far as shopkeepers along Jln Leong Sin Nam are concerned, they won't forget it either. They will always recall the utter indifference to

there was another one – not as dramatic, perhaps, but in reality appalling just the same.

Forums, discussions and meetings have long been held around Ipoh to address the issue of snatch theft. One such gathering took place on Thursday, April 13, 2006, under the ambitious title: 'Public/Private Sector Co-operation to Prevent Snatch Theft'.

During proceedings, participants were asked to propose possible methods for preventing such crimes. Suggestions were duly noted and submitted to relevant authorities for action.

The result? There has been no result. No meaningful action was undertaken by anybody.

The *Ipoh Echo* feels there is both an obligation and responsibility to disseminate information on crime prevention topics.

What has been recognised during these various attempts to force action on the snatch theft issue is that the police and other agencies must take a far more proactive approach to the problem.



Jln Leong Sin Nam where the 38 year old female office worker was dragged almost 80 metres in a violent attack to snatch her bag. The red line marks the attack path.

Suddenly a motorcycle, with engine racing and two crash-helmeted thugs aboard, swerved into Jln Leong Sin Nam from Jln Rajah Ekram and headed straight for her. In a fraction of a second the bike was level with the woman. As it flashed by the pillion passenger lent to

and cash in her bag hung on grimly in the hope the two snatch thieves might abandon their raid when faced with determined opposition.

But the thugs had no such intention. Instead, in total disregard of their victim's life they further accelerated, careering on

anguish and unable to take further punishment she let go her precious bag. She had been dragged for almost 80 metres. As the woman, her back bleeding profusely, lay in agony on the centre of the roadway the victorious thugs rode off in triumph with their booty.

life and limb exhibited by the two snatch theft thugs. But they will, by force of circumstance, be relegating this incident to the list of similar attacks that regularly take place in that part of town. Indeed, two days later, in exactly the same section of Jln Leong Sin Nam,

PROPOSALS

Among several proposals put forward for consideration by authorities have been:

- The construction of pedestrian-friendly walkways with railings along road-sides. These railings should act as barriers between snatch thieves and pedestrians.
- The introduction of strategically placed closed circuit TV cameras (CCTV).

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From the Editor's Desk

By Fathol Zaman Bukhari

Sadly, that's only part of the picture.

Walk into any supermarket or retail shop in any population centre across our state and you'll be hard pressed even to locate supplies of Grade B rice, wheat flour and cooking oil.

Shelves reserved for these items are now virtually empty. There are, of course, exceptions. High-end brands remain generally available. As long as you can meet the staggering price increases. Reality is, though, that many of us simply can't.

Locally produced Grade B rice (better known as "Super Tempatan") – incidentally, a controlled commodity with a secured price of RM1.60 a kg – seems to have vanished from the shelves.

Local and imported Siamese super grade rice is available although not as plentiful as before. A 10 kg packet of imported super grade Siamese rice now costs RM35. A few days previously, it was RM25.

A MIND-BOGGLING INCREASE

A 10 kg packet of Siamese fragrant rice, on the other hand, costs a mind-boggling RM47. A week earlier, it was RM30.

Retailers confirm that prices of local and imported super grade rice, across the board, have gone up by more than 50 per cent. The scarcity of Grade B rice and the spiraling cost of local and imported Super Grade rice have seriously dented the budgets of local wage-earners.

Prices change so of-

ten that Tesco, Giant and Econsave, the more prominent supermarkets in Ipoh, now exclude references to rice, and to a lesser extent, cooking oil and wheat flour, in their weekly flyers and on their notice boards. Unless remedial action is taken to stem the tide, public reaction could prove particularly awkward for a Federal government still recovering from aftershocks of the March 8 election.

So what is the root cause of this phenomenon? It centres on a global development. Thailand, Vietnam and India comprise the world's three top rice exporting nations. As a result of increased home-front demands, both India and Vietnam have decided to stop selling rice on the world market.

SOLE MARKET PLAYER

The artificial shortage brought about by the restriction causes prices to rise dramatically. A metric ton of rice, presently, has surpassed the USD1,000 (RM3,200) mark. Thailand, being the sole market player remaining, is raking in profits never before imagined. The price has almost tripled in a matter of months. It was only USD 371 (RM1187) last year.

But there are other factors that must be taken into account.

Crude oil prices, for example, breached the psychological barrier of USD 100 (RM320) a barrel in November 2007. Its current price hovers in the region of USD 132 (RM422). The high cost of fossil fuel has

prompted consuming nations to source for cheaper alternatives.

Bio-fuel is the "in thing" today. Bio-diesel extracted from oil palm, coconut, vegetable oil and the Jatropha seeds, indigenous to the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia, can help reduce global reliance on fossil fuel. Moreover, bio-fuel is cleaner and produces less pollutants, unlike petroleum.

Some American and even Chinese companies



Challenging times for Shamsuddin

are promoting this new alternative in a big way and are going on joint ventures with oil companies in countries like Indonesia, Nigeria and Malaysia. More lands are being opened up for the cultivation of these biofuel-producing plants.

And here's the rub. Trends in seeking cheaper sources of energy have a negative impact on the production of cooking oil for the local market. When less is produced for consumption, prices invariably go up. It is a simple case of supply and demand. When demand outstrips supply a shortage is created causing prices to rise.

Price increases affect

people differently. The reaction of manufacturers and consumers differ as their needs are at odds with one another. End-users, inevitably, lose out in this unending battle of wits. Manufacturers, not surprisingly, will endeavour to maximise profits. They have no compunction to cheat in order to gain. The scarcity of Grade B rice, a controlled item, is the direct result of this insatiable desire to profit. Rice millers are known to mix low with high grade rice. They then pass off the combined product as "high grade". Since prices of high grade rice are not controlled, a hefty profit results from such shenanigans.

TWO CASES

What is the social impact of price increases on Malaysians? Let us examine two typical cases involving two families on one end of the social spectrum.

Shamsuddin bin Itam Abdullah, 68, is a long time resident of Kampong Pisang in Malim Nawar. He is the sole breadwinner of his family and has been doing odd jobs since his early teens. In the morning he works at his fishmonger friend's stall at the town's wet market. Later in the day he does minor repair work for anyone requiring his services in the kampong.

Shamsuddin earns between RM500 to RM700 a month.

"It's difficult to make ends meet these days. The price of rice has gone up astronomically," he complained. "The 10 kg Cap Rambutan cost RM 17 a

Empty shelves . . . rising prices

RICE IN CRISIS



The price of rice throughout Perak has not just risen dramatically . . . it has skyrocketed beyond reason! And there's little consolation in being told it's the same across Malaysia, indeed, internationally



The quality of Maizon's roti canai remains unchanged, but her profit margins keep shrinking.

year ago, today it is RM27. This is too much."

Lower-income groups naturally favour the Grade B variety, which has a higher percentage of broken rice. Still, it is decidedly more affordable.

A couple of years ago it was possible for Shamsuddin to save a little from his meagre earnings. Today, however, he hardly has enough to see his family through. "The spiraling cost of living has affected my lifestyle. Najib told us to tighten our belts. How am I to do so when I barely have enough to survive," he sighed. Shamsuddin blamed the authorities for not coming down hard on unscrupulous, profiteering traders. "I think they are hoarding some of the essential foodstuffs and we consumers are paying for it," he lamented.

Another resident who is affected by rising costs is Puan Maizon binte Dollah, 44 a single mother of two school-going kids. Maizon, however, is more fortunate than Shamsuddin. She is in the food business having

acquired the skills to make *roti canai* while living in Kuala Lumpur in the mid-1980s. Since 1990, she has been operating a hawker stall at the Malim Nawar wet market. Maizon's stall has a steady stream of customers but she considers the morning market hours as her peak period.

"I make an average of 200 *roti canai* a day but more on weekends and holidays" she said. "The price of wheat flour has gone up three times in the last six months. A 25 kg bag now costs RM69.30".

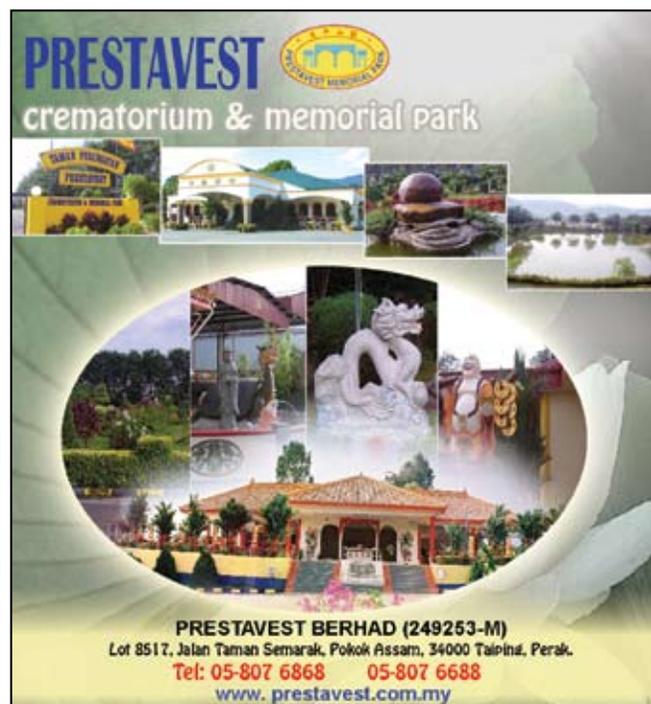
PRICING WORRIES

In spite of the escalating cost she finds it hard to increase the price of her *roti canai* for fear of losing her customers. "Most of them are labourers and lowly-paid office workers. They have been patronising my stall since the day I moved here. If costs go up further I may have to revise the price," she moaned.

A food crisis looms on the horizon. If or when

Continued on page 12

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No 1 Jalan Lasam
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Ridzuan
Tel: (605) 249 5936
Fax: (605) 255 2181
E-Mail: ipohecho.ndr@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

Fathol Zaman Bukhari
Nisha Devina Roy

GRAPHIC DESIGN/
PHOTOGRAPHY

Rosli Mansor Hj. Ahmad
Razali

MARKETING &
DISTRIBUTION
MANAGER

Ramesh Kumar

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EDITORIAL

A DATE TO REMEMBER

It is fitting and proper to commemorate significant dates in history. Indeed, it is right that important events of the past should be well and widely recognised as they inevitably form the basis of our attitudes toward life going forward.

Thus, of particular interest this month to Malaysians nationwide – and with special relevance for Perakians – will be June 16. On this day, 60 years ago, the British colonial authorities in Kuala Lumpur imposed an “Emergency” against local Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) insurgents.

The term “Emergency” was a purposeful misnomer. In reality, it was a disguised declaration of war. Less dramatic terminology was deemed necessary by the British in order to assist businessmen in the thriving rubber and tin industries. Under a formal war declaration, insurance companies would have flatly refused to meet losses incurred by any form of military activity.

These were unquestionably dramatic days and Perak found itself at the epicentre of the initial action. On June 16, 1948, three European planters – Arthur Walker, aged 50, John Allison, 55, and Ian Christian, 21 – were shot dead by communist insurgents on two rubber estates along the Lintang road, north of Sungei Siput. Immediately Britain declared an Emergency across the states of Perak and Johore and outlawed the MCP. Within 24 hours the Emergency had been widened to encompass the entire Malayan peninsula.

The bitter guerrilla campaign that followed, fought primarily through hinterland jungle, would drag on for the next 12 years. A heavily indebted Britain, struggling to establish financial equilibrium on the home front after horrendous costs incurred during World War 11, was ultimately forced to seek military assistance for her Malayan anti-communist campaign from Commonwealth member nations.

Australia first became involved in 1950 when the

Royal Australian Air Force provided a limited number warplanes and operational personnel. However, it took another five years before Aussie ground forces were introduced to the conflict. Historical documents confirm that Britain, to this point, had been loath to introduce significant numbers of Australian or New Zealand troops for fear of having her “influence and prestige” among the “Asiatic races” whittled down.

The first Australian ground forces to be deployed in an anti-communist role here arrived in 1955. They were designated 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR). In the following years Australian forces would be involved in numerous search and destroy operations alongside local and other Commonwealth troops.

Like all wars, propaganda played a major role in the Malayan Emergency. Both sides used it to motivate their troops. Both sides used it to justify the actions they were taking at the time.

Both sides suffered casualties.

A number of European and local miners, planters and police personnel were also killed. They are interred at the Batu Gajah Christian cemetery (God’s Little Acre). Beginning 1972 the sacrifices of these men were honoured in a simple ceremony which, over the years, has grown in size and stature.

The 60th Anniversary of the declaration of the Malayan Emergency will be remembered this year when veterans from the armed forces of Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Nepal, Fiji and Malaysia gather at God’s Little Acre, Batu Gajah, on Saturday, June 14, 2008.

Memories, understandably, will be primarily of those who gave their lives for the cause. It is to be hoped that thoughts of full and final reconciliation will also have their place in the minds of attendees.

The *Ipoh Echo* will provide full coverage of this event.

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THINKING ALOUD

TIME TO MOVE ON

Nearly three months have passed since Malaysia elected its government. Yet an atmosphere of political uncertainty still hovers and the overall impression is that of a national government yet to recover from the March 8 event’s hangover.

Grappling with the concept of having to work with a simple majority in Parliament and five opposition state governments, Federal authorities are projecting a forlorn image: one of loss to an overall opposition win.

This has led to a notion that the leader of the party in power has been unsuccessful. In parallel have come calls by ruling party members for the leader to step down. An already complex situation is further compounded by the opposition leader proclaiming his coalition will be assuming control within the brief time frame of a year.

SCANT COMFORT

The relentless political power play underway is delivering scant comfort to the ordinary citizen who, above all, desires both stability and direction.

The current state of play is, of course, a novel experience for the party which has been dominant since independence.

Somewhere beneath its current highly confused façade must be a basic realisation that it has actually won, continues in power and holds government with a majority that would be the envy of many political parties in power across the developed world.

In developed nations, where changes of government are the rule rather than the exception, what occurred in Malaysia on March 8 would have been considered a massive victory.

THE SERIOUS
BUSINESS

The problem arises from a failure to separate party politics from government. In a democracy, political parties are but a means to participate in a process to attain the position to govern. But once this process is over, party politics give way to the serious business of governing. Only in autocratic societies do political parties play a more significant role than the electorate.

Little or no purpose is going to be served by attempting to identify who, in our country, is to blame. The fact is the world is changing and Malaysia is an active participant in this evolving process.

VICTIM OF SUCCESS

As the country progresses towards becoming a developed nation it is transforming into a more informed, confident and enlightened society. In a sense the ruling party could be said to be a victim of its own success. Reality is that a two party system is the hallmark of developed nations and this nation is rapidly progressing towards such a situation.

The challenge for the future is not to re-emerge as the sole dominating party again but to become one of two dominating parties. What is noteworthy is that before the elections fears were expressed that widespread mismanagement would result should the opposition acquire power.

Today the same voices are articulating that if new managements in the five states do well it may be difficult to dislodge them.

This is unquestionably

a healthy development as the desire of all citizens, regardless of their political affiliations, is for the emergence of a fair, just and progressive society.

HISTORY TO JUDGE

History will judge Pak Lah’s contribution to the nation. Meanwhile, one thing is certain, it has been his liberal values that have emboldened Malaysian civic society and empowered individuals.

The election result is irrefutable evidence of this. As the world becomes more globalised, it is the ability of individuals to perform in a global arena that will define a nation’s progress.

Malaysians have been very fortunate in having Prime Ministers that fit the time. Whereas Dr Mahathir established a progressive identity for the nation, it is Pak Lah who must be given credit for creating an environment for its people to justify the identity.

Having put the Nation on a path to liberalisation it would be unwise to turn back. Liberalisation must continue and people empowerment has to be enhanced. Once these goals

By Siva Pragasam

are achieved true democracy will have been firmly embedded.

With this will come confidence, creativity, innovativeness and other modern tools essential for progress in the new world.

The fact is, Pak Lah is not just the leader of the party but of the nation as well. Stepping down usually occurs when a party has lost, not when it has won. By undermining Pak Lah’s authority, it is the whole nation that loses.

NOT THE WAY

The only way the opposition party could take power before the end of the year is if there are crossovers. This is hardly a good way to form a government if there is serious intent to be one of the players in a two party system long term.

Enough is enough. In a world that is beset with all kinds of social and economic challenges it is high time the warring parties shift their focus from trying to acquire more power to resourcefully using the power they already possess for the benefit of the people they have promised to serve.

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ISSUES TO WATCH

LET'S NOW TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE What about the Gugusan Manjoi Project?



The Mydin hypermarket . . . on or off?

A RM300-million scheme in Kampong Manjoi now appears to be in limbo. Towards the end of 2004, the former Menteri Besar of Perak, Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli launched the Gugusan Manjoi Project. The ambitious plan was to be completed in five years, an undertaking supposedly under the aegis of Perak State Economic Development Corporation (SEDC).

Big things were promised: a bus station, a hospital, a police station, a stadium, food courts and a recreational centre. By 2007, only the new District Land Office in Kampong Sungai Tapah, a stadium and a few shop lots were available. (See *Ipo Echo*, December 1-15, 2007).

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi re-launched what

appeared to be a halting dream in October, 2007. Shortly after, the plot next to the Land Office was fenced up and posters announced the opening



No sign of the promised shop houses

of Mydin wholesale department store in 2008. Along Jalan Raja, a signboard was set-up, this time promising seven units of 2-storey shop houses. A multi-purpose community centre was about to rise in Jalan Tengku Hussin – well, that's what the signboard said, backed up by the fence that enclosed the vacant piece of land.

We are halfway

through 2008. Most of the zinc fencing at the Mydin store site has disappeared. There are no signs of construction. On Wednesday evenings, the plot is transformed into a night market. *Ipo Echo* has been informed that an opinion poll is being conducted on whether or not a Mydin store should be located there. Who then was responsible for the premature announcement?

The proposed shop lots have not materialised either. The site for the planned community centre was being cleared, but the work has stopped.

Is the Perak SEDC still behind the project? To whom should the residents of Kampong Manjoi address their enquiries?

They wish to be enlightened.

A. Jeyaraj

STOP THIS FOOD COURT!

Why there's no need for another eatery where Perkim wants to locate it

MBI should consult the residents in the Maxwell Road, Jalan Pari and Labrooy Road area before proceeding with yet another food outlet there.

A spot-check on this already congested location will prove that Perkim should not be given the go-signal for its proposed

lems and result in traffic gridlock. The vacant piece of land is not ample to accommodate both stalls and parking bays. As is, despite the traffic light junction, Maxwell Road gets jammed.

Also, is there a need for another eatery in this location? Just across Maxwell Road and a stone's throw

along Labrooy Road.

The Perkim signboard is worrying residents who say that there are too many eateries in what is essentially a housing area. They certainly see NO NEED for a food court. They wish MBI would visit the area and realise much thought should be given to proposals that only add to resi-



The proposed site is too small.



The location is already congested.

food court. A signboard has sprouted, at the junction of Maxwell Road and Jalan Pari, announcing Perkim's intentions. The planned food court, to be sited on a plot of land opposite the Syariah Court, is sure to add more parking prob-

lems from the Perkim project are two restaurants, one Malay, the other Indian Muslim. Along Jalan Labrooy, there are a number of eating-places. In the afternoons, hawkers set up food stalls along Bulatan Cherry while night hawker stalls operate

dents' aggravations.

If Perkim wants to set up a food court, the most suitable location is the piece of land next to the Sungai Pari Bridge along Jalan Raja in Kampong Manjoi. There is a need for a food outlet there.

A J

OUR CONCERNS

CONTINUING TALES OF STRUGGLE

There is an urgent need for the government to review the "poverty line"

Siti, a single parent with two retarded children and an ailing 90 year-old mother is surveying the mess the knee-deep flood has left for her to attend in a shanty in Ulu Kinta.

Siti has been seeking help from the Social

Reports often point to the fall in absolute poverty levels in Malaysia from 29 per cent in 1980 to about 5-6 per cent in 2000. How accurate are these figures? The income threshold for poverty line demarcation currently used

In Britain and other EU countries, the poverty line is defined as one half the average household income. In Malaysia, the average household income is RM3,200 per month. If we used the British definition, households earning less



Rani with her children and her grandmother. The struggling mother tries to foster family values in her children.



Welfare Department but since she draws a monthly income of RM400 as a domestic help, she doesn't meet the criteria set by the department.

In Buntong, Rani sighs as she stares at the muddy trickle from her tap. Well, at least, no frog has startled her yet. Rani has lived in the estate all her life. She struggles on with no water supply from LAP and no electricity.

Siti and Rani are among the increasing number of Malaysians who feel left out and marginalised.

There is little welfare support for low-income Malaysians like Siti and Rani who are finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet.

in Peninsular Malaysia is a monthly household income of RM510 (US\$134). This figure is unrealistic given the high cost of living.

NOT POOR!

In the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP) the poverty line for Peninsular Malaysia is set at RM540 per month for a family of five. Is this a realistic figure? Can a family of five survive on an income of RM540 per month, given the cost of living in Malaysia today? Where would they live? And can their children go to school? Given the government's definition, they are not classified as poor and, therefore, are not entitled to welfare assistance.

than RM1,600 per month would be considered poor.

The Social Welfare Department gives financial assistance only to those with a family income of RM350 and below. They do not provide any assistance to those who own even the cheapest low-cost house. A single parent who earns RM500, struggling to sustain a family of five, is not qualified to apply for financial assistance because he/she is NOT considered poor.

Again, the question: where do people like Siti and Rani go for help? Does our Caring Society care enough for them? Or do we just shut our eyes and hearts?

Cecilia Chan

FRIENDS IN NEED

Buddies see requirement to educate society about the scourge of HIV/AIDS

A forum on HIV/AIDS was organised last month by Perak Women for Women. The Buddies Society Ipoh led by Cik Afizah Bani Hashim and Ms Prithy led the discussions.

The symposium tackled many points, among them: What can society do to make life more bearable for HIV/AIDS sufferers? What can be done to change society's mindset towards them, an attitude which is largely based on ignorance?

Working hand in hand with Perak Women for Women, the Buddies Society has identified these as the primary causes in the spread of HIV/AIDS: a general lack of knowledge of HIV/AIDS among members of the community and inadequate sex education. More and more young people, seduced by western values, indulge in

sexual activities without adequate knowledge or information on 'safe sex'.

Sufferers are also reluctant 'to own up' because of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. This is a major hurdle and the participants in the



Dr Sharifah, PWW president

forum examined society's negative attitudes towards sufferers. There is also the problem of explaining the issue to very conservative pockets of rural villagers.

The Perak Women for

Women and Buddies recognise the uphill task but Doctor Sharifah, President of PWW, feels that society should not give up. She believes that, through education and persistence, society will be enlightened and thus become more compassionate. A few foreign exchange students who participated in the forum agreed. According to them, the stigma exists even in western countries although discrimination is not as obvious as it is in Asia.

It was also agreed that better sex education and a more open discussion of the nature of HIV/AIDS will help.

Buddies Ipoh is comprised of volunteers. Interested parties may call Buddies Society of Ipoh, Perak on 05-5499106 or email them at hivbuddiesipoh@yahoo.com.

Sue Mah

REMEMBRANCES OF A SIMPLER TIME

Foo Pak Khean revisits his 'insular and protected' childhood

Being born in 1940 makes me an old man, I suppose. Long past middle-age. I am perplexed, therefore, when I am urged "to grow up" by friends and my wife each time I commit a faux pas. I am of two minds about her admonitions. Could it be that she still glimpses some youthfulness in me? A man is entitled to some wishful thinking.

At my age, I keep a relatively large storehouse of memories which I revisit now and then. Somehow the exercise puts the present in the right perspective. Today brings both anxiety and consolation. So did the past. It came with both joy and sorrow.

THE WAR YEARS

My earliest memories were of the Pacific War. We had gone to Singapore where my father had hoped to get us on a boat to India. This was pre-empted by the Japanese invasion. My uncle and his family were luckier. So our family stayed in Aunt Rosalind's father's house in Cairnhill Circle. The war touched our young lives. My parents told us that our driver Chelliah had been killed in a bombing raid. We heard of a distant relative being given the "water treatment" for the minor offence of not bowing to a Japanese soldier. The

explanation of the punishment – a hose inserted in the mouth and a Japanese guard jumping on one's water-logged stomach – was so dispiriting to us. This relative survived the ordeal but developed a life-long phobia of water. Food, I recall, was

to our visits to the mines. We were too young to appreciate the seriousness of the events unfolding about us. We just thought it was very exciting to be in a car with a sub-machine gun toting guard who sat next to the driver. My father sat with us and we knew he

garden. We were always climbing them for fruit. Since we were not allowed to venture out of the compound, it was Kheng Leong who crossed the road to buy us *chee cheong fun, yau yee oon choy*, etc. In those days, our 20¢ went a long way. Kheng Leong always did our bidding then as I was bigger than he was. But, of course, he eventually outgrew me, became a six-footer and went on to be a renowned horse trainer.

Falim House was a very lively place for a child. My father always had visitors and there were frequent dinner parties. These get-togethers were catered by the famous Kum Loong Restaurant (Golden Dragon).

A MEMORY

I have one particular memory about those gatherings. Once, while a suckling pig was being roasted, there was a big explosion. Part of the cement floor in the kitchen disintegrated from the intense heat. Our elders must have been disturbed. But to us, children, it was part of the fun.

We were too young to join the dinners but we could follow the proceedings from our upstairs bedrooms.

We doze off to the sound of clinking glasses and laughter.

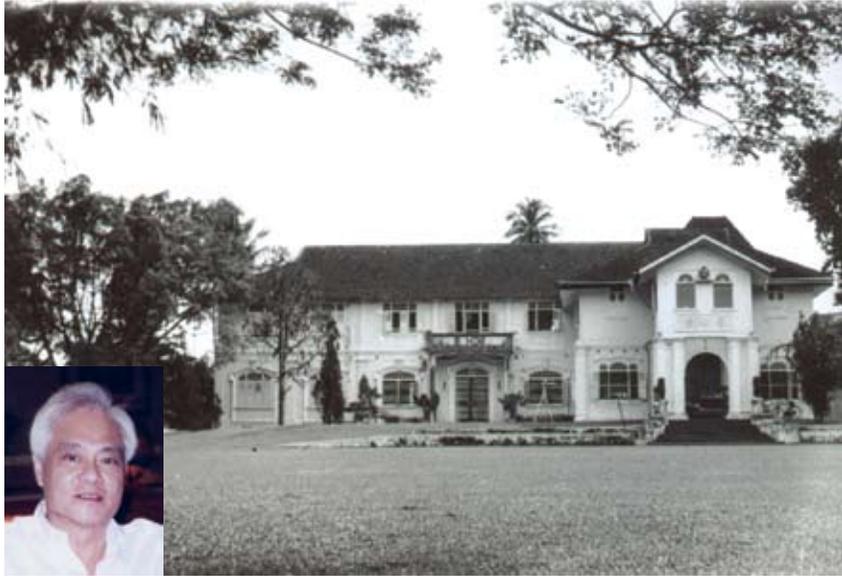
My father was a good drinker and the dinners lasted till the wee hours. Hennessy was the preferred brandy.

There was no extravagance as XO, only VSOP. Life was much simpler then.

PROTECTED

Of school days, I have one word: uneventful. I did not participate in any sports. We led a very insular and protected life. There were the usual private tutoring sessions – would you call them memorable?

My friend Chong Kheng Leong would cycle from his home in Pasir Puteh to Falim to be with us. There was an abundance of fruit trees in the 26-acre



Above: Falim House. . . a lively place for children. Inset: the author recalls times of fun and laughter.

scarce. My father made us eat ground eggshells as supplement for strong bones. I remember a cow he called Minima – she provided us much needed milk.

There always lurked fear. I have vivid memories of running to the basement for shelter whenever the air raid warning sounded. We were always escorted by our many aunts. We never heard any bomb exploding though.

The cow Minima survived the war. Leong Yew Koh (later Tun Leong Yew Koh, first Governor of Malacca) started a farm and asked my father whether Minima could graze on his property. My father obliged. We visited Minima on the farm. We would call out to her and she would amble up to us and eat bananas off our hands.

The visits to Minima would pale when compared



Perak Pioneer
Established in
1894
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most widely
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newspaper in the
F.M.S.'

Editorial

The action of the higher powers that be of the F.M.S., in vetoing the holding of the Ipoh Convent Lottery, has come in for much adverse criticism, on sundry grounds of law, equity and justice. On the one hand the upholders of the last order have proceeded to the length of questioning the legality of the original order of the British Resident sanctioning the holding of the said lottery, though consent had

been given to the same.

The apologists of the present order maintain that some modern Solon has discovered that the action of the British Resident in 'sanctioning' the lottery was ultra vires, in that he authorised the holding of a lottery which was declared illegal by the law of the land. It is contended on the other side that a careful consideration of the Lotteries Order in Council will clearly demonstrate the fact that the British Resident had undoubtedly

acted in the exercise of the prerogative and privileges conferred upon him, in virtue of the same. By clause 1 of section 1 of the said order, three Chinese lotteries mentioned therein by name, have been declared to be illegal and the Resident has been empowered to declare any other lottery to be illegal. In pursuance of the powers thus vested in him, the British Resident issued a subsequent notification proclaiming that all lotteries shall be illegal. If

FROM MY ALBUM

STAMP COLLECTING BY QUICKSILVER

Allow me to begin this second column by saying that I haven't mastered stamp collecting.

To date, I remain merely a mortal with a passion for history. I simply relish the study of different eras and, to me, one of the more enjoyable ways of journeying through years past is through the collection of postage stamps.

I assure those of you who are considering collecting stamps – you will neither grow old nor become a bore. How can humble postage stamps be the core of a discovery tour that begins from early colonial days to the formation of an independent nation?

If only stamps could talk.

In 1854, the East India Company issued postage stamps for the colonies under their jurisdiction. These were commonly known as stamps of INDIA and were issued for use in the Straits Settlements. An example is featured here:



The only method of identifying if these Indian stamps were used in the Straits Settlements is to examine their postmarks. But this was quite confusing as certain post offices in India had 'chops' similar to those used in Penang, Malacca and Singapore.

However, in 1856, a new type of cancellation was introduced to make identification of the stamps used within the Straits Settlements easier.

The cancellations consisted of four-lined octagons with a large B and a number below it. The numbers identified 172 was reserved for Singapore, 147 for Penang and 109 for Malacca. The samples below illustrate the cancellation types.



Variations continued to be used until the decline of the East India Company and the transfer of the Straits Settlements as crown colonies under the Secretary of State for the Colonies on April 1, 1867. For the first time, The Straits Settlements had their own postal stamps. Three of the complete issue are pictured below.



This provisional issue used the stamps of India overprinted with a crown and surcharged in cents to distinguish it from the Indian issues.

I still recall my excitement at having secured the issues – this was the beginning of our country's postal history, which clearly defined the Straits Settlements as a crown colony. At the request of Colonel Ord, Governor Designate Straits Settlement, serious preparations were put into action to create a distinct permanent issue.

Next time, I'll talk about the story of that First Permanent Issue.

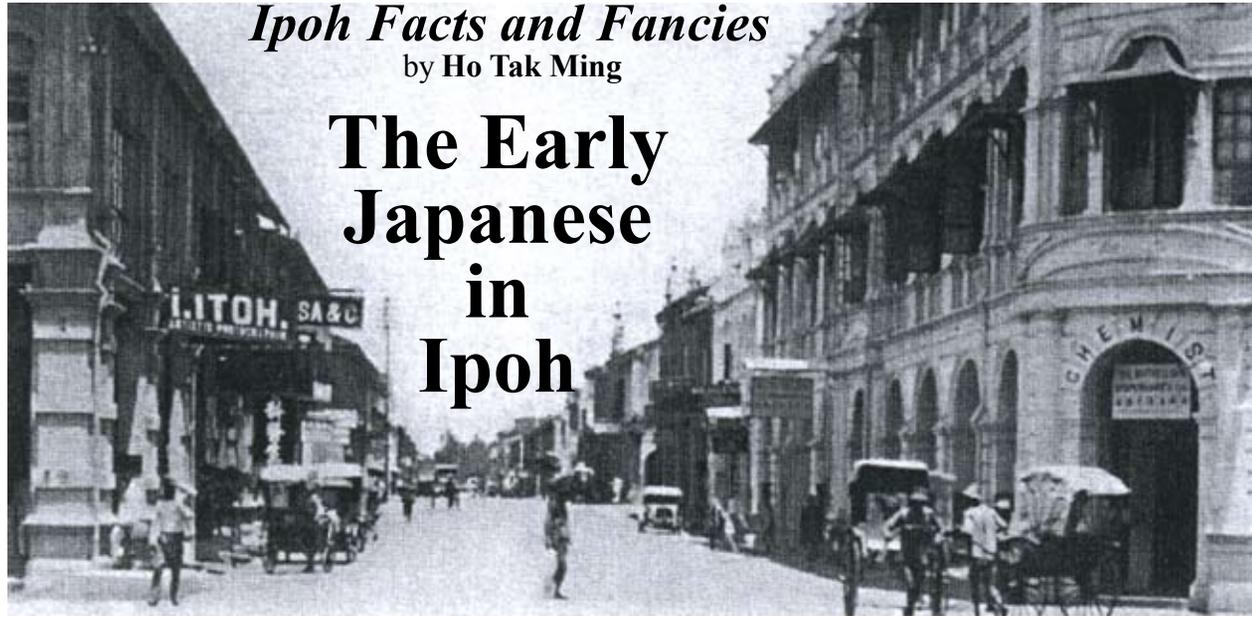
THE WAY IT WAS . . . 100 YEARS AGO

the actual situation nobody would have had the least hesitation in describing the so-called 'sanction' as illegal. But clause 2 of section 1 of the Order provides that the Resident may exempt any lottery, whether mentioned in the Order in Council, or any others included in any subsequent prohibitory order, from the operation of the prohibitory Order in Council. What might be styled officially as 'sanction' was, in legal parlance, merely an exemption order passed by the British Resident in the exercise of his unfettered statutory discretion under the Order in Council. It would eventually happen to be that only those who are responsible for having illegally trespassed upon the undoubted prerogatives of the British Resident, will be finally held liable for all the damages arising from the adoption of a course of action, which to our thinking, cannot be justified by legal or judicial precedents.

Ipoh Facts and Fancies

by Ho Tak Ming

The Early Japanese in Ipoh



One community in Ipoh that was enterprising far in excess of its numbers was the Japanese.

In 1892, when a cart road was built between Batu Gajah and Ipoh, the Japanese residents of Kinta started a pony bus, drawn by two ponies, between the two towns. This service superseded the bullock bus that had hitherto been the usual mode of transport.

The first person to introduce the silent movies to Ipoh was a Japanese, Matsuo, whose cinematograph company came to town in August 1906. It played, as we have recorded in an earlier *Ipoh Facts and Fancies* column, for a record seven weeks before moving to the next town.

1,500 SEAT THEATRE

When R. L. Corbett set up his Ipoh Cinematograph Co at Yau Tet Shin's theatre in Anderson Road in 1910, K Harima, a well-known cinematograph exhibitor in Singapore, lost no time in building a thoroughly up-to-date theatre nearby capable of seating 1,500 people. This was the third cinema hall in the chain that he built throughout Singapore and Malaya.

Competitiveness, it seems, has always been the catchword of the Japanese businessman.

In 1912, there were three bus companies plying the lucrative Ipoh-Gopeng route - the Straits and FMS Motor Bus Company, Wearne Brothers Ltd and Cherry and Co. When

the then Federal Motor and Cycle Co started this route in 1909, it charged five cents per mile, or fifty cents for the ten-mile trip.

Cherry and Co was started by C. T. Harada in 1911, offering motorcar and motorcycle repairs in its garage. When it wanted to break into the Ipoh-Gopeng bus route, it lowered the fare to five cents for the entire one-way trip, starting a "price war" that benefited the consumers.

Unwittingly it sparked off the tourism industry in Ipoh as many, who had no business in Gopeng, took advantage of the low fare to visit the neighbouring town on pleasure trips.

The small Japanese community was represented by a number of professionals, including a doctor, Dr. K. Matsutake, who ran a hospital for Japanese prostitutes, a dental surgeon, Dr. H. Simoyama, a tattooer, T. Jono ("tattooing done on any part of the body to desired design, safety from after effects guaranteed"), a masseuse, Mrs. Kawano, a jujitsu exponent, Prof. Y. R. Merakami, a hairdresser, T. Tasaka, a tailor, Yamatoya, and of course, any number of expert photographers.

There were three excellent Japanese photographic studios in Ipoh. Itoh and Furuse were located at 101-103, Belfield Street, the Mikasa, 93-95, Belfield Street, and Nara's Elite Art Studio at 2, Hale Street. M. Nara was the town's photographer *par excellence*, having studied



Top photo: Ipoh's early 1900's Japanese commercial sector - Belfield Street. And the same street today.

in London and France. As a result he was, in effect, the official photographer at all the main formal functions.

The following published notation gives an insight into the position he enjoyed within the local community.

"Mr. Nara, the well-known photographer, is the leader of the Japanese community of Ipoh. He is going to Taiping to photograph the lake and the Taiping hills. The photos will be sent to Japan to be enlarged and coloured."

Yet, in spite of its dynamism, the sobering reality of the Japanese community in Ipoh was that it was preponderantly female, and that most of the women were "ladies of the night."

MALE COOLIES

They took advantage of the fact that the local population was largely made up of male coolies from China who arrived without their womenfolk. Their only recourse to female companionship came via the brothels.

The 1911 Census figures provide quite astounding figures as far as the local Japanese population was concerned. They showed there were 337 Japanese males and 1,692 Japanese females in the Federated Malay States. Not all the Japanese women came over willingly. Poverty at home forced many Japanese parents to sell their daughters as waitresses

in teahouses, which, in a number of cases, led to their being sent overseas as prostitutes.

It was noted at the time:

"The Japanese Hotel in Ipoh is a thinly-veiled front for a house of ill-repute. There is a slave trade of girls between Japan and Malaya to feed the Japanese brothels in the country."

Nonetheless, the Japanese community in Ipoh was a thriving one and in 1911 raised \$2,500 to stage a "procession of Japanese ladies" in their national costume and a fireworks display as part of the Coronation Celebrations of King George V. Indeed, it could be said that the community was a pillar of the local society.

One of the smallest communities in Ipoh has formed the Japanese Sei Yei Association.

They have come to regard themselves not as isolated and individual traders here only for their own profit and advantage but realising that they represent a definite nationality, have decided to form an association. One of the pleasantest features of this country is the way in which the different nationalities are able to meet together and harmonise and fraternise with one another.

Of course, 30 years later social commentators were viewing the Japanese of that time very differently.



Ipoh's Japanese cemetery, Jalan Sungai Pari



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Musings by See Foon Chan-Koppen



See Foon

I wonder how many of you readers out there turn on your television the moment you wake up? Or reach for the newspaper with your cup of coffee or tea, thereby starting your day with a full dose of all that's wrong in our world?

Newspapers and television news channels thrive on bad news. A "Boy scout helps old lady across street" headline may raise a few nods of approval, but it is the sweaty palms and the adrenalin rush that keep viewers riveted to the box as they watch the aftermath of a bomb blast somewhere in the world. Good news doesn't sell! And as lambs to the

slaughter we find ourselves being subliminally addicted to bad news.

So first thing in the morning, with all the bad news under your belly you get in the car and head for the office. On the way in you're analysing the bad state of finances of your head, cursing under your breath about the deal that didn't get clinched. And you wonder why the rest of the day isn't going the way you planned!

WATCH OUT!

Remember also that the media don't only sell Bad News. They're also messing with our minds! All the bill boards, print and television advertisements, flyers, pamphlets, brochures, junk mail, handouts, web mail, google ads are constantly invoking and admonishing, telling us who to vote for, what to wear, how to accessorise, what to eat or how to think.

As a global society we are moving more and more into the cesspit of sameness. Every day the mass marketers are persuading us to acquire the latest and greatest. We have become fad addicts and mindless followers.

Media "Gurus" have replaced religious ones. The liturgy goes something like this: "Ladies, you're not in if you haven't got the latest "IT" bag. And for those of you who cook, you no longer do it in your plebeian kitchen, you create your alchemy in "temples to cooking". And

gentlemen, if the latest sports car is beyond your budget, then it's the newest hand phone. And while you're at it, get the MacBook Air, the world's thinnest notebook ever. And the iPhone is the ONLY accessory you'll ever need. It's a total babe magnet they say."

I'm all for being informed and I cannot live without television but I resent being constantly provoked to buy, buy, buy. So my routine is now to only turn on the television at night and read the news as and when I'm ready during the day. In this often too-busy world, it's easy to become



deaden to the unique and different.

Yet the universe is constantly re-creating itself. Stars die and new ones emerge. The rain is a gentle cascade or a relentless downpour, both special in its intensity. When was the last time you looked up at the sky and saw a cartoon character or an animal in the clouds? Remember how we used to do that as children? Or walked barefoot in the rain, lifting our faces to catch the droplets and savouring them on our tongues?

NEED FOR SOME QUIET

I realise that we all have obligations and as responsible adults we have to get on with the chores. We may have kids, pets, friends, relatives, bosses, colleagues, clients and a whole lot of distractions that don't allow for much quiet time. But turning off the TV and not reading

the paper till you get to the office will lessen the chaos. Play some classical music instead. Tell your kids some jokes while they're having breakfast and dinner.

YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS

We often become trapped in our routines and become firmly entrenched in believing we have no options. How far we've strayed from following our inner muse. Can you imagine trying to get a group of 2- or 3-year-olds to all do the same thing? It would be like trying to rein in a bunch of wild horses.

Lives of bland uniformity lead us away from a life of joy and celebration. Try to follow the path of amazement and excitement. And, finally, a reminder from the poet Kahlil Gibran: "And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair."

MOTHER'S DAY THE ROYAL IPOH CLUB WAY

The honorees got to choose the club's beauty queen

Ipoh's oldest social club took pains to acknowledge the big contribution mothers give to society by throwing a fitting party for members' wives and their guests. Twenty-four tables were sold out.

The glitzy function was held at the Sultan Azlan Shah hall on Saturday night, May 10, 2008. More than 240 lively well-dressed guests - mothers, fathers and children - turned up.

The highlight of the evening was the crowning of Miss Royal Ipoh Club. Thirteen aspirants in two-piece swimsuits took to the catwalk. They also modelled three skimpy and figure-hugging outfits. The appreciative crowd cheered them on.

Interestingly, judging was left to the mothers who were given cards to keep score. They unanimously picked 20-year old tallish beauty, Zana Joella Chin, a former St Michael's



Mohd. Azri: his music added much joy

Institution student, to be Miss Royal Ipoh Club.

Royal Ipoh Club's 7-men ensemble, "Sweet Memories", played a very well-received selection of retro music and songs. Saxophonist Mohamad Azri, often dubbed as the Kenny G of Ipoh, was in his element, performing effortlessly on his golden-coloured tenor sax. Azri's rendition of "Brazil" and "Summertime" mesmerised the audience.

FZB



Over 1,500 participants joined this year's Tamar Thirunaal - Tamil New Year - celebrations at the State Secretariat's Banquet Hall. Thirty-one Indian based organisations from the Indian community in Perak were represented and gave the occasion a real festive air.

Among the VIPs were Deputy Minister in the PM Department, M. Murugiah, the Perak Legislative Assembly Speaker, V. Sivakumar and the Member

A VERY SPECIAL GATHERING

Significant affair brings Tamils of all persuasions together

of Parliament for Ipoh Barat, M. Kulasegeran.

The Organising Committee Chairman, B.Kumar, in his welcoming speech, thanked Executive Councillor, A. Sivanasan, for his effort in getting the Banquet Hall for the function. Never had an event of such significance been held at the venue before.

Kumar echoed the sentiments of the Indian community and requested that the Government release the five Hindraf lead-

ers detained under ISA. He stressed the importance of the function as it was the only moment when all Tamils, regardless of their beliefs and political affiliations, could gather for a common purpose.

In the run-up to the celebration, 18 competitions were held between the months of January and March. Some 600 students participated. They received their prizes at the function.

Top-notch Indian students who obtained 10 As



and a distinction in the Tamil Language for the 2007 SPM were honoured. Four individuals were commended for services to the community.

They were Francis Selvam in the film industry, Rajendran, the Chairperson of the Malaysian Tamil Writers Association, for his writing skills, P.S. Govindan for social works and Arunandhan for promoting karate.

B.K.Kumar



Serves: 8
INGREDIENTS
 3 ripe tomatoes
 4 garlic cloves, chopped
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 55 g (2 oz) fresh basil leaves
 75 g (3 oz) blanched almonds
 5 tablespoons olive and sunflower oil, mixed
 2 quantities Basic Egg Pasta Dough
 Extra chopped fresh tomatoes, to garnish



Kafe Paprika's
Tagliatelle Trapanese

METHOD

Place all the ingredients (except pasta and garnish) in a food processor and puree until smooth. Chill in the refrigerator.

Roll out pasta as thinly as possible. Dust with flour and roll up into a sausage shape.

Using a sharp knife, cut pasta into 0.5 cm (1/4 in) slices. Unravel and place

on a floured tea towel until ready to cook.

Bring a large pan of boiling salted water to the boil.

Throw in the pasta and cook it for 2-3 minutes, drain well and toss the pasta with the tomato pesto.

Serve immediately with extra chopped tomatoes as a garnish.



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Quiet Entrepreneurs In Our Midst

Daily, the Lohs toil to deliver the tasty, nutritious tofu that is a pride of Ipoh

Tofu was, once upon a time, a product for frugal lives. It used to help a clever housewife devise a nutritious meal on a tight budget.

But even the tofu has come up in the world. Thanks to creative chefs, this once humble fare is now regarded as quite "a sensuous sensation" in the culinary world.

BONUS

A nutritionist consultant has given here some guidelines on the tofu's health benefits and nutritional value. It is the mainstay of a vegetarian diet.

Two pieces of 10 cm squares are equivalent to a chicken drumstick - a good substitute for people suffering from coronary heart disease, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure. Plus it has a high content of calcium and phytoestrogens - these may help reduce the risk of osteoporosis. It also contains a beneficial amount of iron which is important for pregnant women.

Loh Fatt Kong and his wife produce and sell one of the smoothest tofu in Ipoh.

The legend has it that the first batch of tofu was created by a cook in ancient China who accidentally poured *nigari* (a coagulant) into a pot of cooked soybean and it curdled into the tofu we know today.

The tofu cottage industry in Ipoh was started by Loh's father who came from China. He brought along his ancient tools - grinder, sieve, etc. There was also his secret coagulant. It could be *nigari* - a sediment found in the natural ocean water.

The present curdling formula, is the family's well-kept trade secret. Mr

Loh's wife added, "it is edible and harmless".

Surprisingly, Loh's tofu does not taste bland - it has an indefinable subtle character, especially the soft and glossy type. The soymilk before it is formed into tofu, has a hint of nut. Unfortunately, the soymilk is not for sale!

Ah Fatt's stall is located at Gunung Rapat market and his house/factory is just across the road. The machinery used in churning out the ware is scrupulously clean and this is one of the pre-requisites in tofu-making. All the outdated tools have been replaced by modern equipment almost 10 years ago. Firewood has given way to electricity for the boiling method. Cooking by firewood sometimes gives a smoky taste to tofu.

RITUAL

The ritual of making the Lohs' renowned



The couple at work

tofu starts at around 1 pm daily. The production goes through several stages.

The soybeans need to be husked (skinned) by a special cone-shaped machine. This shortens soaking time which takes about half and a half hours when the beans double in size. The swollen beans are washed thoroughly. The rinsing is done in batches.

The cleaned beans are tipped into the grinding machine under a fitted tap of running water. The blended paste oozes out into a pail which is then



Separating fluid from fibre

lifted up and poured into a double steel drum. The inner container (riddled with marble-sized holes) is lined with muslin cloth to separate the fluid from the fibre.

Hot water is poured into this paste to dilute it, thus forcing fluid to trickle easily into a sieve resting over the pail below. This is known as the third stage whereby the finest soymilk is obtained.

TELL-TALE SIGNS

Boiling the curd by electricity - using a long probe attached to a flat walled machine (commercially assembled) fired by diesel - is carried out simultaneously with stages two and three. This electrical gadget is dipped into a huge steel drum with the soymilk being steadily poured in to boil.

When the on-going process of blending and liquid-refining is completed, and the last pail of milk has gone to the boil, the temperature of the



Boiling the curd

boiling content would have reached its desired degree of readiness.

The drum contains 48 gallons of liquid. It is ready when the boiling cauldron is brimming with foam and spewing droplets of milk.

Mrs. Loh pours her secret coagulant into a big urn. The boiled soymilk is then transferred into this urn to congeal. The steamy foam is scooped out and discarded continuously as this process goes on and liquid is being poured in. It takes 15 minutes for the mixture to set.



The secret coagulant

The semi-solid is then transferred to the rectangular shallow trays, drilled with holes at four corners and lined with cheesecloth. As it is filled to the brim the corners of the hanging cloth is flapped up to wrap the contents completely, like an envelope. This is then stacked up to allow water from the almost-set curds to drip out. The soft tofu will be cut up into squares in the morning for sale and some batches will be fried around 4.00am.

Special checked steel moulds are placed over the cloth-lined trays for the hard tofu and the surface will be roughened up prior to wrapping. Hard cement blocks are placed over the trays to compress it further. By morning, the individual pieces are ready for sale.

Soya Sauce Braised Tofu With Eggs and Chicken



Cheng Sun Mooi

Ingredients

- 1 Chicken quarter
- 2 squares fried or hard tofu
- 2 hard boiled eggs, shelled and rinsed
- 1 1/2 bulbs garlic, with skin
- 2 slices *lengkuas* wild ginger
- 2 teaspoonful *fah chiew* (Szechuan pepper)
- 3 petals *pat kok* (star of anise)
- 2 *ting heong* cloves
- 1 thin sliver cinnamon, *kayu manis*
- 2 small knob rock sugar
- 2 tablespoon dark soya sauce
- 500 ml water (about 2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons light soya sauce
- 1 tablespoon *fah tiew* wine (opt.)
- 1/2 cube chicken seasoning (opt.)
- Salt to taste

Method

In a stainless pot, put in the sugar and spices, except garlic and *lengkuas*, sizzle the sugar and add water.

Throw in garlic and *lengkuas* and spoon in the soya sauces and the seasoning.

Salt to taste. Put in eggs and mushrooms. Simmer on medium heat to release the spices' aroma (20 mins).

Slide in the chicken, and let it drown in the gravy over gentle fire to maintain its smoothness. When it is done (25 minutes) it has a hint of spice and is brownish in colour.

Remove. Drop in tofu and let them lie dormant for about 20 minutes to be tanned.

3. Cut and serve swimming in sauce.

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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.

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THINKING OF OTHERS

We have the energy. We should find the time.

I used to play the saxophone for my own benefit – now, I play for others.

Being part of an orchestra as well as a big band ensemble, I used to perform publicly often. Standing up and playing as the crowds cheered and shouted “Encore!” was what I lived for. But all that has changed.

One Christmas, I was asked to play the saxophone in an old folks’ home. I remember not wanting to go. To me, it felt like a burden. I went, anyway, but only because it was Christmas!

AMAZING CHANGES

While I was performing, I noticed the changes in the facial expressions of the old men and women listening to my music. Some had their eyes closed; some started to smile and some even moved with the rhythm and sang along. As I played a love song, I wondered if, maybe, they were recalling great memories. I had no clue but it looked as if the music allowed them to escape from the drudgery of every day life. Music was giving them the chance to be young again!

When the song came to an end, the people’s faces beamed with joy and happiness. The

clapping wasn’t the thing that mattered - it was the smiles on their faces and the twinkle in their eyes. I discovered that one can have an impact on another person’s life, just by doing something small.

For me, my passion for music and my experience at the old folks’ home pushed me to share the gift of music. I wanted more people to get the chance to escape and forget their problems through my music even if it was only briefly.

The hours I spend rehearsing now are not just dedicated to making me a better musician; they now include thoughts of others.

Every one of us has a role to play in our society. This fact never meant anything to me but after some consideration, I recalled that my parents have always demonstrated it. Family, friends and neighbours can always

count on my dad’s assistance. He is also very active in a Christian organisation for people in need. My mum does free pedicures for old ladies because most of them can no longer bend to do it on their own. I saw these things as I was growing up, but it never occurred to me that the small things my parents did made a difference to people.

Since being in Ipoh as an exchange student, I have been involved in many activities. Recently, I volunteered with my friends during a charity fund-raising for cancer patients.

I feel the exercise allowed us to show that, together and in little ways, we have the power and the energy to do something that can make other lives a bit happier. That day, we sold goods and we worked from morning until late afternoon.

We learned that volunteering can also be a very hard job - not many

people would want to dirty their hands especially without gaining monetary benefits.

Some of the volunteers toiled without any breaks – and yes, by the end of the day we were tired. But we knew we had done something for the community.

ADJUSTMENTS

Most of us spend our time pondering what outfit to buy next or what nail polish would go well with that new dress.

Yes, this is normal and part of our young lives, but shouldn’t we broaden our horizons?

Shouldn’t we wonder – and find out - where we can spend more time contributing and bettering our communities?

Perhaps, if we shorten our shopping trips or hours spent watching TV, we could pay more attention to other people – the friendless aged, the orphans, the sick and destitute?

I believe the effort would make a difference in our lives and in our society. We can contribute and these small selfless efforts might, accumulated, help build a better world.

KRISTIN HARTLICH
 Form 5,
 Smk Main Convent Ipoh



How can we help them?

LITTLE STEPS TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT

The value of recycling should be part every school’s programme

Schools are where the awareness of recycling can be raised and pursued among the young. And when parents are also roped in to participate in the programmes, it won’t be long before the world is made cleaner and healthier.

Brunswick Industries, a firm which has extensively dealt in recycling programmes for schools, corporate bodies and industries, recently organised an environment exhibition in the Perak State Library. Held in conjunction with Earth Day, it was primarily addressed to schoolchildren and parents. It was opened by Ipoh Mayor Dato Mohamad Rafiai Moktar.

Activities like an



Fenny Cheong (left) explaining to the mayor (centre) the objectives of the exhibition

Majority of this solid waste is recyclable.

“We are targeting the primary and secondary schools to join our recycling programmes throughout Malaysia,” said Programme chairperson

Fenny Cheong.

“We hope to raise the awareness of recycling among the pupils. The nurturing and the grooming have to start early.”

To this end, Brunswick has organised competitions aimed at encouraging students to avoid waste and practise recycling.

For details visit www.neo2u.net



Vinodh Shan, 13, set up the Nature Club at Ipoh International School in January this year. Nature lovers among his schoolmates joined enthusiastically. Their many activities are geared towards creating awareness and then caring for Mother Earth. Members engage in recycling activities – they have started waging their own war on waste by re-using many things both at home and in school. They organise programmes that discuss how people can save water and electricity.

Vinodh hopes to be an actuary someday.

environmental workshop and colouring contest where children could learn in an entertaining and interactive ways were carried out.

Junior Green Protector Vinodh Shan (see box) from Ipoh International School gave a talk on “Be Green, Be Responsible”.

Malaysians produce 7.34 million tonnes of solid waste a year, which is equivalent to 42 same sized Petronas Twin Tower.

Know Your Assemblymen - part 3

MEET YIT FOONG & MING KAI

If you are from Jelapang, Batu Gajah, Sungai Rapat and Gopeng, here are your leaders



Hee Yit Foong

Constituency: Jelapang / Batu Gajah

Party: DAP

Age: 45

Service centre:

1st Floor 29B Main Road Jelapang. She is at her Service centre every Wednesday afternoon, from 1pm. However she can be reached on her hand phone if you need to see her urgently. **H/p:** 012 5192 183

Education: Studied at Sekolah Chong Hwa Kanthan Baru and Sekolah Aminudding Baki Chemor. Earned her Diploma in Management from Taiwan in 1990. She had once wanted to be a teacher

Marital Status: Married, with 2 children.

Hobbies: Yit Foong is a Buddhist and enjoys doing religious work. Up till 1993, she visited old folks' homes and orphanages.

Life in politics:

Yit Foong's father always encouraged his daughter to do her best. Together, they thought that teaching might not be a suitable career for someone disabled. So she took up book keeping and, subsequently, management. She had good grades but was unable to get a scholarship.

Sometime in 1982, she helped out at her local DAP branch. In 1986, she signed up as a member. When she got a job in the Chemor area, 10 of her colleagues were senior party members.

In 1993, she was made the JKKK for Kanthan Baru. She stood for her first election in 2004 and won. She resigned her job in 2004 to be a full time politician. Her win again in the 12th GE in 2008 makes it her second term as a State Assemblyman. This is her 24th year in politics.

Complaints from her constituents:

Almost 70% of the complaints received are about rubbish, grass, drains and faulty street lighting. The poor collection of rubbish in the flats area at Taman Silibin has resulted in an environmental issue because the residents resorted to burning their

uncollected rubbish. Garbage was being collected only once in two weeks!

The State issues facing her constituency.

- Land and squatter issues. There are a number of squatters in the areas at Farlim, Jelapang, Lahat, Pusing and Papan. This is a long-term issue,

- Flooding at Kg Papan Lama and along Jalan Lahat near Farlim.

Life of a politician.

Hee enjoys being in politics and has no regrets. Of six brothers and sisters she is the only one in politics. Due to her disability, her parents encouraged her to join the government service. Little did they realise she would some day be a member of the ruling state government.



Chan Ming Kai

Constituency: Sungai Rapat / Gopeng

Party: PKR

Age: 28

Service centre:

Chan maintains mobile service centres. His schedules are:

Monday: Pasar malam at Gunung Rapat

Wednesday: Pasar Malam at Simpang Pulai

Friday: Parti Keadilan office at Taman Song Choon. Night time.

H/p: 012 5151 706

Blogsite:

chanmingkai.blogspot.com (Chinese)

Education: Studied at SRJK Sri Perak and SMJK Yuk Choy. He obtained his degree in Technology Management from UTM and his LLB degree from the University of London.

Marital Status: Single

Hobbies: Bowling (seldom plays nowadays) and International Chess. These days, he spends more time at his computer.

Life in politics:

Chan was always interested to initiate improvements wherever possible even as a student at Yuk Choy. This became more focused when he entered University. He got involved in campus politics to ensure student-friendly policies would be

implemented.

Then came the time when the "Reformasi" movement was very active. He met other students with similar interests and this led to his involvement in party politics, particularly with the Keadilan Movement. At one of the by-elections, he met Keadilan members from Ipoh, one of whom was Dr Lee Boon Chye, currently the MP for Gopeng.

It was Dr Lee who encouraged him to join PKR. Upon the completion of his studies, Chan returned to Malaysia in 2003 and immediately signed up as a Keadilan member.

In August 2004, he set up his Mobile Service Centre at Pasar Malam Taman Ipoh Jaya, Gunung Rapat. This centre covers the areas of Gunung Rapat, Ipoh Jaya Ampang and Pekan Razaki. In August 2006, he started other mobile service centres at Pasar Pagi Ampang, Gunung Rapat and Simpang Pulai.

Like the other Pasar vendors, he packs his table, lamps, chairs, batteries and documents into his car and sets up his centre among the vendors. He is there to listen and serve.

He is an Exco Member of AMK (Keadilan's Youth Wing) and Deputy Chairman of the Gopeng Division.

Complaints from his constituents:

As with the other constituencies the majority of his complaints are smade up of SLR (*sampah, longkang and rumput*) His constituency consists of mainly residential areas as well as vegetable farms and pomelo orchards.

The other common complaints are

- **Land issues** related to the pomelo orchard growers in the Ampang area. This is a major problem which, as correspondence records attest, dates back more than 20 years.

Residents who have been living on the land for years but are unable to get the grants to their property because the boundaries have not been defined.

Farmers are currently having temporary licences renewable every year. They have applied for the land but approval is still pending.

Squatters. Not in great numbers but they do exist. This is a long-term problem.

- **Funds for main-**

taining schools – Chan listen to concerns and take them up with the Gopeng MP Dr Lee Boon Chye as they are a Federal issue.

- **Red identity cards are still a problem.** Some have applied for their blue ICs 30 years ago and have passed their Malay test three times.

In his current position how would he like to see a better Ipoh:

He thinks Ipoh has too much "hardware" – a term he uses to describe establishments like coffee houses, cafes and the like. Ming Kai feels the city needs more "software", like cultural activities.

JAG

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING OLD FRIENDS

Sir,

The National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association is an international organisation of ex-Armed Forces personnel from Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Membership also includes former Malaysian Police and Malaysian Government officers who worked closely with these forces during the Malayan Emergency (1948 – 1960) and the Indonesian Confrontation (1962 – 1966). A Malaysian branch has now been established in Perak State with the HQ in Ipoh.

Every year, the Association holds a Remembrance Service in June at the Batu Gajah cemetery. This service is

followed by a similar one for Gurkha soldiers laid to rest in the cemetery situated at Kem Syed Putra, Tambun. This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the declaration of the Malayan Emergency. In addition to the services at Batu Gajah and Kem Syed Putra, the Australian contingent will be holding a similar service at the Kamunting graves in Taiping.

This June, we look forward to another visit to Perak and to renewing old friendships.

Yours faithfully,
B J (Snowy) Selby, National President, National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association Australia



Snatch Theft - part 3 Continued from page 2



- The establishment of publicly displayed reminders in the form of posters and signboards, in specific areas, warning people that there may be snatch thieves lurking in the area. This, it is argued, would promote a healthy dose of awareness among members of the public. Hopefully, they would then take steps to be more vigilant.

- The introduction of readily recognisable police roadside presences in areas prone to snatch theft problems. It has been proven that crime rates drop significantly in areas enjoying regular police patrolling.

- The adoption of civic programmes aimed at improving social conditions in snatch plagued areas. The implementation of such would essentially extend beyond the jurisdiction and powers of one, single agency. In any event, agencies such as the police, local council representatives and relevant authorities would have to combine forces to eradicate this rampant crime.

When the *Ipoh Echo* asked snatch theft victims what, if anything, could be done to prevent this crime, there came a most depressing common response. The overwhelming reaction was a somewhat fatalistic acceptance that snatch theft perpetrators were here to stay. Given the state of crime

control in Ipoh, they said, nothing could be done.

This is simply not the case. Clearly, carrying a handbag makes a woman vulnerable to having it snatched. Whether it is realistic for women to avoid carrying handbags in high risk areas is up to the individual to decide. Would it be safer for instance, to simply forgo the handbag?

SAFETY HANDBAG

If carrying a handbag is of vital importance, would it be wise to consider the purchase of a 'safety-handbag'? These 'safety-handbags' are made by Giossardi and are available in major shopping centers in Ipoh. They have straps that detach at both ends when pulled on strongly, reducing the degree of injuries considerably. More often than not, the snatch thieves only end up with a handbag strap.

Particular attention should also be given to messages about 'dressing-down' in high risk areas – as to avoid drawing attention to an individual. It would also seem sensible to advise that when wearing jewelry, to keep it well hidden under clothes. Also, when in high risk areas, avoid wearing expensive jewelry – that becomes an open invitation to snatch thieves.

The most important factor of crime prevention, however, is the relationship between the police and the

public. As was pointed out in the editorial of the *Ipoh Echo's* previous edition, Sir Robert Peel, founder of the British Police Force, always insisted that police officers should maintain close relationships with the public.

He explained that "this gives reality to the tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police..." Expanding on this theme, he asserted that police were, in fact, the only members of the public "who are paid to give full time attention to the duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare."

POLICE TO BE TRANSPARENT

It is within this very fundamental principle, that the police force in the state of Perak, must remain transparent in all its dealings – and this includes providing accurate information on those involved in snatch theft activity, particularly when it has been reported that a policeman was apprehended and under suspicion of such involvement.

When all is said and done, relevant authorities must take steps to increase public perceptions of safety.

This will undoubtedly have an impact on our community and could significantly improve the general quality of life in our state.

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Sport

THE BROAD ESSENTIAL FRAMEWORK

A guide must pass an accreditation course before he/she gets entitled to train a child

by Steve Darby

In the last issue of the Echo, I said that, whatever the sport, a child is invariably influenced by its first leader/guide/counsellor. I finished off by giving five points that will make for a successful minimum accreditation programme. This fortnight, I am elaborating on these requirements.

Quality Instruction by well trained staff coaches.

A Staff Coach must be well trained in the vital processes of Adult Education. The value of practical learning experiences and previous knowledge must be acknowledged. The Staff Coach should provide a positive, supportive learning environment. The candidate on a beginner coaching course may well have been out of an educational environment for a number of years and could feel threatened.

Appropriate duration of the course.

The candidate is perhaps not as fanatical or in

love with the sport as the expert! A course too long in duration may well prove too demanding for a beginner and may be a stimulus for excuses. The appropriate length must be decided by the needs of the sport.

Accessible to all the community, males, females and disadvantaged groups.

It is often accepted by sports that "HE" is the coach. The forward thinking sports are realising that often "SHE" is the beginner coach due to work demands on the male community, and also the fact that 70% of primary school teachers are female. Often the female coach is undertaking coaching as a third job after employment and motherhood and the timing of courses should be appropriately tailored. Sports must market research the needs of female clients and put coaching courses on when suitable.

A syllabus relevant to the sport's needs.

It is pointless for the

coach of a soccer team of seven year olds to be lectured on about physiological advances in training or tactical developments from the World Cup. The course must be a "Cook Book"

of ideas that are useful to candidate. These areas to include how to organise, how to keep a child active and the basics of child development.

A philosophy of enjoyment and participation.

Research has revealed that the basic needs of young children and sport are to have fun and to be actively involved at all times.

A coaching course for beginners must have the underlying philosophy that is relative to this. It must play down the motives of win at all costs and excessive extrinsic

pressures on children. A change of community attitudes is not an overnight process.

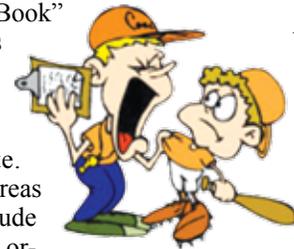
An educational programme must be allowed to take its course.

VARYING NEEDS

Each sport is so unique that it is impossible to have a national generic syllabus and every sport must be self analytical and be able to establish what is relevant to it.

A German soccer administrator once said, "We care too much about our children to leave them in the hands of enthusiastic but untrained amateurs".

Of course we must develop motor skills. But in a changing society we are now being influenced by drugs, crime and increasing economic problems. It is critical that sport should retain its once accepted role as an influence on social development.



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Rice Crisis . . . continued from page 3

with rice, the staple food in our region, gaining by almost 270 per cent..

RICE SUFFICIENCY

The RM4 billion will be used to increase food production by fully realising rice sufficiency from the current 73 per cent to 100 per cent. This will be achieved by transforming Sarawak into the new rice bowl of Malaysia and increasing production of fruits and vegetables. The plan also includes funds to



Paul Raj urges use of local idle lands.

purchase fertilizers.

This bold attempt at funding is a shot in the arm for the ailing agricultural sector. However, care must be exercised if successes are to be achieved. According to Paul Raj of the Perak Consumers' Association, the Government should adopt an economically

sustainable approach in ensuring food security.

He questioned the government's intention to open new lands in Sarawak for padi farming. "Idle lands exist in Perak, Selangor and Pahang. These lands should be considered too," said Raj.

"Keep production costs low so both farmers and consumers can gain. It's a win-win situation," he said. "The plan should focus on the farming communities not cronies of the Establishment. In the past such lands have gone to waste as those responsible have not the slightest clue how to farm," he added.

FOOD CULTIVATION

"Disused mining lands in Kinta Valley and Larut Matang can be utilised for fruit and vegetable cultivation. Cash crops have a fast turn over and cost less to grow. There have been plans to develop these lands but nothing has happened so far".

In a move to keep a lid on rice prices the Government recently announced that Grade B rice (Super Tempatan) would remain at between RM1.65 and RM1.80 a kg.

Ceiling price of the local super grade variety (Super Special Tempatan) is pegged at RM2.80 a kg.

These price caps will take effect from June 1, 2008.

The nation's stockpile has recently been replenished. Some 200,000 metric tons of imported Siamese rice were acquired after a week-long haggling over costs.

Thailand demanded the rice be sold at the prevailing market price of USD 1000 a metric ton, not USD 850 as requested by Malaysia.

The bargaining power currently lies inevitably with the seller who has the option to sell or not to sell. And since there were many willing buyers in the market, Malaysia acceded "not with a bang but a whimper".

This poser will remain to haunt the authorities.

Is the short-term solution enough to satisfy Malaysians? The nation's overall stockpile of 500,000 metric tons will last six months.

What happens when stocks run out? Will there be another scramble for imported rice?

The Sarawak land scheme will only take off when the proposed dam in Limbang is operational.

It will take a while. In the interim, we have to make do with what we have. This is definitely not healthy.