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JUNE 16 - 30, 2009 PP 14252/10/2009(022651)

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NEWS



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HOOKED ON HAWKERS



The economic downturn has brought more people out on the streets in Ipoh, literally. As more people are losing their jobs and livelihood, many have resorted to starting their own food business and many hawker stalls are mushrooming in the city. Will this trend help boost or denigrate Ipoh's reputation as a food haven, known for its hawker specialties and other restaurant delectables?

Continued on page 2

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Proliferation of hawkers resulting from economic downturn

Ipoh has always been famous for its food, and people come all the way from Penang, Kuala Lumpur or even Malacca to have lunch or dinner during weekends.

Ipoh Echo spoke to a new hawker who started a food stall about 9 months ago because there were signs of an economic downturn which is affecting his company. He observed that a number of companies are downsizing and have offered their staff VSS (voluntary separation scheme) or reduced their number of work days and with it a pay cut.

Being a proactive sort, he decided to set up a stall at night while he was still working, in anticipation of being laid off. His reasons for going into the hawker business were simple: relatively low risk and low capital; coffee shops usually rent out their space for RM8-20 per day which includes water and electricity, so if the hawker business does not take off there is minimum loss. Hence he has not applied for a license yet in case it does not work out and the reason for his anonymity.

Not all hawkers set up and rent space in coffee shops with running water and electricity though. A large number set themselves up by the roadside and as more hawker stalls proliferate, some from excellent home cooks while others out of sheer necessity and survival, the primary concern for the general public is the matter of hygiene and health standards.

MBI Involvement

Dato' Abdul Rahim, Acting MBI Secretary, said that he was aware of the problem. He assured that the Health Department

is carrying out regular inspection on food safety as well as ensuring that the hawkers are licensed and comply with regulations. Licenses are only issued to applicants who satisfy the stringent requirements.

New Sites

In order to cope with the increase in the number of hawkers, existing hawker food courts are being extended and new sites are being identified. Over the past 2 years MBI has opened 2 hawker centres, one in Kampong Manjoi and the other in Klebang. However only few hawkers have opened stalls preferring rather to set up in more popular locations.

En. Johari, Pmg. Pengarah Kesihatan Bandaraya, said that his department was responsible for issuance of hawker licences as well as enforcement. Hawkers must be vaccinated before they can start operating and must attend a Food Hygiene Course. It is mandatory that not only the proprietor but all employees attend this course.

He added that errant hawkers are issued with summonses and those without licenses are fined. However, quite often those who have been summoned plead for leniency because they are unable to pay the fine. En. Johari concluded that the street food sector must be included in urban planning and development to make it a sustainable business. This will prevent the creation of illegal hawker centres.

The Hawker Management Unit inspects hawkers twice a month to ensure that they comply with hygiene standards and takes action against errant hawkers. Action is also taken against those



Busy Food Court

hawking in non approved premises and without a license. Hawker centres must have basic amenities such as piped water, electricity, proper waste disposal, clean toilets and wash basins to wash hands. However it is questionable whether they can actually cover the vast number of stalls that open up.

Hazardous Practices

Problems arise when hawkers do not dispose of their food waste properly with drains becoming clogged, giving rise to scenes of rats running around in stalls. When no piped water is available, vendors will wash their dishes at home at the end of their shift but if clean dishes run out and business is brisk during business hours, they'll rinse dishes in a pail of water. Add to this, the fact that some do not clean up after closing and the resultant situation may be hazardous to the consumer.

It is a common practice for hawkers to prepare food with their bare hands as well as accepting payment themselves. Currency, because of its high turnover, being passed from hand to hand, is the single most contaminating source of bacteria and simultaneous handling of food and money contributes to food borne illness. The same person should not handle food and cash.

Wrong Perception

Consumers International discovered that 30 percent of consumers in the Klang Valley and Muar fell ill after eating street food, according to a survey carried out last year. The finding should be applicable to Ipoh as well. Most consumers do not officially lodge a complaint when falling ill after eat-



Mobile Hawker Stall

ing outside. Many feel that as long as there is no food poisoning after eating at a particular place, the food is clean. This is a wrong perception as non-hygienic food preparation can have long term effects on the body. The bacteria and pos-

sibly, parasites, may linger in the body and symptoms can manifest later.

The new Food Hygiene Regulations Act 2009 which was passed earlier this year is expected to be implemented early next year. Meanwhile,

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai announced in June 2009 that the Health Ministry would expand its Food Safety and Quality Division and stall operators would be monitored more closely.

A. JEYARAJ



Fixed stall in hawker centre – note food behind glass for hygiene purposes

TIPS FOR CONSUMERS ON CHOOSING HAWKERS:

- Wearing clean and proper attire (apron)
- Wearing head cover (scarf, cap)
- Have good personal hygiene (short and clean fingernails, not smoking, spitting, coughing onto food, not using bare hands to handle cooked food, using a clean towel, not licking and using fingers to taste food)
- Cooked food not stacked on top of another during display, storing or serving
- Use separate towels for wiping tables, utensils and for drying hands
- Food not prepared near toilets or drain
- Not located very near to the roadside and heavy traffic
- Using clean glassware and plates (not cracked or chipped)
- Clean and safe areas for food preparation
- Free from pests including cats, dogs, rodents, flies, insects, birds and vermin
- Observe good personal hygiene and handling practices
- Food should be covered
- Order preferably hot-freshly-cooked food by the portion.

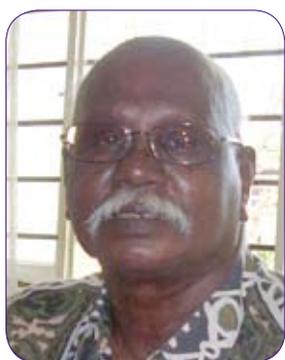
PRO-ACTIVE COUNCILLORS

2008 was an eye opening year for most residents of Ipoh City who until last year did not know who their local councillor representing each of the 22 zones was. When a new batch of councillors was sworn-in, in July, they freely shared their mobile numbers and some even their email addresses with their residents.

Where they used to take their issues to the state assemblyman, the residents have now found themselves with a local voice acting between them and MBI instead, a state of affairs which they're hoping will continue.

Ipoh Echo was informed that zones 8 and 10 were active and decided to check them out.

Zone 8 consists of the housing estates of Tembok, Taman Cherry and Taman Lim while Zone 10 comprises Simee, Taman Ipoh and Taman Canning.



Paul Devadason of Taman Idris

Councillor for Zone 8 was Y.Bhg En Rajasegaran. Mr Paul Devadason, the chairman of the residents committee of Taman Idris and Taman Cherry invited Rajasegaran to their residents meeting where they discussed their issue of clogged drains, clearance of bulk rubbish and flash floods. Not only did Rajasegaran sit through the entire 3-hour meeting but showed up the very next day together with contractors and had trees trimmed, dried and dead branches removed and clogged drains cleared.

Not only were the residents pleased but they were so impressed that they registered their resident committee with the Registrar of Societies and now are officially known as 'Pertubuhan Penduduk Taman Idris dan Taman Cherry'. "We now have an 'official voice'", said Paul proudly. Their only outstanding issue now is flash floods which, according to Paul, was a "major engineering problem which would require funding to tackle the issue".



K.H. Tan & wife at Taman Wah Keong. Notice the 2 tone shades on the wall of the drain – denoting the new and older walls.



Dr Ng Yook Sun from Taman Hock Lee.

Zone 10's councillor was Mr Liu Then Tui. Dr Ng Yook Sun is the chairman of the residents committee for Ipoh Garden and Canning Garden. His first meeting with councillor Liu was a working 3-hour walkabout to see first hand their issues. The next day councillor Liu together with the contractors cleared clogged drains, tidied up the uncut grass and removed uncollected branches.

To identify the root cause of flash floods in his area Dr Ng and councillor Liu went out one rainy day and inspected every drain junction from Taman Hock Lee to Fair Park. They concluded that the culvert under the bridge at Fair Park was small causing the flow of water to bottleneck. According to Dr Ng, Liu did a report which was handed to the Mayor.

For Tan Koon Hock, a businessman and resident of Taman Wah Keong, Simee, "councillor Liu is more than just a friend". "You can never find this kind of person", added his wife.

Behind Tan's house is a monsoon drain which for twenty years had never overflowed. Two years ago when PLUS began widening the highway between Jalan Tasek and Jalan Kuala Kangsar they noticed the water level rising whenever it rained. This was because water from two streams was being diverted to the drain, or so they were told. Even during a light rain the water level would rise.

Last year it overflowed

twice within ten days. Mrs Tan showed me a photo of the flood where the back lane was a flowing stream of water. Two years ago when Tan complained to MBI an inspector came but no action was taken.

This time when Liu got involved he solved the problem by raising the drain's wall by 2 feet. All this was done in less than 2 months. "He was so fast. I was so shocked", exclaimed Mrs Tan.

Indeed when a gotong-royong was organised at Mariaville and Ave Maria Convent (also in Zone

10) late last year, the turnout by the residents was more than the MBI workers. This prompted Mayor Roshidi to comment that he was pleased with the new development.

A new development indeed. Apparently the positive actions of pro-active councillors have managed to raise the bar of civic consciousness which has been dormant for a long time. Hopefully the new batch of recently sworn in councillors will perform likewise. That would be a gain for Ipoh.

JAMES GOUGH

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Perak Academy talk: 'China & the Asian Century' by Mr Bunn Nagara. Friday, **June 19, 2009, 7.30-9.30 p.m.** at: Level 11, Tower Regency Hotel, 27 Jalan Dato' Seri Ahmad Said, Ipoh. Entrance Fee: RM40 per person (inclusive dinner). The talk focuses on the rise of China; its development and the consequences within, and its impact on the East Asian region and the world. The speaker is a political analyst, columnist and Assoc. Editor of Star Publications (M) Bhd, an award-winning journalist and a specialist on East Asia. Please call or email for reservation: Tel.: **05-5478949** (Wai Kheng); Email: contact@perakacademy.com.

Century Ride 2009 starts at **7a.m. on July 19**. A 160-km non-stop event for road bikes only. Starts from Bkt Kinding to Kuala Kangsar, Sayong and back. Limited to 500 riders. For details visit www.kricycling.com or contact **Michael Beh (018-500288)**, **Choy (018-9500226)** or **Alice Chim (012-5068369)**. Registration closes on **July 12**.

All registered proprietors of **Prima Ipoh Condominium** are invited to attend the 2nd Management Corporation AGM on **June 17 at 6 p.m.** at the condo's community hall as the first MC has been declared as valid by MHLG. Notice is hereby given to Ng Wing Hong to make complete handover of the management to the first MC body within 7 days.

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IPOH – A FIREFLY AWAY



L-R: Hanson Lau (PCCCI), Dato Gan Tack Kong (FMM), Angelina Fernandez (Firefly), Dato' Khadri (DPMM Perak), Lim Si Boon (MICCI) and Yap Fu Fah (Parlo Tours).

Firefly Managing Director Eddy Leong and his team were in Ipoh June 8 to announce the much anticipated commencement of the Singapore-Ipoh flight effective July 12 2009.

The event was held at the State Secretariat Complex. Seen in attendance was the MATTA Perak Team, Perak Hoteliers Association Sec. General Nicholas Chan, the heads from the FMM and various Chambers of Commerce.

Angelina Fernandez, Firefly's Head of Marketing and Communications briefed the attendees about the operation.

The route will operate 4 times per week on Monday, Wednesday,

Friday and Sunday. The flight time takes 1 hour 20 minutes and departs from Changi Low Cost Terminal Singapore at 2.50 p.m. From Ipoh the departure time is 4.45pm. The ATR 72 500 aircraft can seat 72 passengers. The 1 way (all-in) fare from Ipoh to Singapore is RM88.

Everyone in attendance was looking forward to the inaugural flight. Apparently the sentiment from Singaporeans was similar. At a launch on June 6 in Singapore the Firefly team received a lot of enquiries about the Ipoh flight. Additionally the Ipohites living and working there indicated they planned to use the flight regularly.

JAG

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(Regd No 687483 T)

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THINKING ALOUD

The latest episode in the ongoing political saga in Perak was a 72-hour hunger strike by members of Pakatan Rakyat and its sympathisers. The intent apparently was to persuade the Sultan of Perak to dissolve the State Legislative Assembly. If they truly believed that His Highness was going to be moved by their act to dissolve the Assembly I would think that they have completely lost touch with reality. A much more pertinent question is whether the Sultan can in fact dissolve the Assembly. Surely they must know that even if the Sultan is minded to take their appeal seriously there is the matter of certain preconditions that must be met before this could transpire. What is more remarkable is that whilst on one hand PR maintains that the Sultan has no power to dismiss the Menteri Besar, they on the other hand assert that His Highness can in fact dissolve the whole Assembly on his own volition.

Not to be out done by PR's hunger strike UMNO members avowedly numbering several thousand al-



legedly fasted for a day, intending by this act to bring about the full restoration of peace and stability in the State. Though this event was to have taken place quietly without fanfare or much ado, it was nevertheless loudly announced by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir at an unrelated event and celebrated with a breaking of fast ceremony attended by some 1,000 guests at the Menteri Besar's official residence. So much for sacrifices claimed to have been made quietly.

I am quite certain that similar such events will follow. Our people have

the habit of adopting tactics that has engendered some publicity notwithstanding that it may have produced no results. Mind you looking at some of our politicians, missing a few meals might do many of them a world of good not only for their health, but the reality experience of what the poor have to endure day in and day out may remind them of their job.

When Gandhi fasted he achieved what he set out to accomplish. This was because he was quite prepared to fast to death and because he was so loved that millions were willing to go to great lengths to ensure that he did not. Our local politicians must

LETTER TO EDITOR

Send your letters to the Editor Ipoh Echo 1, Jalan Lasam, 30450 Ipoh or fax to 05-2552181 or email to ipohecho.fzb@gmail.com. Letters must have writer's full name, address and phone number. A pseudonym may be included.

LARUT HILLS

Since the departure of Philip Sankey who was the superintendent of the hills for many years, Maxwell Hills, as it was then known has been going downhill – if you will excuse the expression. Not since Sankey, has any of the successive superintendents shown any passion or imagination in its management.

It's not that the State Government has not been warned about the parlous state of the hills but neither the previous BN government nor the ex PR government took any notice. The Perak Tourist Association tried to give its input but neither government wanted to involve the Association. In fact the ex-PR Government would not even meet the PTA despite many requests for a meeting.

The trouble is, our governments think they know best when in fact they don't.

I understand the previous BN government was in discussion with some businessmen concerning the building of a cable car service up

the hills and this was taken over by the PR government. Whether it is a rail service or a cable car, both are hare brain ideas. In the first place it is financially unsustainable in which case it will eventually be left to rot and become an eyesore. There just isn't enough traffic to sustain such an investment. Even the present four-wheel drive service is under-utilised.

I understand that the Larut Hills is a financial drain on the state and as such it is reluctant to commit the required resources to keep the hills in a pristine condition. Unfortunately, proper maintenance is not something the state can scrimp on because that would only lead to higher costs later on to put it right. In it's present state it is a disgrace and it will only get worse when the hostel comes into operation.

Instead of trying to palm it off to the Taiping Municipal Council which I understand the State Government tried to do; it should think of ways to make it viable. The hills can be a money earner if managed properly. All it needs is the passion to want to do it properly; the

vision to see the potential it holds and the imagination to carry it out. Sad to say the State Government has none of these.

The Larut Hills must be developed sensitively if it is not to lose its natural attraction and also to serve as an effective catchment area. The State Government must resist the short-term temptation of fast money proffered by businessmen who want to make a fast buck without due regard to the damage they do to the hills.

Before the State Government embarks on creating yet another white elephant it should invite input from the public as well as the tourism stakeholders. It is time the State Government involves the stakeholders in the tourism industry as equal partners in developing Perak's tourist potential.

I am sure the Perak Tourist Association, which is the umbrella body for many tourism players, will be glad to share its expertise with the government if invited.

Yin Ee Kiong
Penang

THE HUNGER STRIKE

by G. SIVAPRAGASAM

admit the distance they are willing to travel in efforts of this kind is rather modest and the number of people they have endeared themselves to who would be willing to make any kind of sacrifice for them are very few, if they exist at all.

To add to the confusion the police decided to get into the act by arresting the participants of the event, including some of those employed to provide the infrastructure for the event. Little harm could have resulted from this protest. Indeed the arrests possibly transformed this minor event into a significant issue. The authorities need to realise that often threats are more effective than the actual act, for the unknown is always dreaded. Powers of arrest need to be used judiciously so that the fear of arrest remains an effective deterrent. By using it indiscriminately, its value becomes diminished.

The powers that be will do well to pay careful heed to former Prime Minister Badawi's parting words:-

"Umno is today at the crossroads. The path that we choose will determine whether we continue to remain relevant. Sadly, there are still those who feel that we do not need to pursue reforms. They believe that Umno will regain its glory if we revert to the old ways – the old order, by restricting the freedom of our citizens and by silencing their criticism.

If we revert to the old path – the path will take us to regression and decay and will hasten our demise. If we do not take courageous

steps to reform in the face of this dynamic transformation of society and the radical global changes taking place, then we shall live to witness the end of our beloved Umno."

This warning to UMNO is applicable equally to Malaysian society as a whole.

I am certain that I am not alone in wondering when all the politicking is going to cease and the serious business of managing the State is going to begin. I understand that the State Government has created a new think tank to construct a development plan for the State. Hopefully this body performs more meaningfully than the previous one set up under the last BN government. PR legislators could do a service to the people of Perak by monitoring this think tank, telling us what it is costing the people of Perak, its obligations under the terms of employment and how effective it is in carrying out its tasks.

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MUSINGS ON FOOD by See Foon Chan-Koppen

More pics at ipohecho on line seefoon@ipohecho.com.my



SeeFoon has memories of Milan in Ipoh

go there often. Now that I live in Ipoh, I have tried a few times to reproduce this much loved dish *Branzino salato al'forno* (salt baked seabass) at home but alas without much success. By chance I was introduced to a new restaurant recently that serves a dish quite similar to the Milanese version I so miss. The best surprise is that this is a Chinese restaurant, newly opened in Ipoh.

Soon Fatt – 15 years young

Located on Jalan Seenivasagam, Soon Fatt has actually been around for about 15 years. Started



as a 'Tai Chow' stall at the food court opposite the Excelsior Hotel, the restaurant is operated by a young couple, Chong Tack Ming and his wife Chan Foong Ho. Enterprising and dedicated, this committed duo will not allow any glitches to get in the way of their running the business. The day I was there, Foong Ho had brought her young daughter into the restaurant because her baby carer was

indisposed and she played happily on a blanket on the floor behind the cashier's counter while her mother was busy serving guests.



he'll come back to expose the underside for you, to avoid the risk of getting too much salt on the flesh. RM20 for the whole fish and highly recommended for those on a low fat and low carbohydrate diet.... not low salt however. I do miss the extra virgin olive oil that the Milanese version serves with their



whole and cut in chunks for serving – RM25 for half a chicken; kale braised with whole pig's trotter, *Kai Choy Mun Chu Sao* – RM25; Taro braised with spare ribs, *Wu Tao Mun Pai Kwat* – RM10; Mantis Prawn done either *Gong Po* – RM10 (dried chillies, dark soya, sugar, cashews) or *Lai Yau* – RM12 (butter, fried,) style; and their frogs legs with fried ginger – RM20.

fish though. I used to love drizzling it on my seabass. Perhaps Soon Fatt may consider serving this on the side as an option?

Loss Leader

For the past three months, Soon Fatt has very cleverly promoted their sharks fin soup in individual tureens at the incredible price of RM8.00 per portion. At that price, I was expecting heavy starch, surima or synthetic crab, and maybe even synthetic sharks fin but to my delight, the soup was thick without being too starchy, with chunks of chicken and real chunks of sharks fin! This, in the F&B business is known as a loss leader...one dish sold below cost to draw in the customers. When I was last there, it was certainly working. Not many ordered the sharks fin but they must have been lured in previously and found the food to their taste and kept coming back.

House Specialties

Some house specialties worthy of mention at Soon Fatt are their smoked chicken or *Yin Wu So Kai*, juicy and succulent chicken lightly smoked

Two noodle dishes worthy of mention are their *Tai Lok Meen*, fat Udon noodles fried in dark soya sauce with pork and lardons thrown in and their fried meehoon or vermicelli that comes like a pancake, slightly crispy at the edges and laced with meat, prawns and vegetables.

Soon Fatt is a bigish restaurant, able to seat about 400 people. There are 3 private rooms downstairs and 2 big ones upstairs, each able to accommodate 2 tables each. When opened up, the downstairs room can accommodate 4 tables and the upstairs, 5. A recent lunch in a private room there saw us sitting 15 at a table (the largest table they can muster) and all my friends were delighted at the new taste treats that were being introduced. All in all a welcome addition to the Ipoh food scene.

RESTORAN SOON FATT

42 Jalan Seenivasagam, 30450 Ipoh
Tel: 05-2436864
11.00 a.m.-2.30 p.m.
5.00 p.m.-10.30 p.m.

FOOD CHEE CHEONG FUN

The review on kopitiam has been postponed to a later issue. We apologise to those of you who are anticipating going on a kopitiam-hopping spree.

Instead, we have done a review of chee cheong fun. The direct translation of *chee cheong fun* is: pig's intestine noodle. The noodle when rolled up resembles that of the pig's intestine. The rice noodle sheets are made from a viscous mixture of rice flour and water. This liquid is poured onto a specially-made flat pan in which it is steamed to produce the square rice sheets. Some are made plain or with bits of dried prawns or barbecued pork (*char siu*) embedded. The noodle is cut from folded sheets into strips and looks very much like *kuey teow* but has a much softer texture. *Chee cheong fun* is served with different sauces, namely: chilli sauce, sweet sauce (*teem cheong*), savoury mushroom sauce (*tungku chap*), light soya sauce, curry/curry paste; and in Penang, prawn paste (*har koh*) too. The noodles are drizzled with oil and sprinkled with roasted sesame seeds, crispy fried shallots and sliced pickled green chillies, before the sauces are poured on. One can opt for all or any of the sauces. It's basically a 'personal taste' dish. There is also the 'Hongkong' *chee cheong fun* which is rolled with a filling of dried shrimp, *char siu* and white turnip (*sengkuang*). We have it from a very reliable source that the *chee cheong fun* in Hongkong does not in fact have *sengkuang* at all.



Extensive Menu

The menu here is extensive with more than 100 items. Lunch items are very popular, with noodle and rice dishes beginning at a very reasonable RM3.50 per dish. Their service is friendly and efficient especially from Johnny a young Indian who speaks perfect Cantonese.

Salt Baked Fish "a'la Milanese"

The Soon Fatt version of my favourite salt-baked fish uses live Tilapia and is served on a bed of deep fried crispy cellophane noodles giving it its Chinese flavour. Understandably, Tilapia being a farm raised fresh water fish, can occasionally have tinges of muddiness but Foong Ho assures me that they make all efforts to keep the fish alive in pure water for a few days before serving, to reduce the chances of getting a muddy taste. The fish is encrusted in a thick layer of salt and baked, with skin and scales. When serving, the waiter will remove the salt and when finished with the top half,

NAME	WHERE	COMMENTS	PRICE (RM)	
STALL (house) 1.30~4.00pm; Opens: Mon, Tues, Thu & Fri, only NB: if you don't want to wait too long, go to the back of the house from noon onwards to get an order no.	1456 Jln Pasir Pinji 5, Pasir Pinji	Noodle is freshly made, soft and can taste the dried prawns. Sauce is tasty & has got good chilli sauce. Hold the 'teem cheong' if you don't want it too sweet.	Small: 1.70 Reg.: 2.30 Big: 2.80	★★★★
RESTORAN YEI LOCK IPOH 7.30-9.30am (go early)	175 Jln Raja Permaisuri Bainun (Jln Kampar)	Noodle and sauce tastes good. Pickled green chilli a bit sweet.	Small: 2.20 Big: 2.80	★★★★
THEAN CHUN 9am-4pm; Thursdays closed	73 Jln Bandar Timah (Leech St), Old Town	Noodle is thinner and has a soft texture. Sauce is good but can be a bit sweet with the 'teem cheong'.	Small: 2.20 Big: 3.50	★★★★
KEDAI KOPI KENG NAM 6.30am-1.30pm	127 Jln Raja Ekram (Cowan St), New Town	Noodle is good and sauce is tasty with enough chilli.	2.20	★★★★
KAFE IPOH CENTRAL Canning Gdn Chee Cheong Fun 6.30am-3pm	53 Jln Raja Ekram (Cowan St), New Town	Noodle is good and sauce is tasty with enough chilli.	3.00	★★★★

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(Serves 10)

- 600 gm tuna fish tinned (fresh optional)
- 1 kg white cannellini beans tinned (dry optional)
- 200 gm onion rings thinly sliced (red or white onions optional)
- 25 gm Italian, or flat parsley (chopped)
- 400 ml extra virgin olive oil
- 100 ml red wine vinegar
- 150 gm mesclun salad
- Seasoning to taste

Procedure:

1. Wash beans with cold water, (if using dried, soak over night boil in salted water cool and wash).
2. Flake the tuna into small chunks and lightly fold into the beans together with the parsley.
3. Add the olive oil and vinegar toss gently and season to taste.
4. Arrange on a platter or in a bowl and garnish with salad and onion rings.
5. "Serve with love and passion from the heart".

PARENTING

by WERN SZE GILL

ipohecho.parenting@gmail.com

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY – June 21, 2009

The idea for creating a day to honour fathers began in Washington by woman named Sonora Smart Dodd who thought of the concept while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in 1909.

Having been raised by her father after her mother died, Sonora wanted her father to know how special he was to her. Her father was born in June, so she chose to hold the first Father's Day celebration on the June 19, 1910. So Father's Day was born in gratitude by a daughter who thought that her father and all good fathers should be honoured with a special day.

This Father's Day, we asked sons and daughters, mostly living outside of Ipoh, to honour their Ipoh-based father with short messages from the heart....

"To a wonderful father who has been there always through thick and thin... Happy Father's Day. Love you dad!" **Sam (Kuala Lumpur), son of Col Fathol Zaman Bukhari** – editor of Ipoh Echo.

"Everything you did, we know you did it all for us. We love you dad, and that is forever." **John, Eli and Angela (Kuala**



Janice (2nd left) with dad, Leong Yew Kee & family

Lumpur), children of Mr Wong Hon Hor, Ipoh Garden.

"Dear Papa, love you a lot. Thank you for everything and for being there for us always. Happy Father's Day!" **Edith, Ian, Joanne & Mummy (Ipoh), children, daughter-in-law & wife of Mr Ong Koon Ann, Mansion Park.**

"Daddy, thanks for encouraging me not to be afraid and to put myself out there; allowing me to go close enough to the edge without falling over. I know you've always believed in me and that has shaped me into the person I am today. Happy Father's Day!" – **David Lim Tek Min (Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam), son of Mr Lim Say Lay, Ipoh Garden.**

"Dads are special people, no home should be without. We are blessed as a family, to have you here and about. The many things you've done, all the

times that you are there.. Helps us know deep inside, how much you really love and care. So thank you Dad, for being our Dad." **Janice (Shanghai), Clarence (Singapore) & Jason (Kuala Lumpur), children of Mr Leong Yew Kee, Wah Keong Park.**

"Dear dad, no words can express or quantify all you and mom have done for us to make us who we are today. We are so blessed to have a dad as dedicated, caring and sup-



Dato' Robert Lim with his family

portive as you. Thank you for educating, disciplining and loving us all these years. Love you always!"

Qi Vin (Melbourne, Australia) and Qi Wen (Kuala Lumpur), sons of Mr Tang Siew Kong, Ipoh Garden South.

"Dad, you have ingrained in me, ever since I was really young, the value of integrity. You never understated the importance of telling the truth and standing up for what is right, and I remember seeing numerous examples of you exercising that value in very practical ways. Thanks for wisdom imparted to me over the years... Happy Father's Day!" **Kheong Sen (Bendigo, Australia), son of Mr Lim Foh Thye, Canning Garden.**

"To the most supportive and understanding father in town. You



Pei-Shyen (left) with dad, Him Shoong & family members

have helped and guided us throughout our lives and tolerated our idiosyncrasies with little question. On this special day, and despite all our busy lives, know that we love you & mum dearly and you are always in our thoughts and minds. Happy Father's Day!" **Renee (Melbourne, Australia), Terry & Eric (Kuala Lumpur), children of Dato' Robert Lim Git Hooi, Ipoh.**

"Thank you.. for raising not one, not two, but three children, who have not exactly behaved the

best on every occasion. Thank you.. for being a figure of hope, a pillar of strength, a source of inspiration that has guided the Chongs on every measurable length. Thank you.. for providing us with only the best in every situation, not to mention being the best bank that often loans without protest. Thank you.. for being the best Dad in every possible way, who is there for us through thick and thin." **Pei-Shyen (Nottingham, UK), daughter of Chong Him Shoong, Ipoh.**

FATHER'S DAY QUOTES

My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person, he believed in me ~ Jim Valvano

"My Father didn't tell me how to live; he lived, and let me watch him do it" ~ Clarence Budington Kelland

The greatest thing a FATHER can do to his children, is to love their mother ~ Anjaneth Garcia Untalan

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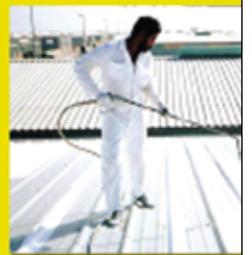
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YOUNG PERAK

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

MHS GETS REBRANDED AND A NEW NAME



Mention Methodist High School (MHS) Ipoh and Ipohites remember the institution as one which offered a chance for students who could not get a place for Form Six in a government school. Over the years, MHS has proudly produced hundreds of students who secured places in public universities and currently serving in various industries and corporate bodies. As opportunities have broadened for SPM school leavers these last few years via options and opportunities in

pursuing matriculation, diploma or A-levels, the core of MHS direction needed reformulating and rebranding to align with current educational trends. Hence the establishment of Wesley Methodist School Ipoh (WMSI), a private school modelled after the popular Wesley Methodist School of Kuala Lumpur.

Chairman of WMSI Dato' Chin Lean Keat said the school seeks to inculcate noble values to nurture students into wholesome individuals by providing them with opportunities to

FORMER OLYMPIAN HONOURED



Mr Asir Victor arriving at his alma mater. Looking on is principal Mr Phoon Chong Chee

Malaysian 400-metres Olympian, Mr Asir Victor, who competed in three Olympics – Tokyo (1964), Mexico (1968) and Munich (1972), was extremely proud when he was invited home by his alma mater, SMK St Michael Ipoh, to officiate at its 82nd Annual Sports day recently.

Mr Asir, who studied in the school in the 50s, said, "I immediately accepted as it was indeed an honour for me to return home to see the school. What's more, it's such a great opportunity to meet the teachers, students and the athletes". He currently runs a vegetable stall in the Buntong market.

develop physically, mentally, socially and spiritually within a caring and safe learning environment.

The school, which started on January 5 this year, currently runs one class each for Form One and Two students, and a class of some 15 Upper Six students, being the last batch of students from MHS.

Chin said it will cost

some RM3 million to renovate and refurbish the school premises to render a more conducive learning environment. In meeting the expenditure, a fundraising dinner will be held on July 15, 2009, at Hee Lai Ton Restaurant at 7 p.m.

For details, call YMCA Ipoh at 05-2540809 or the school at 05-2545122.

And what a day it was. Some two thousand students, teachers and guests, which included parents and former students, gave a thumping and cheery welcome to Asir Victor when he arrived at the school compound.

The 60-piece school band member added life and zest to the atmosphere.

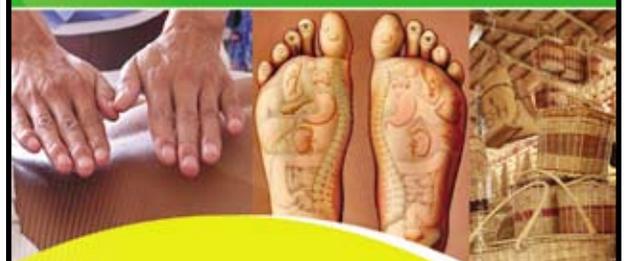
Last year, Mr Asir was invited by the Beijing Olympic Council to witness the athletics programme in the 2008 Olympics.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

DENGUE – 10 MINUTES A DAY KEEP THE MOSQUITOES AWAY



All of us are constantly aware that the threat of Dengue is always around us.

However when Ipoh's Mayor Dato' Roshidi says he won't allow for leniency for mosquito breeding related offences, one can be assured that dengue fever is a problem.

And when Menteri Besar Zambry visits dengue fever patients at Hospital Bainun and gets briefed on the dengue situation by none other than the State Health Director, Dato' Dr Ahmad Razin, one can be certain that the situation is not improving.

Ipoh Echo met with

Dato' Dr Ahmad Razin recently to get his views regarding the problem.

"The best way to control the spread is the "Cari dan Musnah (Search & Destroy) method" responded Dato' Dr Razin. He summed up 3 areas where mosquitoes breed and the action to be taken:

1. Your own house and surrounding space. "The best way to control the problem is by spending 10 minutes every day to check that all water storage containers in your house are overturned". He mentioned also to check the roof gutters which are a potential breeding ground

as it is difficult to reach. Also check the immediate area outside the gate of your house for breeding grounds.

2. The next area is what is termed as 'no man's land' or the parks and recreation areas. Although it is looked after by MBI, "the public too should take an interest to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes in these areas".

3. An area of concern is the construction sites as 25% of the total sites have been positively found to be breeding grounds. So far only one site was issued with a 'temporary closure' notice whereby no work could be done onsite until the site was cleaned up.

However Dato' Dr Razin reiterated that the best way to control the problem was if everyone participated in keeping their immediate surroundings clean and tidy by practising the search and destroy method.

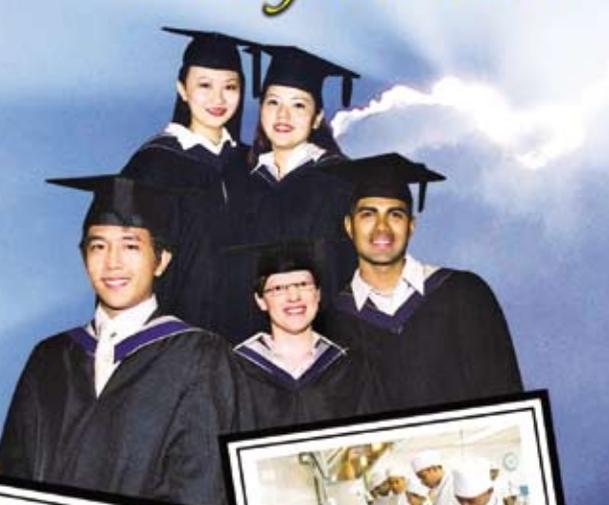
Some locations that have been identified as breeding hot spots are Taman Cempaka, Lim Garden and Klebang Jaya. Up till the middle of May, 321 dengue cases have been reported in the city area.



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IPOH IN BRIEF

More pics at ipohecho on line

THE SPIRIT OF GOTONG-ROYONG



The spirit of gotong-royong is alive and well, at least for residents of Taman Lapangan SSI Ipoh, a new residential area near Pengkalan here. Besides ensuring that the practice of doing things together and helping each other in the spirit of 'muhibbah' or goodwill, are preserved, the organising committee also sought the assistance of the Health Department and Ipoh City Council to run programmes for the residents like medical screening, checking and eradicating of aedes mosquito breeding grounds and planting of trees.

While the adults got busy with aerobics dancing and clearing of rubbish at the housing area, the children demonstrated their skills in the colouring competition.

Taman Lapangan SSI has been identified by the Ipoh City Council to be a model residential area within its jurisdiction.

CHEMOR MARKET—A LET DOWN



Illegal hawking outside the Chemor Market premises is giving licensed traders in the market a hard time. Vegetable seller, Puan Fatimah Abdullah 60, had complained to the authorities several times but no positive action had been taken. The illegal trading continues unabated. The upper level of the market, once filled with traders, has only a handful left. Most have closed shop due to poor business. Shoppers, said Fatimah, preferred to buy their marketing needs from the illegal vendors as the prices were a lot cheaper. "They don't have to pay rental like we do", said Fatimah to Ipoh Echo. "Moreover, it's a lot easier to pick your way outside the market", she quipped. The empty lots have become a gathering place for vagrants, school truants and drug addicts. If the trend is left unchecked, the Chemor market may soon turn into a white elephant at the expense of tax-payers. Ipoh City Council needs to react fast to overcome this lingering problem.

PRAYERS FOR WAR VICTIMS



The Lim Garden and Kinta Valley branches of the Malaysian Ceylonese Congress held a special prayer session at Shree Ganapathy Alayam in Persiaran Tun Perak, Ipoh, recently. The prayers were dedicated to the innocent victims of war-torn northern Sri Lanka. The session started with *yaagam* followed by *abhishegam* (pouring of milk on Lord Ganesha). It ended with *pooja* and the releasing of two white pigeons, as a symbol of peace.

PERAK THINK TANK ...



Aminudin Hashim the CEO of Institute Darul Ridzuan

Perak Chief Minister Dato' Seri Zambry recently announced the setting of a Perak think tank called Institute Darul Ridzuan or IDR.

The institute, which is an independent body, is to assist the various state government agencies and GLC's to implement the best strategies in the development of the state. It will also assist in the preparation of the state's annual budget and propose innovative policies towards the goal of being a developed state by the year 2015.

Zambry also appointed 39 year old Encik Aminudin Hashim as the CEO to head this strategic think tank. Aminudin is a Chartered Management Accountant with 15 years experience in Management Consulting and Corporate Analysis who had earlier worked with the IA Group.

The institute which began its operations effective May 1 will be housed at PTTC Meru Raya. Initially it will have a team of 25 under its employ.

PERAK INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DINNER



In conjunction with the celebration of its 72nd anniversary, Perak Indian Chamber of Commerce organised Majlis Makan Malam Perhimpunan Usahawan in the Ipoh Town Hall. The Guest of Honour was Senator Dato T. Murugiah. In his welcoming speech, President B.K. Kumar said that the government has introduced a number of schemes to help Indian businessmen and it is up to them to make use of the opportunity.

The Chamber took this opportunity to honour members who were recipients of titles awarded by HRH the Sultan of Perak during his 81st birthday. The recipients were garlanded and adorned with *ponnadai*, a shawl with golden threads which is the traditional way to honour a person.

The event ended with the launching of a musical audio CD album Paandi Muthukkal comprising of songs composed by M. Pandian.

GATHERING OF VETERANS



A special function to honour Umno veterans was held at the Perak Umno building on May 28. Several of the party's stalwarts and veterans, including its first youth movement's head, Hj Mior aged 91, a party pioneer, were present. The get-together was organised by the Perak Umno Veteran Club formed in 2006. Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir, officiated at the function. In his welcoming speech he thanked the old-timers for their loyalty and support for the party.

BUSINESS CARNIVAL 2009



In conjunction with the declaration of Kampar as a new district within Perak on May 21, a business carnival, jointly organised by the district office and a local company, Triple One Enterprise, was held in front of Kampar Hotel. A number of government agencies, including the Armed Forces, Pemadam and Health Department set up booths and vied with agencies from the private sector such as Celcom, Maxis, Proton and Perodua for attention from the hordes of visitors that thronged the day-long carnival. The crowd was entertained to songs from the 60s, performed by popular Malay singers, cultural dance troupes and accomplished musical bands in the state. The spectators had a swell time in spite of the sweltering heat.

SULTAN AZLAN SHAH OPENS MANJUNG DISTRICT POLICE HQ



Parade at the Manjung HQ

HRH officially opened the Manjung District Police Headquarters. The headquarters costing RM53 million was completed in November 2007 and consists of 10 administration and 27 accommodation blocks.

Also present at the opening ceremony was the Raja Permaisuri of Perak, Tuanku Bainun, Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan and Perak Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Zambry Abdul Kadir.

In his speech the Sultan of Perak highlighted concerns of white collar commercial crimes. These crimes had a wide reaching impact on the business community and maintaining investor confidence. He urged the police to act firmly and swiftly on them.

He then proceeded to lodge a mock police report attended by Constable Ashida Zakaria from Kedah. When asked for her reactions she said she felt "cold and nervous" while attending to such a "VVIP".

One of the events during the opening ceremony was a display of the types of police uniforms that had been worn by the police force since it first started. It was a good snapshot of a time gone by. Indeed the opening ceremony was impressive.

RETIRED ENGINEER DONATES RM200K



Koon handing his cheque to Nizar

Retired engineer Koon Yew Yin recently contributed RM200k towards Pakatan Rakyat's election fund. Dismayed with the current political situation in "our beautiful state of Perak" he made the contribution saying that, "Sooner or later only you can choose the government you want".

TENBY BRINGS IN MOONLIGHT SERENADE, WOWS AUDIENCES IN IPOH, PENANG AND SHAH ALAM!

Tenby Schools sponsor Ensemble, giving back to the communities in which they operate

Tenby Schools Malaysia recently feted guests in the local communities to 'Moonlight Serenade', a series of concerts by the PSPA International Ensemble 2009. Specially performed for Tenby Schools, the Main Sponsors of the Ensemble this year, the concerts were staged in three locations – Ipoh, Penang and Setia Eco Park, Shah Alam – essentially where Tenby Schools are located. At each of the venues where the Ensemble performed, audiences were moonstruck by the wonderful repertoire featuring seven world class musicians from around the globe.

forming arts to develop the whole person."

Si Boon went on to elaborate on how young people of today soak up the MTV culture and how much of a challenge it was to keep classical music relevant and exciting for them. Tenby attempts to do this by building up musical ensembles comprising their own students in each of the schools, and finding innovative ways to show young people that classical music need not be boring and outdated; and on the contrary, that it is very much in trend, ageless, timeless and appealing.

PSPA International

toire of classical music, including Beethoven's "Spring Sonata", "Voices of Spring" by Johann Strauss, Dvorak's "Song to the Moon" as well as favourites from George Gershwin.

This was also the first time that the Ensemble included a Soprano, bringing an exciting new dimension to the repertoire. Miss Mari Moriya, from Japan, stunned the audience and stole the show with her powerful vocals and fantastic range. Her diminutive stature evidently belied the sheer power and pitch that her vocal chords were capable of producing.

In Ipoh, in addition to a private soiree for Tenby Schools Ipoh held at Meru Valley Resort, a separate concert was also performed in conjunction with PSPA Members' Night at Syuen Hotel, to a captive audience of more than 550 PSPA members and guests. The event was also a tribute to PSPA retiring Patron, Dato' K.K. Lim, who had founded the society in 1988 and had for many years been the driving force behind the society's objectives and activities.

At the event, President of PSPA, Datin Rosalina Thong, presented Dato'



Ensemble with Tenby and PSPA representatives with Lim Si Boon centre



Moonstruck by Mari singing with the ensemble

"Tenby is delighted to be able to give back to the communities in which the schools operate by hosting concerts for the benefit of our students, parents, teachers and staff, as well as members of the community", said Mr Lim Si Boon, CEO of Tenby Schools Malaysia.

"It is very much in line with Tenby's larger vision to promote a culture of performing arts lovers, particularly among students of our schools. Our vision of A United World at Peace through Education, does not confine education merely to academia, but also translates to education via music and the per-

Ensemble 2009 featured seven international musicians performing alongside their Malaysian counterparts on one stage, led by its Music Director and clarinetist, homegrown Ipoh boy, Mr Eugene Pook.

The other musicians in the Ensemble were Miss Carmen Lamoine on flute (from the USA); Mr Eric Wang on Violin (London); Mr Chan Wei Shing on Cello (Singapore); Miss Vicky Chow on Piano (Canada); Mr Lau Yew Hann on Viola (Malaysia) and Miss Mari Moriya, Soprano singer (Japan).

Audiences were treated to a refreshing reper-

K.K. Lim with a token of appreciation which was accepted by his wife Datin Stella Lim, on his behalf, to thunderous applause.

"Dato' K.K. Lim's passion for the performing arts has always been an inspiration to me and PSPA endeavours to run with his vision for society and to carry on his good work to promote the performing arts in Perak."

"We are delighted to be able to bring back the International Ensemble to Malaysia this year, thanks to the generosity of Dato' K.K. Lim through Tenby Schools, the Main

Sponsors, as well as other sponsors including KLK Berhad", said Datin Rosalina.

In thanking Tenby Schools for its contribution, Mr Eugene Pook said that he was very encouraged and inspired by Tenby's vision to promote the arts not only among students of Tenby Schools but also "the genuine desire to bring alive classical music in the communities in which the schools operate".

"I am also much impressed by the Music departments in the various schools in Ipoh, Penang and Shah Alam, and their firm commitment to start individual ensembles within the respective schools.

"This is the first step towards developing a pas-

sion for and an appreciation of the arts, particularly the timeless beauty of classical music, among the young", Eugene added.

Tenby Schools was established by Dato' Lim Keng Kay (Dato' K.K. Lim) in the year 2004. In 2008, he set up SiWu Education Trust in loving memory of his and his wife Datin Stella's younger son Lim Si Wu. The Trust now owns and operates Tenby Schools in Ipoh, Shah Alam, and Penang, and aims to set up schools wherever they are needed and viable, to set up teacher training centres, and to provide scholarships to needy pupils.

This is in pursuit of its vision of A United World at Peace – through Education.



Kok Kee Boon, Datin Rosalina Tong, Datin Stella Lim and Datin Sandra Lee

PSPA's Meet the Musicians Event

In conjunction with 'Moonlight Serenade', PSPA organised a 'meet the musicians event' in which the seven musicians shared some of their thoughts on music and Malaysia.

Eugene Pook, who plays the clarinet and is musical director of the ensemble, is a homegrown talent from Ipoh. He acknowledged the power of music in bringing the musicians together and that this was not only a musical exchange but also a cultural one.

Vicky Chow, the latest addition to the ensemble is a Canadian pianist who has performed extensively as a classical and contemporary soloist. Making her



orchestral debut at the tender age of 10, it is Vicky's first time in Malaysia. When asked about her experience here in Ipoh so far, Vicky is enjoying all the different places to eat, with special mention of 'lok lok' and laksa.

Echoing Vicky's enthusiasm on the great food is Mari Moriya, the soprano from Japan. Though it is her second time here,

Ipoh in her view is new and interesting with friendly and thoughtful people all around. On the flute is Carmen Lemoine from San Francisco. Carmen loves to travel and so far, her first time in Malaysia has been a wonderful experience. According to Carmen, her favourite part of the trip is meeting the people here.

It is also the violinist,

Eric Wang's first time in Malaysia. Based in London, Eric has just finished doing a radio recording in Hong Kong and is pretty pleased with the high standards of musicians of this ensemble. Also sharing the stage is Lau Yew Hann who plays the viola. Lau commented on the warm friendly people in Ipoh, and mentioned that it was refreshing to get out of the city life of Singapore. It is his first time playing in Malaysia.

They also had an opportunity to meet music students who attended their workshops in Ipoh where they gave personal attention to individuals wishing to improve their technique and have better insight into improving their musical prowess. **MINDY OON**



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IPOH FACT AND FANCIES

by HO TAK MING

THE MARKET GARDENERS OF KINTA Part one of two...

Although the Kinta Tin Rush was sparked off by the influx of miners from Larut in the early 1880's, not all who came to the Vale of Tin were miners. Some of them were market gardeners.

First Catholic Mission

In 1875, just one year after the Pangkor Treaty, the Vicar Apostolic of Malaya and Singapore, Bishop Le Turdu, sent Father Jean Francois Allard of the Societe des Missions Etrangeres de Paris (MEP) to Taiping to open the first Catholic Mission in Perak. Fr. Allard, who had earlier worked with Chinese Christians in Malacca and Province Wellesley, built a wooden chapel on top of a hill and founded the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Chinese farmers who had followed him from Province Wellesley started to cultivate the land around the church. But the land was unsuitable for farming and most of the farmers went over to the Kinta Valley, which was then being rapidly opened up following the discovery of tin.

Changkat, Batu Gajah

In 1882 Fr. Allard asked to be sent to Batu Gajah to be with his former parishioners. There he founded the Parish of St. Joseph. Together with his parishioners, he cleared the hill at Changkat and

made vegetable gardens. Apart from his pastoral work, Fr. Allard became a farmer just like them, "with hens, vegetables and fruit trees" on his farm. He built his wooden chapel on top of the hill at Changkat. His small parish at first numbered 250, but began to grow rapidly as more of the Chinese immigrants became attracted to this mode of livelihood and were converted to Christianity. Fr. Allard was so busy with his evangelical work and with being a farmer that for months at a time the Church had no communication with him and thought he had "disappeared".

In 1884 when the British colonialists made Batu Gajah the headquarters of Kinta district, they found that the plateau at Changkat where they wanted to build their offices and bungalows was illegally occupied by a colony of squatters. The British gave them an alternative site at nearby Rotan Dahan for their vegetable gardens. The farmers thrived because the soil around Batu Gajah was very fertile, and Fr. Allard's congregation grew to over a thousand.

Perak Gov't Gazette

The District Magistrate, J.B.M. Leech, took an interest in this peaceful community of vegetable gardeners and charted



their progress in the Perak Government Gazette:

1889: "A short distance from the hill on which the Government Offices are situated at Batu Gajah a Roman Catholic missionary, with a large number of Chinese Christians, have made vegetable gardens. The success they have achieved has led a large number of heathen Chinese to adopt this particular form of cultivation in different parts of the district. The gardeners are the most peaceful section of the population. They supply an important want to the towns, and there is a ready sale for their produce."

1890: "Father Allard's colony of Christian Chinese at Batu Gajah are beginning to plant pepper and coffee, and have taken up several small blocks of land for the purpose near the Station. They are working with their capital, and no doubt will be successful, as the land is very

good."

1891: "At Batu Gajah several lots of garden land from 2 to 20 acres have been taken up and are being cultivated by Father Allard's Christians."

Staying Healthy

Unwittingly, the presence of a large colony of vegetable gardeners supplying fresh fruit and vegetables at low prices to the numerous mines in the vicinity made a vast difference to the health of the mining community. In the late nineteenth century when beriberi ravaged the miners throughout the country because of a poor diet consisting of mostly white polished rice deficient in vitamin B1 found in fresh greens, Batu Gajah stood out as a comparatively healthy place. For instance, in the year 1894, when the percentage of deaths to admissions in Ipoh hospital was 20.68%, and in Gopeng hospital 19.72%, mostly from beriberi, the comparable fig-

ure for Batu Gajah hospital was 13.93%.

Conversion to Tin Mines

However, the saga of Fr. Allard's Christian farmers did not end with just performing a valuable community service (albeit unknowingly). During the latter part of the Kinta Tin Rush, fabulous deposits of tin were discovered at Rotan Dahan. Land in the locality changed hands at astonishing prices. The amount of tin got out of Rotan Dahan by the miners was considered to be the greatest on record in Kinta. A good many of Fr. Allard's Christian farmers became rich tin mine owners.

By 1902, most of the vegetable gardens at Rotan Dahan had disappeared. The gardeners who had produced so much of the fresh greens of Batu Gajah had comfortably retired from their earlier occupation. The Perak Pioneer reported:

Fruits and vegetables that used to be so extensively grown and locally sold in Kinta, are now mostly imported from Penang. Strange to relate, the imported article is said to be cheaper. This may be accounted from the fact that very few men plant locally, and demand higher prices in consequence. Several old plots of fruit and vegetables have now gone into tin miners' hands

and been transformed into the well known enormous excavations.

Present Greentown

In contrast to Batu Gajah, vegetable farming did not quite catch on in Ipoh because tin mining provided the greater attraction. In 1887 Father Barillon came to Ipoh, which then consisted of only a collection of at-tap houses, to found the Parish of St. Michael. On the site of the present Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, he built a flimsy wooden structure which was his first church, to serve the needs of a handful of Chinese Catholics nearly all of whom were market gardeners. Here it was that he laid the foundation of a Catholic settlement, in a part of Ipoh that was then very much "in the wilds" (the miner C.G. Ogilvie shot a tiger just behind the present St. Michael's Church in the early 1890's.) Fr. Barillon applied to the Perak Government for a hundred acres which he allotted to various Catholic families. However, a good many of the farmers drifted away from vegetable gardening and sold their holdings. About fifty acres reverted to Government, which later became Greentown, a suburb in which residential quarters were built for Government servants.

LETTER FROM ULU KINTA

MATERIAL BLING OR MARITAL BLISS?

Used to enjoy weddings but not anymore. Lately, they have become grander, more ostentatious, less personal. Preparations once involved the family and community. Today, wedding planners take advantage. Where previously, friends and distant relatives would be introduced to the newcomer, these days, weddings are ruthlessly exploited for business interests.

Bride and Groom sidelined

In one wedding I attended, the honoured guests were royalty from the various states. The bride and groom looked insignificant and sidelined. It felt like the state opening of parliament, but with a little feasting included. The venue was a luxury hotel in Kuala Lumpur, presumably because it could accommodate the several hundred guests. Everyone attempted to outdo each other in fine clothes and jewel-

lery, that one couldn't help being blinded by bling. It also mirrored a business convention with the gathering of people from commerce, shamelessly exchanging business cards, amongst other things.

But this one was a vulgar display of wealth. The invitations had been printed in a neighbouring country. And shockingly, the bride's mother replaced the groom's *bunga mayang* with her own arrangement of porcelain roses from London. Still dissatisfied, she then swapped his *hantaran* with her purchases from abroad.

Karaoke Session

However, another wedding I attended, was more family oriented and held at home. The atmosphere was relaxed, without pretence or commercial connotations and thus, had more meaning and depth.

What would have turned out acceptable was unfortunately marred when the celebrations that continued into the night,



ended with roast lamb and a karaoke session. It was like a barbecue, with the karaoke reminding me of a Saturday night out, unwinding with friends.

Sense of Community

But my happiest and fondest memory was of a bersanding in a kampong near Kuala Kangsar. The bride's family lived in a tiny terraced house but the whole lane, had been

blocked off and covered in tarpaulin, underneath which guests were served as they sat amongst the gay decorations of *bunga manggar*.

The air had a community feel about it. Seemingly, everyone who knew the family had been involved in the preparations. The wedding dais although simple, was tastefully decorated, but felt no less grand than the one I

saw at the luxury hotel.

Everyone felt part of the crowd and not mere appendages or props; or there, just to make up the numbers. Most had the opportunity to greet the newlyweds and catch up with each other.

More to the point, the guests were close friends or family. They weren't royalty or business associates or public figures, invited to inflate the parents' perceived self-importance in society.

Smitten by Bling

Can the Malaysian public really be so smitten by bling and pompous displays of social status? I am amused by stories of unnecessary expense, like renovating the house just for the wedding, even though it was perfect before. Others bedeck their entire family in one style of dress, like a uniform, similar to the attire beloved of our politicians when they appear en-masse in the same batik shirt at some prize-giving ceremony.

For all the talk of preserving our culture, modernity has surreptitiously crept in by the back-door. The *bunga telur* has been replaced with chocolates, cakes or decorative porcelain; this defeats the significance of the fertility symbol. The traditional *jogei* has been replaced by karaoke. And for some, sponsorship deals by companies mean that in part exchange of the hefty wedding expenses, the newlyweds pose for photographs holding a brand of instant-noodles and ready-for-the-table sauces. Plainly, tat has taken over taste.

Sadly, for the grand ostentatious weddings, the only ones who will benefit are the wedding planners, the hotels, the luxury car hire people, florists and caterers.

My sincere hope is that the symbolic, religious union of the two people who matter, is for life, and not just for show.

YMM

writer's email: letterulukinta@yahoo.com

LEISURE

TENGGOL ISLAND TRIP

by IPOH MUSKETEERS

In the midst of intense political chaos in Perak, we have decided to take an exotic aquatic weekend in Tenggol Island, Terengganu, and bring along three foreign exchange students with us to show and share with them the tropical splendour of Malaysia.

The Drive There

We left Ipoh in the wee hours on Friday morning. After a 2½ hour drive on the hilly road via Simpang Pulai / Cameron Highlands, we reached Gua Musang for a rest stop and breakfast.

The journey continued on Route 8 at Kampung Sungai Aring and we drove through the bumpy Felda Aring estate road for approximately 35 km, till we reached the 'new' road with less potholes which serpentine around the northern edge of Lake Kenyir, the largest man-made lake in South East Asia.

After a six-hour or 475 km of country road driving, we finally reached Tenggol Island jetty, which is located on the left side of Dungun River near Kampung Seberang Pintasan, 300 metres from the new bridge. And we still had the boat ride ahead of us.

More than an hour of a comfortable boat ride (25 km from the mainland), with our view of Tenggol Island visible all the time, we finally reached the mesmerising bay of Tenggol Island.



The Island And The Dive

At first glimpse the island looks pristine and relatively non commercialised, but upon closer look, traces and signs of environmental damages were visible. According to the boatman, the bay used to be covered with all types of coral and it was impossible to even walk to shore, unlike today where leisure snorkelers can swim to their heart's content. After a quick unpacking and brief by the chalet owners and dive instructors, the divers were all ready with the first dive in the evening at Turtle Bay point. So, with all the heavy dive equipment strapped around our body, we walked clumsily like oversized penguins, to the boat – a routine which we were doing daily during our stay.

We started with the easier dive sites to familiarise ourselves with the environment and the water in order to enjoy more of the underwater experience. Such a sequence is important for novice divers to build

up their confidence; certainly the calm waters and clear visibility helped tremendously in achieving this. We were grateful.

The weather was also very kind to us and despite the occasional rain, the currents and visibility were magnificent and we enjoyed the underwater world. Divers who were lucky to own an underwater camera were busy snapping away while the rest just paddled slowly to enjoy the scene.

The big fish were certainly a joy to watch and while they were not plentiful, they were curious and followed us while watching our every move. When we stretched our hands to touch them, they quickly swam away, like a shy kampong girl running away from intrusive eyes.

The turtles were very friendly too and on one occasion, we saw one Hawksbill foraging on the coastal sea grass bed. The turtle was surprisingly not shocked by our sudden appearance and went on with his meal and we were just captivated with the experience of swimming



alongside the turtle.

The last dive was certainly an awesome experience and without us realising it, we went as deep as 30 m at the Tokong Laut dive site and was simply overwhelmed by the sheer volume of coral, fishes and abundance of marine life there. It was certainly exciting and fun where all of us got a chance to swim through the rock formations and have close encounters with the marine life. Unfortunately, it was also a shortlived one as we ran out of oxygen pretty quickly and managed to stay below for 35 minutes rather than the usual 55. We were later told that it will take about three dives to fully enjoy the beauty of Tokong Laut site. What a pity!

In total, we managed to squeeze a total of six dives within a span of 36 hours during our stay but obviously, nobody was complaining. The fatigue was easily dissipated by the enjoyment of the sheer beauty of Tenggol's underwater world and the easy going life there.

The Night Activities

As there was not much entertainment at night, most of the 'elderly' except for the youngsters, turned in early in preparation for the following day.

As a result, one thing most members missed was the Green turtle that crawled onshore to lay eggs on both nights! On the second night, two team members managed to get a glimpse of this rare sight after deciding to stay awake. We were however outraged to discover that all the eggs from the first night were poached and it was only on the second night that the chalet owners managed to scare away the poachers and secure the eggs for hatching.

The Drive Back

All good things come to an end very quickly. A broken engine shaft on the boat that was to take us back to the mainland was broken and we packed ourselves into a smaller one and departed. The ride to the mainland was uneventful except for a

brief encounter with the Marine Police who were doing their patrols.

The drive home through the country road plying between the east and west coast was certainly a thrilling experience. Here, we get to see Malaysia's natural beauty at its best, a total contrast to the boring albeit convenient highway. I felt peace, tranquility and serenity passing through the kampongs where villagers enjoy their daily life at a pace town folk can only be jealous of. I felt transported to my childhood where I felt like a kid again. Chants of 'La-la-li-li-lat-tang-pong' ran through my head, memories of pet spiders ('Pau fu') crawling through my fingers, counting the 'guli' after a big match with the neighbourhood kids – wondering where they have all gone?

After two hours or more of this soul-searching drive, we came back to Gua Musang, to be greeted by the usual two massive rock cliffs, reputedly more than 100 million years old, for a quick dinner before driving back to Ipoh via Cameron Highlands.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the foreign students were ecstatic with the trip. This is what they have to say:

"The island offers many different attractions, a destination for the whole family, *ce manifique*."

The trip was organised by seasoned dive master/instructor, T.S. Chin of Scuba Venture Ipoh (www.scubaventure.com.my).

MAYOR'S CUP JET SKI COMPETITION



The inaugural Mayor's Cup Jet Ski Competition was held at Lahat Mines, Lahat, on May 31, as part of Ipoh's 21 year's city celebrations. The event was held at the lake location known as Waterfront City and was jointly organised by Ipoh City Hall and property developer Excellent Realty Sdn Bhd.

The lake at Waterfront City covers 150 acres of

which 1.8 km was used as the circuit for the competition. The event attracted 40 competitors from Perak as well as Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. An official for the event organiser, Kamaruzzaman Sayuti said the "participation was good as most similar events attracted half that number".

Under the unlimited category the winner was

Lee Yew Kong. For the 800cc category the winner was Ahmad Dawii Alias and runners up, two brothers, Tee Chun Kit and Terry Tee.

A spokesman for Excellent Realty, Rodney Lee confirmed that the Mayor's Cup competition will be a regular feature for future city day celebrations.

The patron for the event was YAM Raja Kecil

Tengah Raja Ashman Shah.

Seen also at the event was veteran Ipoh photographer Foo Kok Kin busy at his craft, "It is good that

these disused mining ponds are being put to good use for water sports activities", said Foo as he clicked furiously away at the speeding water scooters.



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