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MAY 1 - 15, 2009

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ISSUE 73

BREAKING NEWS

IPOH-SINGAPORE DIRECT FLIGHTS ARE ON!

"The Ipoh to Singapore direct flight is on and is scheduled for early July". So said State Chairman for Local Transport Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon, when contacted by Ipoh Echo recently. Dato' Mah politely declined to reveal more details other than to say that another service provider had shown interest in the route. "Once all details are in place we will issue a statement and provide the inaugural flight date". The confirmation of the flight is indeed good news for the state. Ipoh Echo will be providing regular updates so make sure to get our future copies.

Miss Echo
MAY

FIRST GARDEN LOW-COST FLATS - A NIGHTMARE FOR RESIDENTS



More pics at ipohecho on line

Name:
KEELY WONG
Occupation:
STUDENT
Hobbies:
SINGING, DANCING
The quality I admire most:
SELF-CONFIDENCE
Ambition:
EVENT PLANNER

Residents of First Garden low-cost flats at Hala Bekor 11 have been living a nightmare since maintenance of the buildings were handed over to them by the developer in 2000.

Continued on page two



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ACCUMULATED PROBLEMS NOT GOING – AWAITING IPOH CITY COUNCIL INTERVENTION

The First Garden low-cost flats were built by Kinta Properties and were ready for occupation in 1984. There are 280 units located in two 4-storey blocks. Initially, about two thirds of the units were occupied by the owners while the remaining were rented out. While under developer's management, the residents were happy with their units, until the maintenance of the buildings was handed over to them.

Self Management A Failure

Padmaloshini, Manager Legal Affairs of Kinta Properties, said that in accordance with the Strata Titles Act 1985, when strata titles were obtained and individual titles were handed over to the residents, the developer would assist the residents to form their own management team to maintain the flats. This Kinta Properties did, but sadly the residents' management body (Management

Corporation) functioned for only three months owing to failure in collecting maintenance fees from flat owners.

Since maintenance was non-existent, the common area is overgrown with grass and scattered with rubbish. *Gotong royong* was organised and cleaning activities were carried out from time to time. However, this was not effective.

Accumulated Problems

The accumulated problems of the residents over the past 10 years are many. These include unpaid quit rent amounting to more than RM70,000, missing and leaking roofs, leaking water tanks, non-functioning septic tanks, lack of corridor and staircase lighting and uncollected garbage.

At present more than a hundred flats are vacant. The owners simply abandoned their houses without informing their neighbours. In the process of vacating, they dumped

their unwanted items in the common area and left the empty flats full of rubbish. Vandals have stripped everything that can be sold. Drug addicts and criminals are now making use of these flats and residents are hesitant to confront them for fear of reprisals. Women and children are in danger of being assaulted and molested.

State Abdicates Responsibility

Members of the impotent Management Corporation met with the authorities at the Home Ministry but nothing was forthcoming. All attempts at meeting the previous Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Tajol Rosli proved futile. The reason given was that these were private flats and, therefore, the state had nothing to do with it.

However, when Dato' Seri Nizar was the MB, the residents met him in August 2008 and put forth their problems. They requested him to rehabilitate the buildings and to waive



Vacated flat - rubbish left by previous occupants

for a waiver.

Ipoh City Council – Possible Saviour?

Ahmad Suhaimi of MBI said that the Ipoh City Council is the regulatory body to ensure that management corporations are run smoothly as per regulations. The council audits their accounts too. His men had visited the flats to assess the situation and would compile a report soon.

Dato' Abdul Rahim, the acting council secretary, said that the engineering department is carrying out a study and would submit a report with the cost estimates to the Menteri Besar office, as directed. Whether this will happen is a million-ringgit question given the political climate at the moment.

The poor residents have suffered enough. Anyone visiting the place will feel sorry to see them living in such squalor. Since the roofs are leaking, the floor of the empty flats are damp and waterlogged. This environment is most conducive for mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and dengue.

The First Garden Low-Cost Flats may fall

Rubbish Continues to Pile Up

apart and pose a danger to all residents as well the surrounding neighbourhood unless remedial actions are taken fast. The authorities must not allow the poor residents to suffer

without attending to their needs. Why allow a situation to degenerate to such proportions when it could be resolved with a little imagination?

A. JEYARAJ



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Hot and Cold

the outstanding quit rent. They said that they would then maintain the building and pay quit rent regularly. Nizar agreed and asked the Secretary of the Ipoh City Council, who was at the meeting, to prepare the cost estimate.

An officer from Pejabat Tanah dan Galian Perak said that he was aware of the problems faced by the residents. However, the office was only responsible for the collection of quit rent. Pengarah Tanah dan Galian Perak had no authority to waive outstanding quit rent, said the officer. He advised the residents to write to the MB and the Commissioner of Building, in this case, the Ipoh mayor, and request



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ANAK PERMATA NEGARA PROGRAMME

This government-sponsored nursery is free and is readily available here in Ipoh

The Anak Permata Negara Programme is a government-sponsored project aimed at developing the minds of infants and toddlers between the ages of 0 to 5. The programme, introduced in March 2007, incorporates both nurseries and kindergartens under a single roof.

The Pusat Anak Permata Negara (PAPN) Bercham, opened in August 2008, is the latest addition. Located on a vacant lot along a slip road in Taman Mewah, Bercham, the nursery is about a kilometre away from another prominent landmark, Yayasan Sultan Idris Shah. The modest single-storey building comes complete with a playground, a pitcher-shaped wading pool, a pristine landscaped garden and a wooden play house on stilts. It is a sight to behold in spite of it be-



Puan Fatimah Zaharah

ing hemmed in by the surrounding houses and commercial buildings. The setting is most conducive for the development of young minds.

Few are aware that such an entity exists in the city. Most would question its relevance given

the abundance of privately owned nurseries and kindergartens in the suburbs. Ipoh Echo visited the state's only centre recently for an informal meeting with Puan Fatimah Zaharah, the nursery's chief coordinator.

Puan Fatimah, an Ipohite from Pengkalan, has been with PAPN Bercham since its inception in August 2008. "There are 14 such nurseries in the country. One each in every state. This Bercham chapter is the latest," said Fatimah. The primary objective of PAPN is to develop children's minds at the formative stage. Kids are exposed to the rudiments of educational development through games, interactions and informal learning lessons. Professional staff are engaged to ensure that



Main block in a pristine landscaped garden

the training curriculum is implemented successfully. The centre employs eight qualified minders.

Enrolment is open to those earning below RM1,500. Ethnicity is not a criterion. All are eligible to apply so long as one's earning is within the stipulated margin. The positioning of the nursery explains this rationale. Bercham was once a new village inhabited by squatters. In essence PAPN is a nursery for the poor.

The capacity of the centre is limited to 40. Of the number, Chinese account for 24 (60 per cent), Malays 15 (37.5 per cent) and Indian one (2.5 per cent). "When we opened for registration over a hundred applied," said Fatimah. "Applications are submitted to Cyberjaya for

selection". Parents' participation is essential. They have to be present at the centre 4 hours a week to interact with their children. "This is a requirement parents have to adhere upon enrolment," Fatimah remarked.

An opportunity now exists for poor Malaysians to enjoy the benefits and facilities of a high-end nursery and kindergarten. The government-sponsored Pusat Anak Permata Negara caters for this. It is free and it is available here in Ipoh. However, vacancies are limited as only 40 can be accommodated at any one time.

There is a need to increase the number of centres, especially in rural areas where poverty is more prevalent. The government, unfortunately, has no

such plans at the moment. It costs RM1,500 a month to maintain a child, so cost is a big consideration.

The Ipoh nursery is located at JKR 5905, Jalan Persiaran Tasek Timur 7, Taman Mewah, Bercham.

Those wishing to know more can call Puan Fatimah at **05-5482145** or **05-5483050** (fax). The centre is opened Monday to Friday 8 am to 5 pm.



Break time for toddlers

ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Malaysian Ceylonese Congress joint activities for members of Lim Garden & Kinta Valley

a. **May 3, 2009:** Special prayers for peace and well being of Sri Lankan citizens to be held at Shree Vinayagar Temple, Persiaran Tun Perak off Jalan Connolly, Ipoh. Yaagam/Abhisegam will be at 3.00pm followed by Pooja at 6.00pm.

b. **June 21 2009:** Goodwill Badminton Tournament to be held at Rayan Cultural Hall, Ipoh. Entry forms for members can be obtained from their respective branches. For enquiries please contact Dr Rajadurai, **05-5275313** or K. Sabapathy, **016-5323089**.

2. Ipoh Toastmasters Meetings

a. YMCA of Ipoh Toastmasters meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 7.45pm. Venue: First floor, Lecture Hall 1, YMCA Ipoh.

b. Ipoh Toastmasters Club meets every 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 7.45pm. Venue: ILTI, 6 Jalan Raja DiHilir Ipoh.

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05-547 4444/994
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05-5017100

Perak Water Board
05-254 6161

Ipoh City Council(Complaints)
05-255 1515

Perak Anti-Corruption Agency
05-253 1982

State Secretariat
05-253 1957

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05-254 7987

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05-312 0848

Registration Department
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Tenaga Nasional Berhad
05-253 2000

Lembaga Air Perak
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Directory Service
103

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Perak Women for Women Society
012-521 2480
012-505 0547
05-5469715 (office)

THINKING ALOUD

by G. SIVAPRAGASAM

MALAYSIANS OF INDIAN ORIGIN

Siva provides a candid look into the problems and challenges faced by Malaysian Indians. Part one of two

Challenges and Strategies

On the 17th of October '08 a prominent entrepreneur and successful businessman delivered a talk on 'the Malaysian Dilemma'. Little was said about the Indian community. Though constituting only about 7% of the population it is still a sizeable two odd million. So I have decided to write something on this community. I must however confess that my knowledge is at best meagre and the article is a blend of my personal experience, other people's research and conclusions and some observation. So if there are inaccuracies I stand corrected.

A Brief History

The Indian connection with this region began very early in history, first as traders and later as invaders but no permanent settlements were established. It was British colonisation that led to the arrival of substantial numbers of Indians. Most came to earn money and send it to their families and eventually to return home. However subsequent generations began losing contact with their land of origin.

When Independence arrived citizenship was offered to the Indians and they began to settle permanently in the country. Those who came consisted of a small number of Malayalees and Sri Lankan Tamils who came to work in the clerical/administrative sector, Gujeratis and Indian Muslims who came as traders but by far most of the arrivals were Tamils and a smaller number of Telugus who came to labour in the plantation and public works sectors. Whilst the descendents of the first two groups have progressed in pace with the other races, many of the descendents of the plantation workers now occupy the bottom end of the economic and social structure of Malaysian society.

Most from this sector worked in rubber and oil palm plantations. Isolated in remote locations, earning low wages, with their necessities supplied in a confined zone they had little motivation to save

or opportunity to invest. There was also little access to education or new skills. They were all mono-lingual with little understanding of administrative policies and procedures. When fragmentation of the estates began, the displaced from this group relocated to the urban areas. Most of them settled in squatter areas coming into contact for the first time with other cultures which sometimes resulted in conflict.

The Problems Of The Community

The problems faced by this sector of the Indian community are all too visible. They are engaged in menial jobs, live in shanty towns, suffer from poor health and malnutrition with many of them becoming alcoholics and engaged in criminal activities. Their children receive poor education in badly equipped Tamil schools with most dropping out at a very early stage. Many are stateless and the women powerless.

Added to their problems are class divisions, caste consciousness and religious beliefs compounded by the ineffectiveness of the political parties that claim to be the custodian of Indian rights.

Despite their numerical weakness it cannot be denied that the Malaysian Indian community has contributed significantly to the development process of the country. However the community lags behind in almost every sphere in the context of the current Malaysian society.

Let me elaborate three problems faced by the community: poverty, statelessness and education.

Poverty

What is often quoted is that the Indians control about 1.5 percent of the nation's corporate wealth. However this is an insignificant aspect of the problem and to me quite immaterial. Mass poverty in the community is the more critical issue.

Up to 1957, 65% of the Indians arriving in Malaya were from the labour class. Almost all found employment in the plantation sector. Although

there has been a significant rural-to-urban migration in recent years due to displacement from the rubber and oil palm estates, there has been little change in their location, situation, or status with a large number of the ethnic-Tamils continuing to be concentrated in the plantation states.

Alternative employment and housing is a major problem with most of them living in urban squatter areas. The living conditions has brought about a mindset that is besieged by hopelessness and helplessness, captives to low-self image, coupled with the lack of opportunities to pursue education and employment. The environmental degradation of urban squatters has produced a depressed sub-culture. They have become captives of a cycle of poverty from which they have been unable to break free.

Statelessness

The most visible problem is the issue of the stateless in this community. Most of them are descendants of plantation workers who worked in very remote areas. Situated far

from the police station or registry office, many failed to register the birth of their children. When they eventually married, their marriages were not registered because of inability to produce their identity card for this purpose. A vicious circle was created with the birth of their children not being registered as well, as they would have had to produce their identity cards and marriage certificates to register the birth. Problems faced by these people include the inability to obtain bank loans, trading and hawking permits as well as not qualifying for low cost government housing.

Education

A sizeable number of Tamil school children in both the National and the Tamil school systems of education, dropout without completing their secondary or even their primary education, or if they do so with low academic achievements. This could in main be attributed to poor parental care and concern, malnutrition, poor health, inadequate educational facilities, non-conductive

home environment and poverty.

Also there is little pre-school education. Unsatisfactory conditions in Tamil schools have resulted in teachers losing interest in their jobs, creating a lack of interest in studies amongst pupils. Co-curricular activities are also negligible, hence little opportunity for pupils to develop social and other non-academic skills.

The problem of the community has been further exacerbated by loss of educated and qualified youth through migration.

Next issue: Possible solutions to the Indian dilemma

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MUSINGS ON FOOD by See Foon Chan-Koppen

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SeeFoon gets adventurous in explorations of Old Town...



The street turning off to the left as one crosses Kinta River travelling down Jalan Sultan Iskandar Shah (Hugh Low Street) is a fascinating part of Ipoh's old town. Known as "Ham Yu Kai" or Salt Fish Street (Jalan Bijih Timah), this short stretch of about 300 metres has a row of sundry shops lined up consecutively, selling Chinese provisions and all the dried seafood like *ikan bilis*, dried shrimp, and salted fish. There used to be a market at the end of this street but this has

dwindled down to a few stalls selling fresh produce in the early morning.

Towards the end of this street on the left is a small passage between two shop houses with a big sign that says Jalan Pasar Patrick. This leads into a small alley way lined on both sides by a row of zinc-roofed shacks leading to the banks of the Kinta River. Here at the end of the alley is a very popular local eatery with only a Chinese sign board *Jiong Loi Fan Deem* proudly displayed in red lettering proclaiming itself to be "the future rice shop".

Not for the Squeamish

This is not a restaurant for the squeamish and if you're expecting minimum



restaurant standards, this is not the place for you. Here you rub shoulders with the "hoi polloi" who generally know better than their well-off brethren, where a good meal is to be had at a good price, and if you make the mistake of arriving after 12 noon, you'll have to wait in the sweltering heat at least half an hour for your food.

The day my Foodie friends and I were there,

just coincidentally turned out to be one of the hottest days in the year. As I sat under the zinc roof inadequately serviced by both a ceiling and a revolving table fan, I was musing to myself that the food had better be worth the suffering in the heat.

Popular Cold Dish

An appetiser plate was served first, almost as a conciliatory gesture for the long wait ahead as we had arrived just as the full lunch crowd descended. This was their popular stewed pigs' head cold dish, served with hardboiled eggs. The tasty morsels consisting primarily of the cheeks and ears braised in soya sauce, were tender and had just the right degree of saltiness, taking

were thinly sliced and the roast pork's crackling still "crackled", which had me rudely trawling through the plate in search of more!

Grandma's soup of the Day

The soup of the day was a marrow which is known in Chinese as "old cucumber" *Lo Wong Kua*, boiled with pork bones and meat – RM8.00. This is a very typical Cantonese home dish which brought back memories of the soups my grandmother used to make. This soup of the day will vary from watercress to lotus root to whatever else is available at the market in the morning. Many a traditional Chinese family will still have their children com-

wishing that they could have used another fish – RM12.

The next dish was the fried omelette with preserved radish or Chinese



Daikon. Choi Po Dan – RM7. This is the true staple dish, the dish that is ubiquitous in many a Chinese home kitchen when mother or grandma had insufficient dishes on the table. Tasty and just like I used to get it at home, with the radish in bite-sized bits rather than the chopped variety one finds often in the market these days. And more importantly, they used the salty variety instead of the sweet one which I find cloying.

To finish off the meal, my nose had caught a whiff of *belacan* coming from the kitchen and I immediately demanded to know what it was. Fried *Kang Kong*, or water spinach as it is popularly known, fried with *belacan* was produced and promptly devoured with relish – RM5.

For 6 people, the total bill for all the dishes mentioned came to RM60. Another value-for-money meal for Cantonese home cooking par-excellence. A meal I couldn't produce at home for the same number of people if I were to buy the ingredients and cook it myself.

Location: Jalan Patrick Market, Off Jalan Bijih Timah, Old Town
Been operating more than 30 years
Operating time: 11:30am - 3:00pm

FOOD

YONG TAU FOO (YEONG LIU)



Stuffed bean curd, *yong tau foo* was originally only bean curd stuffed with fish and/or pork meat – the bean curd being white or brown (fried). These days it has become generic to call any of the vegetables that is stuffed *yong tau foo* or *yeong liu*. It could be stuffed ladies-fingers, green chillies, okra, or bittergourd. The okra and bittergourd are usually fried. People are constantly coming up with new ways of making *yong tau foo* – there is broccoli, string beans, even green leafy vegetable with a bit of stuffing attached to it – truly amazing! Other popular *yong tau foo* are: fish balls, meatballs, sotong balls, fish cake, turnip fritters, prawn rolls, etc. The stuffing should be springy and not chewy, and the fried items crisp. Usually served in a clear soup with or without noodles and eaten with chilli sauce. A good dipping chilli sauce is absolutely essential. Due to the wide variety, we have refrained from rating the *yeong liu*. There are many more which we did not include. Each has its own specialities and we recommend you try them all!

NAME	WHERE	COMMENTS	PRICE PER PIECE (RM)
NAM FATT FISH BALL NOODLE HOUSE (air-cond) 7.45am-10.45am Tuesdays closed	86C, Jln Raja Permaisuri Bainun (Jln Kampar), 30250 Ipoh (opp. Ecosave)	Has a wide variety – fish paste is springy- speciality is Teochew Tofu	0.50 to 1.50
DAI SHU KIOK (Foot of Big Tree) 8.30am-5.30pm	Pusat Makanan Big Tree, behind Tuck Kee Restaurant, Jln Tokong, Pasir Pinji	Huge variety – freshly made – extraordinary stuffed string beans	0.50 to 0.60
HAKKA MEE 4.30pm-10.30pm	Kedai Makanan Swisang, 13 Jln Wira Jaya, Tmn Ipoh Jaya Timur,	Unusual stuffed broccoli and leafy vegetable	0.50 to 0.60
KEDAI MAKANAN & MINIMUM DESA RISHAH 11:00am-4:00pm Mondays closed	No. 3 Taman Desa Rishah, Falim	Very good chilli sauce – <i>sar kok</i> is good. Good selection.	from 0.50

Our next food review will be **Chicken Rice**

Email your favourite recommendations to: ipohecho.vw@gmail.com



away the need for the chilli sauce which came with it. RM5 with two eggs.

The rest of the dishes finally arrived in rapid succession. First on the table was the bitter gourd with chicken, one of their signature dishes. *Fu Gua Kai* – RM10. This came in a black bean sauce, the bite-sized bitter gourd texture complementing the tender chicken pieces, and the sauce just pungent enough to mask the still remaining bitterness in the gourd.

This was followed by the leek with roasted pork. *Siew Yoke Chao Suen* – RM10. The leeks

ing home to "drink soup" on Sundays even if they're no longer living with their parents. This soup is usually left to boil for many hours and only ingredients which are known to be "cooling" are used for this type of soup.

Next came the *Tao Fu Yu*, steamed carp and soft bean curd in a sauce redolent with preserved soya bean sauce, mild chillies and garlic. As fresh water fish is not one of my favourites and this fish is also full of bones, I had one piece of the fish and concentrated on the bean curd. The taste was excellent though and had me

Recipe

by CAROL CHENG

MICROWAVED TOFU

It is undeniably true among Malaysians (especially from Kuala Lumpur and Penang) that Ipoh produces the best tofu that is cheaply available to housewives. Some restaurateurs from Kuala Lumpur have discreetly owned up to getting their daily supply of this nutritious vegetarian protein from Ipoh for their signature dishes. The following recipe is a very simple one and can be prepared without fuss in the microwave. This is very good for Christians observing their meatless diet.

Ingredients:

3 cakes of soft tofu
2 tbsp dried white

bait (*ngan yue chai* in Cantonese), rinsed
1 stalk lemongrass, 2-inches of white only, minced
2 shallots, minced
2 young kaffir lime leaves
2 tbsp soya sauce
2 tbsp cooking oil.



Method:

1. Cut tofu into 3 and line a microwavable plate with these.
2. Heat up 2 tbsp oil in a wok, fry shallots, minced lemongrass and white bait till crispy. Pour all these over the tofu and microwave it on medium high heat for 3 minutes.
3. Garnish with finely sliced kaffir lime leaves and 2 tbsp soya sauce.

Note: If you do not own a microwave, this plate can be steamed in your rice cooker, but change the container to a metal or stainless steel plate, following the same method. Do not leave it too long in the rice cooker, otherwise the tofu will be spongy and drowned in its own juice. Soya sauce can be added in last or at the same time before steaming.

LETTER FROM ULU KINTA

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

writer's email: letterulukinta@yahoo.com

Ipoh has a shortage of green lungs and the old polo ground, Taman Rekreasi Sultan Abdul Aziz, is unique. It is within reach of the city centre, it has a commanding view of the hills, the track is peppered with exercise stations, the water feature teeming with pondlife and the foot reflexology path, are well-liked by children and adults. It is my favourite place to jog. Unfortunately, its popularity may also spell its demise. The track is easily congested and the noise is so jarring, especially on weekend mornings, when the obscenely loud music and ridiculous chants of the aerobic instructor are most annoying. I believe she is immune to the racket she creates – a perfect example that loud noise over the years does make one deaf and oblivious to the well-being of others.

What used to be a park frequented by a select few is now oversubscribed. It is quieter, less tiresome and infinitely better to jog on the surrounding roads (a view shared by other dedicated joggers).

After limbering up at the park, my alternative running circuit is an amble along Jalan Brash, a quickening of the pace on Jalan Kelab Golf, until, at the picturesque St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, I'd run at speed along the long

straight stretch of Jalan Tun Dr Ismail. After veering left into Lorong Rani, I'd end up at the Hokkien Cemetery in Persiaran Harimau. This marks the turning point whereby I'd return to the polo ground, via Lorong Tun Dr Ismail, and Persiaran Brash.

Nothing beats a pleasant jog along broad leafy avenues of dappled sunlight. With intermittent traffic, it was safe. The grand colonial mansions and their equally interesting gardens were a sight for sore eyes. The accompanying bird song was like music to my ears.

Popularity – A Menace?

Lately, things have changed. Mobile hawkers ply their trade at the polo ground. Parking is difficult. Littering is a problem. Residents by the park claim that Mat Rempits are a nightly nuisance. The feverish pace of development in this area risks it looking like a high-class slum. The grand dwellings have gone and are replaced by homes of garish design, all aiming to be taller, larger and more ostentatious than its neighbour.

Houses edge close to the boundary fence. Gone is a sense of proportion. Homes lie in the shadow of another. Excessive amounts are spent on massive characterless, disproportionate structures, with

a postage-stamp sized garden – which is mostly concreted over anyway. No light. No style. No taste.

Aesthetics Compromised

I remain convinced that the decision to uproot and replace the beautiful flowering roadside trees is because royal palms present less work to the council. Someone decided to compromise aesthetics for minimum effort. Black bin bags dot the roadside, often 'teasingly' piled under big red signs prohibiting the dumping of rubbish. The council might be forgiven for a few days delay in collection, but for several weeks? This is inexcusable.

Increasing Pollution

In addition, residents suffer from higher levels of noise pollution and by-products of combustion. Cars conveniently use Persiaran/Laluan Harimau and Lorong Tun Dr Ismail as short-cuts to avoid the jams along Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tiger Lane), Jalan Raja Dr Nazrin (Gopeng Road) and Jalan Raja DiHilir (Tambun Road), the principal arterial roads.

Vehicles, including heavy lorries, criss-crossing this residential area have multiplied. Road surfaces are terribly potholed, with crumbling

sides from encroaching grass verges. Frustrated residents say that their complaints for road repairs remain unheeded. My exercise routine has become nerve-racking as vehicles whizz past, with inches to spare, sometimes spraying me with muddy water from the pot-holes or when it's dry, to coat me with dust.

The monsoon drains are trenches of vegetative growth, which overflow after a downpour. Where growth is substantial, roots have forced cracks into the concrete. Excess water, unable to flow away, create stagnant pools. It is unsurprising we wage a losing war against dengue. I recall a time when dedicated maintenance crews, led by a supervisor, would ensure that the drains were free-flowing and cleared of debris, the grass verges tendered properly and rubbish, collected regularly. Sadly, all that remains are distant memories.

Snakes And Mosquito Haven

Persiaran Harimau presents new threats. The borders of the cemetery and rampant undergrowth, dense patches of encroaching lalang, shrubs on the road shoulder and overhanging branches from unkempt trees, are an eyesore but hide another danger.

It is daunting for the residents, especially those with young children and the elderly. They live in abject fear, unable to enjoy the tranquility of their own gardens, where they risk being bitten by mosquitoes and snakes. One unhappy grandparent revealed that there was a reluctance and dread among the grandchildren to visit. A council which regularly and routinely services the area would inevitably reduce this reptilian menace and dengue threat.

Cheng Beng was celebrated recently. The

gravesite and tombstones had their spring clean. Appropriate rituals to appease departed souls were conducted. Unfortunately, the opposite exists for the living. Joss stick wrappers, plastic bags and packaging materials were chucked helter-skelter nearby.

Pleas To Council Fall On Deaf Ears

I am in full agreement with residents of the area who have called (unsuccessfully, thus far) on the council to clear the undergrowth, clear the drains, clean the area up and maintain these busy side roads.

Road users and those who litter the area indiscriminately would do well to realise that residents of Laluan Harimau mourn the fact that they not only have to live amongst wildlife but that few respect their wishes.

YMM

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB DISCOURSE

The National Press Club held its first series of national discourse in Ipoh recently. The topic of the forum was aptly named "The Perak Crisis" and was held at the Ipoh Town Hall.

Speakers on the panel were prominent lawyer Dato' Shafee Abdullah, UMNO legal adviser Dato' Hafarizam Harun and "countryside lawyer" and head of the DAP Perak Legal Aid Bureau, Nga Hoc Cheh. Moderator was blogger Syed Akbar Ali.

Press Club Chairman and popular blogger, Ahirudin Attan aka Rocky Bru, said that the reason for the discourse was to encourage healthy debate on cur-



Discourse in progress. Ahirudin Attan on extreme right

rent issues. By holding the forum outside KL, the club hoped to establish rapport with the populace and to touch base with local journalists and bloggers.

The forum covered issues pertaining to the Perak crisis including the upcoming state legislative assembly on May 7. All relevant clauses in the federal and state constitutions

were discussed. Lawyer Nga insisted that the state legislative assembly be dissolved and a fresh election be held. But this was opposed by the other two panelists. The participation from the floor was healthy and well facilitated. More than 200 turned up for the forum much to the delight of the organisers.

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MY MOTHER, MY INSPIRATION

In this issue, Claire Bong shares how her mother single-handedly raised her and how they have remained best friends till today. She dedicates her story to all mothers and wishes them, "Happy Mother's Day".

In this issue, Claire Bong shares how her mother single-handedly raised her and how they have remained best friends till today. She dedicates her story to all mothers and wishes them, "Happy Mother's Day".

Mothers are a tremendous source of inspiration. After all, they bore us, nurtured us, clothed us, sacrificed all they had for us and showered us with unconditional love. They inspire us to be the best that we can ever be.

Many people who have met my mom and I, liken us to the Gilmore Girls. We are like best friends, always laughing, chatting and doing things together. We share clothes, enjoy listening to the same music and like the same food. We share a very strong bond – not just as mother and child, but also as great friends.

SINGLE PARENTING

I am the only child of my parents. The year my mom turned 29, my father

passed away in a motor vehicle accident two weeks short of my fifth birthday. Her world crumbled.

Life was not easy for mom as a single parent. With so many hats to wear, she had to be both a mother and a father to me. Ma-ma (my maternal grandmother) came to live with us so mom could go back to work. But of course Ma-ma and I were always up to mischief behind mom's back. Occasionally we were caught, but I was let off the hook because 'Ma-ma should have known better than to encourage such mischief'.

Mom never failed to provide. I had piano lessons and art classes to bring out the creativity in me. Swimming lessons to ensure I had enough exercise. An assortment of toys to keep me entertained. Ma-ma also cooked plenty of nourishing food to ensure that I grew up healthy.

Mom made sure I was independent enough to take care of myself at a young age. Because of this, I never really felt



Claire Bong and mum

lonely or that I was half an orphan because I did not have siblings or a father around. It helped that mom kept the memory of dad alive by placing pictures of the three of us all over our home.

Many would think that bringing up one child is easier than bringing up a few. I'm certain mom would beg to differ. One or five, children are always more than two handfuls, a lot of frustration and a huge responsibility. It was harder for my mother being a single parent.

There were countless

times where I disobeyed mom and wanted things my way. But mom would always win. "Mommy knows everything," was her line. She was right. I could never hide anything from her. It was like she had eyes at the back of her head. She would say "Being a mommy is fun because mummies know everything. I know you did something but I don't want to burst your bubble. I want you to tell me yourself because you're old enough and you are a responsible girl." That never failed to hit my guilt

button and I would end up bursting my own bubble.

MY BEST FRIEND

My friends often think I fear my mother because I would tell her the 5Ws of where I am. When I was younger, yes, I was afraid she would reprimand me if I didn't tell her the truth. But as I grew older, I realised that by telling her what I was doing, where I was going and with whom I was with, I was demonstrating my respect and love for her.

I have seen mom go through many trials and tribulations in life, holding her hand sometimes. Mom had a lot to deal with – being a single mother, the sole bread winner, being a sister, a daughter and more. She always told me that whenever she felt like giving up on life, or whenever she felt like she was all alone in the world, she would take one look at me and all her worries would melt away.

Through all the difficulties, mom never gave up. She always

maintained the facade of a superstar – strong, beautiful and confident. She is one of the strongest women I have ever known in my life and I am deeply appreciative of the example she has set for me.

My mother inspires me in many ways – to respect others, to always have faith and give my best.

She taught me that even though things may suck sometimes, we just have to wait out the storm and things will always look up in the end.

Happy Mother's Day. I love you mom (but then I'm sure you know that already) :)

We invite you to share how your parent has been a role model to you so others may draw inspiration from him/her. Email your stories (about 700 words) to ipohecho.parenting@gmail.com, along with a scanned photograph of your parent. We will feature the best stories here!

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YOUNG PERAK

by PETER KHIEW

Teachers and students from schools are invited to write about their respective institutions of learning.

E-mail articles to: ipohecho.pk@gmail.com

YOUNG TIGER WOODS



St George's Institution, Taiping, has a new champion in its school. He is dubbed as the Tiger Woods of Taiping by his teachers and classmates. Yes, junior golfer Low Khai Jei, a Form One student, has been making waves lately. First, he secured the overall title in the Under-12 category for the Elite-Premier circuit winning three of the five legs. Next, Low has always finished as one of the top five in the Under-12 category at the SportExcel golf circuits.

Last year, he completed the season on a winning note when he bagged the Under-12 category at the SportExcel Junior Open Circuit grand finals. Low also made his school proud by chalking up victories at the Gunung Raya Golf Resort in Langkawi.

To acknowledge his achievement, the Old Georgians Association, during its 46th Annual dinner recently, presented Low with a plaque. Its president Paul Loh Eng Wah said current students should emulate his determination and tenacity to succeed by being actively involved in curricular activities.

PREFECTS TO THE FORE

A school prefect's responsibility is to ensure that students abide by school rules, but when prefects go the extra mile to paint the school walls, they truly deserve a pat on the back. SMK Pinji is fortunate to have such caring student leaders. Whenever they see the walls of the school toilets or classrooms are stained, a unit of four prefects is mobilised. Armed with brushes, rollers and paint, the prefects would give a touch to the spot, keeping it spic and span. Other students would join in and together they would make SMK Pinji spotlessly clean.



Prefects painting a school wall

INTER-SCHOOL DEBATE WINNER



It was a tough journey for SMK Methodist (ACS) debaters before it was adjudged winner at the 44th Rotary Club Inter-School debate involving secondary schools in Ipoh.

The first round, on April 2, was against SMK Tarcisian Convent. ACS was represented by Jagraj Singh, Krizun Loganathan and Choong Wai Keong with Wong Mun Choong as reserve. The motion was "Neither a Borrower or a Lender Be". ACS Ipoh argued its way through and qualified for the second round.

On April 6, ACS faced-off with SMK Main Convent, opposing the motion "TV Has a More Significant Role to Play in Modern Life than the Computer". After an awesome display of oratorical skills, ACS emerged winner.

The final on April 9 held at the Chinese Chin Woo Hall, was between ACS and SMK Anderson Ipoh. ACS proposed the motion, "Corporal Punishment Has a Negative Effect on Society". With supporters from various schools filling the 800-seat hall, both teams gave their best.

SMK Methodist (ACS) Ipoh won for the second year in a row. The best speaker award went to ACS's Krizun Loganathan. The debaters attributed their success to their coach cum mentor, Miss Foo Suit Mooi, for her guidance. They thanked their schoolmates who turned up in the

hundreds to cheer them on.

The Rotary Club debate is based on the Australasian format where a motion is given an hour before a debate starts.

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LIBRARY OPENING TIME

How are we to inculcate reading habits in the rakyat when the Perak State Library along Jalan Raja Dihilir, Ipoh, which for years is opened on Sunday, is now closed. Working adults only have time to use the facilities during weekends. On Saturday, the opening hours end at 3pm while it is 6pm on weekdays. I feel it is too early for the public to go to the library at 9am (opening time was at 10am previously).

What is the justification for this? Is it to cut costs during the economic downturn? When the government is taking measures to improve delivery system and the public service sector is becoming more responsive, there is one government agency which is doing just the opposite.

Ipohites deserve better and those responsible should be more empathetic. A public library, in essence, should remain public not a private entity.

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IPOH IN BRIEF

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SAVE YOUR KIDNEYS!



(R-L) NKF ambassador Azizi with the Leo team

The Leo Club of SMK Anderson, Ipoh, launched a 'Save Your Kidneys' campaign on the 1st of April with the help of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF). According to the NKF, kidney disease is not only occurring in older people, but also in young people. With a yearly increase of patients requiring dialysis treatment, there is a great need in raising public awareness on this health issue.

In order to support the NKF, the Andersonian Leos have raised approximately RM500 for the foundation and are looking forward to raising more funds through sales of a series of merchandise, including the debut album 'Kamu Semua' of rising star Azizi Zakaria, who is also the Teen Ambassador of NKF. There are 22 dialysis centres nationwide at the moment, two in Perak, one in Ipoh and the other in Taiping, with one more centre opening in Kota Kinabalu. In order to continue giving subsidized dialysis treatments, RM4.5 million needs to be raised this year. You can support NKF by contacting Leo Club President Justin Yee at: 016-5663736. Donors will receive a free mug for every donation of RM20, or four fridge magnets for every RM10.

PIC-ROBIC AT POLO GROUND

It was an outing with a difference for some 40 stroke patients from NASAM (National Stroke Association of Malaysia). Instead of carrying out their routine physiotherapy at the association's premises in Pasir Putih, they gathered at Polo Ground recently for a more intense workout. The change of environment provided them with an opportunity to mingle with the public. The *pic-robic* (picnic cum aerobic) involved physical exercises with the accompaniment of music. The programme allowed volunteers' participation in helping out with aerobics, *tai chi*, hand clapping and some fancy movements. For details on NASAM please call the association at 05-3211089.



The Ipoh Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Perak (ISPCA), has been around since the mid-eighties, rescuing and caring for hundreds of animals. This year, the ISPCA's Annual Charity Dinner kick started with a ribbon cutting ceremony followed by a welcome address by ISPCA President Dr Goh Hue

ISPCA ANNUAL CHARITY DINNER

Lang. In her speech, Dr Goh urged all who were at the dinner to accept the reality of unwanted animals and to support and encourage the spread of animal welfare. This can be done by neutering our pets to prevent breeding which causes the increase of unwanted animals and by making sure that the pets live in conditions that are hygienic. Emphasis was also placed on the need for pet owners to be considerate about the feelings of their neighbours. Dr Goh ended her speech by saying that "The riches that you have is in the kindness of your heart".

The night carried on with guests being entertained with Latin dances performed by Nicholas Tan, Sylvia Lee, Kenneth Tan and Chan June Nee and a selection of songs performed by Estee Pok, Chan Yew Joe and Mr Yogaswaran. Though the ISPCA has helped hundreds of animals, it still faces its fair share of obstacles, among them being the lack of funds and manpower. Thus, those interested in contributing in cash or kind or in becoming members of the ISPCA can contact the shelter at: **016-5608905**.

KIWANIS CHARITY CARNIVAL



A charity carnival was organised by the Kiwanis Club of Ipoh to raise funds for children with Downs Syndrome. Held recently at Kinta City, this event kicked off with a children's

party and continued throughout the school holiday week with competitions and performances. The highlights of the charity carnival included a hip hop dance contest and kids' belly dancing which showcased the talents and passion of many young dancers in this art. The crowd

was also entertained with Line Dancing, and Latin and Ballroom dancing performances. Besides dances, there was a presentation on recycling and reusing by Don and Mylene from the Green Crusaders, which introduced practical ways in which one could help save the environment, a hair 'cut-a-thon' and a hair show by professional hairdressers. The charity carnival ended with a mini concert by Lisa Yeoh and a mask changing show which left audiences amazed at the speed and dexterity of the mask-changer.

GEORGIAN DO

It was a family gathering of sorts at the 46th Annual Reunion Dinner of the Old Georgians' Association Taiping where some 500 former students of SMK St George turned up to meet their former teachers and classmates. It was also an opportunity to meet up with long lost friends and to rekindle friendships. Thanking the former

students for the "homecoming", its president Paul Loh Eng Wah said their efforts in attending the dinner was reflective of their support and commitment towards the cause of the alma mater and Old Georgians alike.

Among those present at the dinner were representatives of all the LaSallian schools in Malaysia, former students, Dato' Ng Tieh Chuan, the CEO of the MPH



(L-R) Harneak Singh rep. of Old Michaelian Association, H.E. Yean Yoke Heng and Brother Matthew Bay

Group of companies in Malaysia and His Excellency Yean Yoke Heng, Ambassador of Malaysia to the Republic of Cuba.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ABANDONED HOUSING PROJECT



The abandoned housing project in Taman Perpaduan Permai, Bercham

Buyers of houses in Taman Perpaduan Permai, Bercham, are seeing red when developer, Trinity Home Builders, abandoned the project in 2002 after completion of the first phase. The developer is presently under receivership.

According to Ong Khong Ken, the spokes-

man for the Taman Permai House Committee, buyers are still paying for their loans. They had engaged the law firm Ngeh & Co to take up their case. But no action has resulted and they were unable to meet with their lawyer, state assemblyman Dato' Ngeh Koo Ham. An inquiry with the lawyer's office revealed otherwise. According to

a staff member, the law firm had initiated actions to resolve the long-standing problem.

Syarikat Perumahan Negara Berhad, meanwhile, had submitted a report on the abandoned project to the Housing Ministry last year. However, it could not provide Ipoh Echo with a copy when asked.

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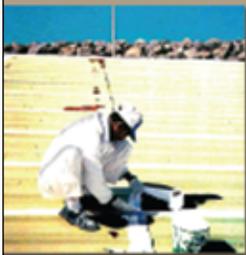
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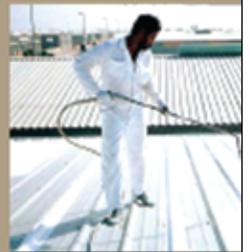
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THERMO-SHIELD R Roof System is considered a Space Age technology, in its own class. The materials used are similar to those applied in the insulating and reflective tiles found on the NASA space shuttle. It functions to effectively dissipate and reflect solar radiation back into the atmosphere. The polymers used expand when wet, offering protection against damaging moisture penetration and shrink when dry, facilitating moisture evaporation that helps prevent blistering.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

POLICE CADET CORPS ACS SITIAWAN



ACS Sitiawan Cadet Corps

It was an auspicious moment for members of the Anglo Chinese Secondary School, Sitiawan Cadet Corps when they were invited to participate in a parade to commemorate Police Day at the newly completed Manjung Police Headquarters complex recently.

Afhvin Raj 16, a sergeant and the leader of the school's police cadet corps, said that it was the first time the unit had been invited to participate in a parade of such nature. He was overjoyed.

When asked why he chose to become a police cadet he said, "I have

always admired police personnel in uniform. There are opportunities for youths from the Indian community to join the force." He added that most of his friends in the unit felt the same way and would join the force when the time comes.

Afhvin and his friends had participated in live shooting practices on two occasions and were enthralled by the experience. The unit trains every Saturday at the school ground. The emphasis on discipline, honesty and good bearing, as is required of police personnel, make up for the deprivations he faces daily. Afhvin aspires to be

a police officer when he graduates from college. His parents, especially his mother, G. Letchumy, are very supportive of him. He scored 7 As in his PMR examination last year and is certain of maintaining his grades in the coming examinations.

Afhvin's sister, Sharonsheela, is an undergraduate at a university in Bangi while his brother, Kelvin, is attending National Service training presently. Afhvin plays soccer for his school and futsal for his club, the Manjung Youngsters.

SAMINATHAN

BOOK REVIEW

Images 1909 - 2009, Centennial Anniversary, Anderson School is truly a Perakian and a Malaysian book. Readers will engage in an epic voyage through a span of a hundred years into Anderson School's history and progress. The many black and white images of Anderson School add 'colour' to the passages in this coffee table publication.

Readers are taken in chronological order through pertinent events that have shaped Anderson School. The information on both the World Wars and the school's role in those trying times are an interesting read.

A foreword message dated June 1959 by the School Principal, Mr Martin Ogle (1957-1965) captures my attention. He envisaged that every youth who walked through the gates of Anderson would be provided with wholesome education. He encouraged extra-curricular initiatives in line with youth development, with such vigor, rarely seen in leaders today.

School History

The section begins with a photograph under the caption, A Name That

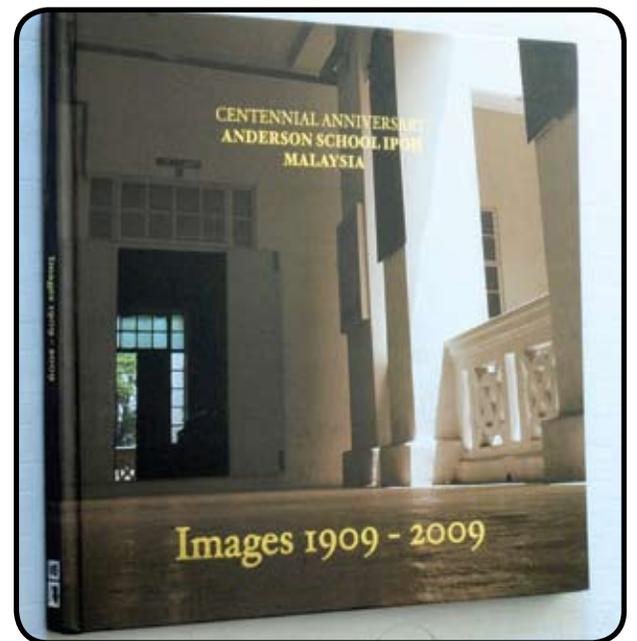


Photo by Mariyam Abdullah

Befits Honour, showing a gallant Sir (Dr) John Anderson, K.C.M.G, in full uniform. Anderson School was named after this highly distinguished civil servant.

However, Images 1909-2009, seems to have omitted a rather pertinent fact about the existence of the school. In, Lord of Kinta by Datin Rogahaya Eusoff, Chapter 4 - Anderson School, it is explicitly stated that the government had decided to set up an English school (Anderson School) to cater to Malay students who had difficulty in gaining admission to Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) and who were reluctant to attend other English schools such as the Anglo-Chinese School.

Sir John Anderson may have spearheaded this move and taken heed of the government's call, resulting in the school being named in his honour.

Recollections

The entries in this section are original heartfelt stories by proud Andersonians who, without fear or favour, have penned their thoughts in Recollections.

Throughout the book, Anderson's theme phrase "To Strive, To Seek, To Find and Not To Yield," is repeated as a constant reminder to readers of the role Anderson School played in shaping the lives and views of these men in their youths. I found the

phrase inspiring, projecting undeterred determination.

Vista Of A New Frontier

This section is a collection of pressing issues raised by a number of Old Boys, with regard to the future direction of Anderson School.

Whither Anderson School? Dr I. Lourdesamy, Ph.D speaks on the current state of affairs of the school from an administrative angle to its core business, education. He proudly states that his father was the school gardener, which speaks volumes for the school and of Dr I. Lourdesamy, as an individual.

Conclusion

Overall, Images 1909-2009, is informative and, therefore, is a good source of information for researchers in the development of premier schools in Malaysia. This coffee table book is the result of a compiled contribution by different generations of Andersonians, reflecting their aspirations for their alma mater, Anderson School Ipoh.

Priced at RM130 this 80-page book is available at the Old Andersonians' Club, Ipoh. A generous discount is given for bulk purchase. Please call: **012-5016385** or **019-2774282** for details.

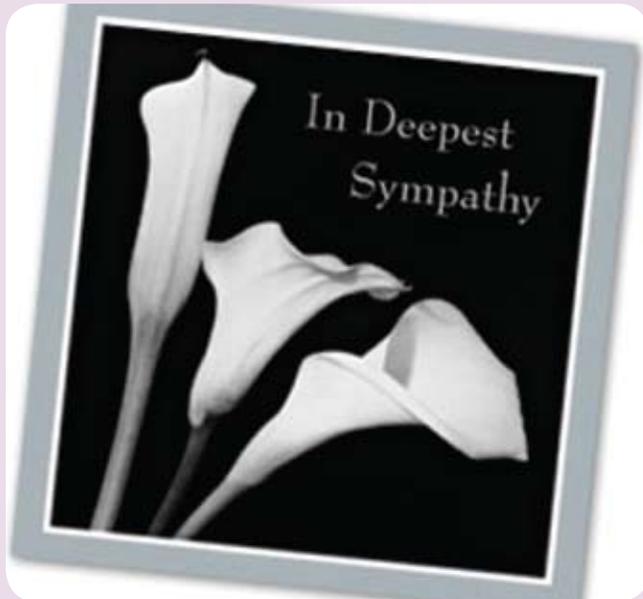
CHELVI MURUGIAH

A TRIBUTE

A FRIEND TO THE END

On Christmas Day December 25, 2008 I found a missed call on my hand phone. But I chose to ignore it thinking it was another of those greeting calls one gets at this time of the year. The following day I received a voice mail. "Linus this is Tia. I am now at Selayang Hospital diagnosed with liver cancer. Come over before I die." Tia was a retired major. We had been friends since the day I joined the army over 40 years ago. In August 2008 we had travelled through Indonesia, Thailand and Laos. How could this be possible? He never complained about his health when I was with him.

I froze in my tracks and after regaining my composure, called a friend in KL to check on Tia. A few hours later, Jalil rang me from Tia's room. "Linus he's in bad shape," he whispered. Seconds later I heard Tia's voice, "Brother, when are you coming?" I felt bad and all I could utter was to ask him to hang on till I am there. Days later I received more calls from friends who had visited



him. On January 10, 2009, I got a text message saying that Tia would be moving out to a retirement home in Petaling Jaya. I told my friends to go to the home and cheer him up since it was his birthday. They did just that.

On January 23, I flew out of Kuching and on reaching KLIA took a cab straight to Tia's place. Shafique, Shanon, Maniam, Shamsul and Ling were already there. Tia, looking frail and sunken, was there with the rest. He seemed as cheerful as always. He took a swipe at me for "missing the fun" although

there was hardly a drop of beer to go around. We talked about the good old days when we were deep in the jungles chasing after insurgents and how our paths criss-crossed. While we indulged in small talk, I took the opportunity to ask Tia what had happened. "I wanted to repent and lay off drinking for good," he replied. A month later his health took a dive. He got himself admitted and was diagnosed with Hepatitis B which would lead to liver cancer.

Was it a wake up call or was it something else? Whatever it was, the Lord

had opened His door to welcome him Home. Tia got himself baptised and became a Christian.

On February 11, a woman's voice came on my cell phone. It was Tia's wife, Teresa. "Linus, Tia passed away at 5 this morning," she said in between sobs. I had never spoken to Teresa for over two decades. How did she get my number? Could Tia have reminded her to do so? I could not figure out. It was exactly a month after his 65th birthday. True to his word, Tia had waited for me till his last breath.

"Sorry ma'am," was about all I could muster. I felt terrible. My old buddy had gone and I am nowhere near him. I rang up all my friends in KL and informed them of Tia's demise. I could not do much as I was in Kuching. At his funeral all manner of people - white, yellow, brown, black, Muslims and non-Muslims - were there to pay homage to a dear old friend who wore the same uniform once.

Life is short, I told myself. Make the best while you can and always count your blessings.

LINUS LUNSONG

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