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# IPOHECHO

Your Voice In The Community

April 16-30, 2010

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ISSUE **95**

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REFORM FOR  
MANAGEMENT  
OF PERAK  
TOURISM LONG  
OVERDUE

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## CERAMICS

### RISING FROM THE ASHES OF TIN



*Photographs by Rosli Mansor*

**O**ut of the ashes of the renowned tin mining industry in the Kinta Valley, the ceramic industry in Perak has emerged strongly. It was primed for success as large reserves of ball clay and kaolin were discovered in the Kinta Valley, Changkat Jong and Bruas. Capitalising on these discoveries, the Perak Government through its investment arm, State Development Corporation (SDC), established the Ceramic Park in Chepor, about 20 km north of Ipoh, in 1991. The cottage industry potters and small-scale kilns operating around Ipoh and along Jalan Kuala Kangsar were relocated to the Ceramic Park and foreign investors were attracted to participate in the industry to make it a leading sector. It was also to help the factories switch from producing low value products like earthenware and flower pots to manufacturing higher value-added items, such as technical products. And thus, a ceramic research centre was also planned at the 57ha Ceramic Park. However, various unexpected problems cropped up resulting in the ambitious project not reaching its full potential.

*Continued on page 2*



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# CERAMIC INDUSTRY PLAGUED BY PROBLEMS



The problems faced by the ceramic factories range from shortage of workers to the escalating production costs. And to add to the plethora of woes, the quit rent for land in the Ceramic Park, where most of the factories are located, has been increased by 150 per cent.

According to the chairman of Perak Ceramic Industry Association (PCIA), Mr. Tang Bun Cheu, 80 per cent of the factories making pottery in the country are located in Perak.

These factories are badly affected by rising production costs and competition from cheap imports.

The ceramic industry's latest official sales figures available show that local

sales account for RM640M and exports RM173M.

Tang said the current economic slowdown had also affected the industry and these figures are about five percent less than those for the previous year.

Meanwhile, imports of ceramic products have increased from RM116M to RM135M from previous year.

He said about 80% of the produce was exported in the past, but it had reduced by 50% and the factories had to cut their production. The number of factories have since reduced from 60 to 40 over the last five years.

## Shortage of Skilled Workers

Director of Sin Thai Pottery Sdn. Bhd., Mr. Tan Chiew Ping, said the main

problem faced by the industry is labour shortage.

On the average, each factory employs about 50 workers. As locals are not interested in the job, they have to depend on foreign workers.

The work permit for a worker is limited to five years, after which he has to leave the country. While it takes about three to four years to train a worker.

Tan said that the workers should be allowed to stay and work for longer periods so that their experience could be fully utilised and they could also train newcomers.

Shaping of the pots in the potter's wheel is a skilled job. The wheel is used for trimming excess material and for applying incised decorations or rings of colour.

The decorations are done manually. If a worker is too slow and the clay hardens, the pot has to be rejected. Therefore, the workers need time to learn the skills.

He said the labour costs are more than 30% higher than those of competitors abroad.

Other contributing factors to the escalating production costs of the ceramic industry are: fuel which has gone up by 63%; cost of electricity up by 26%; clay by 150% and the tax on imported chemicals increased between 10% to 30%.

PCIA have had discussions with SDC repeatedly for the past ten years, requesting them to extend the existing natural gas line in the state to supply gas to Chepor and Bercham Industrial Estates, but has not been successful.

## Government Intervention Needed

PCIA feels that since the government is promoting "Kempen Membeli Barangan Buatan Malaysia" (Buy Made-in-Malaysia Products Campaign), sales tax should be abolished to be competitive to the cheap imports especially from China, India, Thailand and Indonesia. It suggests that imports must be restricted to protect the industry.

Chief executive officer of Celles International Sdn Bhd., Mr. Cae Hiew, whose company supplies fuel to the factories, said that the demand for fuel is

decreasing due to the cuts on production.

He said that fuel costs could be reduced if coal is used, but the government does not permit this. Another way of reducing cost is using non conventional fuel which the government should allow.

Assistant secretary of PCIA, Mr. Tang Chee Fook, worried that if there is no subsidy or intervention from the government, the factories would close down and it would be an end to the ceramic industry in the state which began as factories producing la-

tex cups for the plantation industry about a century ago.

The government needs to be proactive and get the stakeholders together and discuss how to protect the industry, before the factories close down and once closed, it would be impossible to revive.

More damage to the economic stability of the Silver State. Something which can be averted with timely intervention from the state government.

A. JEYARAJ



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# LIVING IN TRYING TIMES

• by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

*"Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried"*  
~Winston Churchill



## Political Expediencies

As citizens of a country that not only practises but preaches democratic values, it is our right to demand a clean and efficient government. One that abhors corruption and abuses by those in high places. We expect the government to uphold the rule of law and be receptive of the diverse views and interests of the *rakyat*. Is this happening in Perak?

If the fracas at the Perak State Assembly on March 30 and 31 is anything to go by, we are far off the mark. Our elected representatives, instead of deliberating on issues concerning our well-being, deemed it appropriate to partake in a shouting match

which culminated in a walkout by the Opposition. This is the third time in a row. Fancy a legislative assembly sitting, supposedly to last at least a week, ended prematurely after only two days. We are living in trying times where norms and practices are being hijacked by the very people whom we have placed our trust in. It is indeed a shame. Political expediencies now take precedence.

Little wonder why Winston Churchill described democracy as being the worst form of government. He denounced its virtues but adopted a pragmatic approach in expounding its concept, *"it is not exactly great but it is the best of a bad bunch"*.

It will be the best of the bad bunch provided the people entrusted with the responsibilities play by the rules rather than by their rules.

## Political Tsunami

After the political tsunami of March 8, 2008, advocacy groups and the *rakyat* began to clamour for openness and accountability from the ruling party. With the loss of its two-third majority in Parliament, Barisan Nasional is beginning to feel the heat and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun has no alternative but to institute reforms to liberalise the economy and to bridge the ever widening gap between races in the country. He has set his administration's heart on combating rent-seeking and patronage politics, two major ills that have dogged the BN Government since socioeconomic re-engineering, known by its acronym NEP, was introduced in 1971. His 1Malaysia pledge, however, is not making much headway as there is still doubt as to its relevance, given the kind of negativity it has engen-

dered.

But will his reform agenda succeed when resistance is stiff, especially by those who have enjoyed the bountiful largesse? While waiting for the inevitable to happen, it is business as usual for our politicians here in Perak. Only difference is, there seems to be a little more urgency in the way things are being handled presently. Acceding to demands by pomelo growers for farming land, rejuvenation of the once dormant Sultan Azlan Shah Airport, recognising minorities' rights, financial aids to national-type schools and legitimising the illegal shoe-making industry in Menglembu, to name but a few.

More could be done but it is difficult to reform an habitual offender because habits die hard. It is not easy to change the mentality of the civil service which has been subjugated by an autocratic regime hell bent on controlling the masses through political indoctrination. During a brief by a senior official from the Home and Local Government Ministry recently, the poor chap could not fathom the relevance of the third-tier

government election.

## Seminar and Workshop

It is against this backdrop that a collection of NGOs, led by Komas and financed by the Commonwealth Foundation, organised a 3-day seminar cum workshop entitled, "Lobbying for Local Government" at Armada Hotel, Petaling Jaya from March 29 to 31. The Commonwealth Foundation, incidentally, is funded by Commonwealth governments. It works with civil society in enhancing the working capacity of their organisations. And one area of interest to the Foundation is Governance and Democracy.

Fifty participants from all over the country partook in the forum aimed at imparting skills in lobbying for the reintroduction of local government. Local council election was suspended in 1965 following fears caused by a belligerent Sukarno-led Indonesia. The passage of the Local Government Act 1976 was to placate the *rakyat* over the loss of this people-centric balloting. Although some are of the opinion that this third-tier voting could be revived, by virtue of contradictions in the

Act, the general feeling is that it is difficult given the stance taken by the Prime Minister and the Election Commission. Penang and Selangor, however, are exploring ways to circumvent the regulations.

## Mob Rule

One other subject deliberated was access to information. Laws such as the Official Secrets Act 1972 and the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 restrict the free flow of information. As such, rumour-mongering becomes a favourite pastime with Malaysians.

Najib, in wanting to encourage transparency in the awarding of federal tenders, introduced the MyProcurement website on April 1. But the veracity of the information given is fast making the portal a sham.

Having said that, maybe Thomas Jefferson's description of democracy is more apt considering all of the above. *"A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one per cent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine."*

However in Perak, it is the forty-nine per cent that is calling the shots.

## HOW TO "WILL" A LOT BY SAYING A LITTLE

• by Peter Lee

I believe many people would like to have their Will done for the sake of their family. However, I notice that the most common fear in their minds if they engage the services of others to do their will is revealing too much of their private and confidential information. To put such fear to rest, one does not require to reveal everything they have.

The first step in doing your will is to choose at least a minimum of one or a maximum of four individual Executors. If a Trustee Company like Rockwills Trustee Bhd is chosen then it can be the sole Executor (or substitute executor to the individual executor) because of its expertise, impartiality, professionalism and perpetual existence. Once the Executors are chosen, if you have children who are minors, it is highly recommended that you appoint someone to be your chosen Guardian in case both you and your spouse pass away together. It is always advisable to seek the consent of those whom you intend to appoint as Executors and Guardian. The most important thing for them to know is their responsibilities and not the contents of your will.

When the appointment of Executors and Guardian are in place, the next issue would be the distribution of your assets. Let's take your bank account for example. You don't have to mention the account number of the bank and the name of the bank. All you need to do is to state "all my monies in all my bank accounts" and state to whom you want to give it. By doing this, you can cover your entire bank accounts in all your banks irrespective of how many times you change your banks and bank accounts. Such a method of distribution can also be applied for your cars, partnership business, shares in private limited company, investments in unit trusts, shares in Bursa Malaysia and overseas stock markets and you don't have to specify the details of these items unless it is for a specific purpose as their status may be changing constantly.

With regard to all your properties, it is always advisable to state the addresses of your properties because it would be easier for your Executors to locate your assets. But if you are uncomfortable with this due to reasons of many properties involved, then you can state it in the form of "all my immovable assets". If you have young children, it is of great importance that you set up a "Testamentary Trust" in your Will by specifying how you want your estate to be distributed to your children who are minors, in stages, by your Executors if you and your spouse are not around. This would require some thought between you and your spouse as to how much is needed for your children's monthly living, medical and education expenses depending on your current lifestyle. In addition, you have to determine the source of funding and the duration for this Trust. Such instructions in your Will would clearly set a condition on how your estate's money is going to be utilized for your children and not at the Executors discretion as he may be holding a sizeable estate. Hopefully, my explanation would clear some of your doubts on revealing too much in your Will and encourage you to take immediate action in doing your Will for the love of your family.

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



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## THINKING ALOUD

• By G. Sivaprasagam

For a brief spell, a couple of months ago, I was part of a team assigned to conduct an audit of the tourism attractions in north-eastern Perak. The opportunity gave me a rare insight into the workings of Perak tourism. One feature that kept repeatedly emerging was the lack of common vision not only between the public and private sector but among the various levels in each sector.

Whilst steps are being taken to address the weakness in public and private sector coordination by the setup of the Perak Tourism Council what needs to be also resolved is the problem between the various levels involved in tourism efforts. As the Public sector is essentially a single institution perhaps this is where initial focus should be.

## Middle Management Impressive

Three distinct levels of management direct tourism in the public sector.

At the top are the decision makers who also assume the role of identifying projects and deciding implementation. The middle rung is occupied by those who have the responsibility of actualising these decisions. At the bottom are those tasked with carrying out operational tasks on the ground.

What is disturbing is the lack of common purpose amongst the three levels.

Little fault can be attached to the middle rung. Those in this quarter appear to be well informed, possess quality, are knowl-



edgeable and demonstrate commitment and passion. They appear to know what would work and what would not, why some effort succeeded whilst others failed and how to generate the optimum results. They in fact have the pulse of the tourist industry.

## Thoughtless Decisions from Top

The top level however appear to be unwilling to take advantage of the middle rung personnel, preferring to make decisions in seclusion.

The Tulip Garden project in Bukit Larut is typical. During a visit to Holland a casual suggestion by someone of a tulip garden in the Hill resulted in a portion of land in the hill station being converted into this project. Tulips not being indigenous to this region had to be grown from imported bulbs in green houses. Visitors to the hill expecting to see fields of tulips were disappointed to find only an experiment. That the green house is now devoid of tulips and the project is abandoned is evidence of the project's 'success'. The resources

wasted on this project could have been avoided if those in the middle rung had been consulted. There is a failure to understand that by wasting the meagre resources allocated for tourism on thoughtless projects denies worthwhile projects.

## Tourists Contact with Bottom Level

At the bottom level, personnel lack understanding of the nature of their role and how their task relates to the entire tourism effort. As the ones with direct contact with the tourists the impact of their ignorance is far reaching. The following episode is an instance of the problem.

At Ubudiah Mosque in Kuala Kangsar we observed the guard standing at the entrance steps gesticulating animatedly with his hands, shooing off some French tourists attempting to enter through the main gate of the mosque as if they were a bunch of undesirable. The tourists appeared to be in shock while their tour guide looked embarrassed and helpless. Upon inquiry the guard's explanation for his behav-

our was that the visitors were improperly garbed. To me they appeared properly dressed with all parts of their body covered save that some of the ladies were in slacks. It was only when the guard was reminded that the mosque had gowns for visitors not properly dressed that he reluctantly fetched them and gave it to the visitors.

The fact is there are sign boards let alone all kinds of brochures and literature inviting tourists to visit the mosque. All this effort is neutralised if the people on the ground behave in this manner. It would be better if the mosque is closed to visitors – at least negative publicity could be avoided. And even if the visitors are to be denied entry for whatever reason, surely we

could be polite. After all, our state is supposed to be the land of grace.

It is not the guard's fault. It is not the lack of training that is at the root of this mischief but failure to equip him with a macro vision of his task in the overall endeavour.

## Let Communication Be Across the Board

It is time the authorities move away from the outdated top-down administration and progress to top-down/bottom-up type of management.

I would like to add that in implementing the mechanism for public and private sector coordination of tourism effort let it not be restricted to those who form the top level but allow the design to permit engagement at all levels.

## AN "EYE-OPENER" JOURNEY INTO HEARTLAND OF ORANG ASLI

Members of the Lions Club of Sunway and its branch club, Ipoh Riverview Club, had an "eye-opener" journey into the heartland of the Orang Asli in Cameron Highlands recently. It started at Batu 3 along the Tringkap-Kampung Raja Road.

"It was a narrow, winding and bumpy route. On top of that it was treacherous and we held onto the side bars of the four-wheel-drive for our dear lives", described C.A. Lau, president of the Ipoh Riverview Club.

"Upon reaching the kampong where the dilapidated huts were a common sight, we alighted from the vehicles to be welcomed by the Orang Asli folks especially the children. They were curious of our presence especially when we were in our Lions Club T-shirts."



The village headman, whom they had contacted earlier through a friend, came out and greeted the group.

He said the journey to the heartland was made possible by volunteers in Cameron Highlands who helped to ferry 1,000 kg of rice, 250 kg of oil and loads of dried rations. Well-wishers and supporters had contributed about RM5,000 for the project to be realized.

"It was an arduous task loading and unloading the goods. It was back break-

ing but it was all for a good cause. The pain was easily forgotten", said Lau.

Rice, oil and dried rations were then officially handed over to the Penghulu. After that, the members took the opportunity to mingle with the children who swarmed around them.

"The undernourished children and living conditions dawned upon us how lucky we were. It was truly an enlightening trip that gave us new awareness of our roles as humans", he added.

JF

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## PHI PUTTING ELDERLY COUPLE BACK ON THEIR FEET

Despite living in a poor condition under candlelight in a hut on the banks of the Kinta River in Ipoh over the last three decades, an elderly couple turned down any suggestion of relocating to an old folk's home claiming that they are "still fit and able".

Phun Ah Lun, 67, and his wife Ah Kiew, 65, are not willing to be separated and live far from their present place. They would proudly say that they wanted to live independently and earn a living. However, they would



Nurse Ng Meng Siew cleaning Phun's wound

gratefully accept any aid given to them or be located

to a nearby place.

Phun was once a street vendor selling children's toys and balloons but stopped working after he injured his right leg 18 months ago. With his swollen ankle wrapped in cloth and protected by a plastic bag, he tries to move around with a walking aid.

As a result, Ah Kiew is now the sole breadwinner. She scavenges and sells recyclable materials, and plan to use all their life savings to seek treatment for Phun's leg.

On seeing their plight

highlighted in a newspaper recently, Pantai Hospital Ipoh (PHI) led by its CEO Dr Dilshaad Ali visited the couple and assessed Phun's health needs and the overall situation of their living condition.

Phun has sought medical treatment for his leg but has difficulty travelling for change of dressings. He depends on Ah Kiew to ferry him in her old tricycle for treatment. The couple refuses to go to a hospital.

Phun's wound is 5cm diameter big and deep.

The wound needs further attention especially in the present environment where he is living in harsh conditions and not getting proper nutrition.

If the wound does not improve in the next few days, Dr. Dilshaad would persuade the couple to submit to the hospital's specialist for further treatment.

The hospital will help in the transport and cover all medical expenses.

Dr Dilshaad said the hospital also plans to relocate the couple to near-

by quarters where living conditions are cleaner and safer. Under the hospital's corporate social responsibility programme, they do not only look into the immediate needs but also long term where the poor are being "put back on their feet" and able to carry on in their daily living.

Dr Dilshaad said his medical team is presently going to the couple's hut to change the dressing regularly and monitor his health condition.

## GOODBYE AHHA – AN ILLUSTRIOUS SON OF THE ORANG ASLI COMMUNITY

The Orang Asli community, especially the Semai tribe, has lost one of their most illustrious sons.

Thirty-eight-year-old Sahak bah Udal or better known as "Ahha" passed away last month due to a lung infection.

Ahha, a Semai lived at Ulu Geroh about 12km up the Titiwangsa Range from Gopeng. As chairman of SEMAI (Friends of Ecotourism and Nature Conservation), he almost single handedly introduced to the world the gentle culture of the Semai community

by empowering his entire village to participate in its ecotourism activities.

He also encouraged the community to practice tidy habits to enable tourists to have a comfortable stay. Ulu Geroh now has a visitors' centre which houses a dormitory and their E-Semai project, a programme for its residents to enable hands-on exposure to ICT.

Ahha, who had earlier worked in the hotel industry, saw potential in promoting his Semai culture as an eco-tourism product and encouraged its residents to showcase their lifestyles



Ahha and community members posing with the PTA President's Award

such as mat weaving and their traditional Sewang

dance. Other recent activities include a herbal gar-

den, insect sanctuary and

All of these activities introduced reflect a community that cares for its environment and is able to make a living out of it sustainably while preserving a community's culture and its indigenous knowledge.

Being the main co-ordinator and facilitator between the NGOs and the community, Ahha had been able to receive funding from various NGOs and corporate organisations, among them MNS, DANIDA and Shell, to carry on their activities.

His efforts also re-

ceived recognition for the Village of Ulu Geroh when the Perak Tourist Association presented their 2009 President's Award for being "a proactive community for showcasing their lifestyle and activities."

Yes, Ahha will be missed by many but his dedication in helping to upgrade the livelihood of his community will be carried on through the ecotourism activities he initiated. For details of the villager's activities please go to their web page: [www.esemai.org](http://www.esemai.org).

JAG

# Daulat Tuanku

## Heartiest Congratulations

Duli Yang Maha Mulia

Paduka Seri Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah

Ibni Almarhum Sultan Yussuf Izzuddin Shah

Ghafarullahu-lah

D.K., D.K.M., D.M.N., D.K.A.

Sultan, Yang Di- Pertuan Dan Raja Pemerintah

Negeri Perak Darul Ridzuan

on the occasion of  
His Royal Highness'

Birthday

From



A valued member of The Pantai Group

## LETTER FROM ULU KINTA

## CELEBRITIES Are Not Enough

Ipoh's Michelle Yeoh was appointed Malaysia's reading ambassador to promote the Information, Communication and Culture Ministry's "Come and Read 1Malaysia" campaign. She is another high profile personality, after Malaysia's first astronaut, to give talks on reading, in schools.

Do we really need celebrities to be our reading ambassadors? Are we only motivated when famous people are involved? How accessible will Michelle be because only a few select schools will be graced by her presence? Shouldn't the biggest encouragement come from us, the parents within the home?

Young readers are stimulated only when their parents read books, value reading and have ample reading material at home. It is pointless hiding a book away or placing it on the highest shelf. Books need to be visible and within children's reach. Young readers also need easy access to interesting books at affordable prices.

Bookstores and newsagents are not the only source of books. True, new books are expensive. But dotted around Ipoh are good, second-hand bookstores. And one can always find good bargains on Ebay or good internet booksites.



We have libraries in our major towns. We do need more of them, preferably with a wider selection of books. Sometimes the attitude of the staff can be off-putting as they tend to place extra emphasis on dress code, rather than interest in books.

Some clubs like the Ipoh Swimming Club and Royal Ipoh Club have good libraries. Schools, or at least our Main Convent Ipoh, once had a well-stocked library with interesting books ranging from cooking to collecting as a hobby. We could borrow books during our activity period but sadly, many parents claim that few schools have this library facility, if at all.

Book exchange is a pretty inexpensive way of owning many titles with-

out the cost of paying for new books. Another source of inexpensive books is the budget hotels which are frequented by westerners. These tourists travel with a handful of books which they donate to the hotel, on departure. These inexpensive books can be purchased from the hotel owner, usually for 50 sens.

As always, it is the simple ideas that work best especially when trying to promote anything, even reading. If we were to read ourselves then we set a good example to our children. It shows the child that the parent has chosen an activity which is enjoyable. Children are then more likely to develop the same habit.

Books make great gifts for birthdays, celebrations, or for taking on vacation.

We should encourage our children to choose books as gifts to important people in their lives, and also to value the books they receive as gifts.

We could make reading fun for our children and act out stories, by using different voices. To deliver a story in a boring voice will kill any enthusiasm for reading, however exciting the story.

If we read a lot, we encourage independent readers to read as well. When we ask them about what they are reading, we

engage them in conversation and stimulate interest in their subject.

It is best to turn off the television to provide 'quiet time'. Television harms the developing young child and turning the television off, forces the child to seek alternative things to do, like reading.

Other ideas are making weekly or fortnightly trips to the library so that children look forward to borrowing new books. Also, books on CD or tape can be played when on long trips.

Encouraging reading in children is easy. The pleasures from being absorbed in a good story are plentiful and can only benefit both children and their parents. Thus, celebrities need not apply.

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## IPOH IN BRIEF

## SWAT FOOT PATROLS IN COMMERCIAL AND HOUSING AREAS



Perak police has intensified its Stop-Walk-And-Talk (SWAT) patrols at commercial and residential areas in the state. State's chief police officer Dato' Zulkifli Abdullah stated this when com-

menting on the appeal from residents in the Ipoh Garden and its surrounding areas for more physical presence of the police to prevent crimes.

"These patrols are being done by the officers

of Mobile Police Vehicles (MPV) as they are able to cover a wider area", he said at a blood donation campaign held at the Police Officers Mess in Ipoh on April 8, in conjunction with the 203<sup>rd</sup> Police Day celebration. "Daily the MPV's are designated specific areas where they will park and do their foot patrols".

An on-line poll carried out by Ipoh Echo also showed there is overwhelming support from the people for more crime prevention measures.

JAG

# Daulat Tuanku

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Negeri Perak Darul Ridzuan

on the occasion of  
His Royal Highness'

**Birthday**

*From*

The Board of Directors,  
Management & Staff



THE HAVEN  
LIVING IN THE HEAVENS

# DIRT VIGILANTES COUPLE'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT



Hew Thye Yew and Yap Mee La on their daily routine

By Jerry Francis

While most residents would not lift a finger to help save the environment and keep the city clean, company director Hew Thye Yew and his wife would without fail carry on with their civic duty every day collecting and disposing rubbish at the playground in Taman Cempaka.



Hew Thye Yew

They would turn up at 6 a.m. with torchlight, a large waste disposal plastic bag and a spike to collect the litter around the field. And they have been doing it for the last five years.

"I'll spot the litter while my wife, Yap Mee La, will pick them up and put them in the disposal

plastic bag," said Hew. "On a bad day, we would collect about two bags of litter for disposal in the dump at the nearby market. Most of the rubbish is plastic bags and containers of leftover food."

The modest Hew was reluctant to be interviewed, explaining that their daily

routine was only a small "task" towards helping to keep the city clean.

Those who see them going through their daily routine think they are mad to take all the trouble which is not appreciated by others.

"Some even advised us not to waste our time as the residents in the area would continue to indiscriminately litter the place", said Hew.

"It is our contribution to the community", explained Hew. "If we do not play our part toward a clean and healthy environment, how can we expect others to do so?"

Hew hopes those watching them would understand their concern towards maintaining a clean and healthy environment for all.

"I also hope their conscience will be pricked each time they litter the area", he stressed.

Sixty-two-year-old

Hew said it all started when they got frustrated watching the rubbish scattered all over the playground where they go for their daily exercise of Tai Chi.

"The residents need to change their attitude and be more civic conscious. Throwing rubbish appears to be natural to them. Not just young people, but older people are also guilty", he said.

Ipo Echo hopes there are more dirt vigilantes like Hew and his wife whose contribution, although just a drop in the ocean, could make a difference.



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# JIM THOMPSON NEVER LEFT THE HILLS!

That's the hypothesis of Capt Philip J. Rivers on the sensational disappearance of Jim Thompson, aka the 'Thai Silk King'. Thompson purportedly took off on an afternoon walk on that fateful day of March 26, 1967, and was never seen again. He literally disappeared into thin air.

What started off as an endeavour to gauge the scope of police investigations back then led Capt Rivers to conduct a very thorough investigation of the whole debacle. Capt Rivers' experiences as a fraud investigator stood him in good stead as he eliminated the possibilities which ranged from the plausible to the utterly lu-



dicious. Of the more ridiculous are that Thompson was gobbled by a tiger, sucked in by quicksand, murdered by a disgruntled mistress, dyed his hair red and told fortunes in a cave in Ipoh, and carried off into the jungle to serve as a toy-boy to a native princess!

Entranced listeners at this talk organized by the Perak Academy on the 46th anniversary of Jim Thompson's disappearance were told by Capt Rivers that the three Cs of possibilities never could have happened, i.e., the criminal, communist and CIA elements. The very thorough and extensive search by the police and related mediums and *bomohs*, eliminates all theories.

Capt Rivers' answer to the 46-year-old mystery came by chance in the course of his conversation with a senior medical officer of the district hospital in Cameron Highlands. This officer remarked casually that the hospital

is in possession of some bones found by the Orang Asli in the farming hamlet of Tringkap. Being the Holmes that he is, Capt Rivers paired this revelation with the deathbed confession of an Indian man that he had, in his earlier years, accidentally knocked down a white man and had buried this man to hide his misdeed.

In the midst of the many conjectures, maybe the simplest theory is the most probable? Perhaps the surviving family member(s) of Jim Thompson would have the bones analysed and lay the mystery and Jim Thompson's soul to rest once and for all.

VALERIE CHAN

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## TOURISM

# PERAK TOURISM PROMOTION



Ten Proton Saga cars and 500 consolation prizes await the winners of a tourism promotional competition, "Melancong dan Menang di Perak" (Tour and Win in Perak) to be held this year.

The Perak State Government will co-sponsor it with Syarikat Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Sdn Bhd (Proton) and mobile phone operator, Celcom.

Its launching was officiated by Dato' Hamidah Osman, Executive Councillor for Tourism and Women's Affairs at her State Secretariat Building office in Ipoh recently. The competition, which will be in the form of "lucky draws", will be divided in two parts, the first from May 1 to August 15 while the second is from September 1 to December 15. It is open to all above 18 years of age. Entry forms will

be made available at participating service and retail outlets in the state. These outlets, in order to be participating premises, will be required to pay a RM500 entrance fee.

"We'll provide them with all the promotional items needed", said Hamidah to the media. Service and retail outlets keen on participating can get details from Tourism Perak, Level 10, Perak Techno Trade Centre, Meru Jaya, Jelapang.

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## IPOH IN BRIEF

## BUKIT LARUT'S CABLE CAR PROJECT TO GO AHEAD



The Bukit Larut's Cable Car Project, which has come under heavy fire from many quarters who are sceptical over its feasibility, is to go ahead.

The Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Nazrin Shah, said at the opening of the Perak State Assembly in Ipoh on March 30 that it would be developed by private sector at the cost of RM60 million.

"When ready, it will be a new attraction to Taiping, which is already rich with various tourism products", said Raja Nazrin.

The state government, he said, would impose tight restrictions and requirements to ensure that the environment is not affected by the project.

His assurance is to appease the fears by NGOs of the environmental impact the cable car project would have on the hill resort.

Presently, the only transport up the 1,250 metres above sea-level hill resort is by land rover service available at the foot of the hill. It leaves every hour from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

It is a 30-minute drive up the steep hairpin bends of the narrow winding road built shortly after World War II and completed in 1948.

On a clear day at the summit, it is possible to view the sweeping coastline stretching from Pangkor Island to Penang.

JF

## PERAK STATE ASSEMBLY FAILED TO REFLECT A WORKING STATE GOVERNMENT

The Third Session of the 12<sup>th</sup> Perak State Assembly, which was officially opened by the Raja Muda Perak Raja Nazrin Shah on March 30, has again failed to reflect a "working state government".

This is the general view of NGOs and members of public in the city. They said since May 7, last year, the State Assembly meetings have been in shambles.

Even an important meeting, such as the presentation of the annual budget on October 28, last year, was rushed through without much debate following a walk-out by the opposition Pakatan Rakyat's assemblymen.

And so over the last three sessions, the State Assembly had sat down for a total of six hours during which time no serious debates took place and the meetings hastily concluded.

Although the opening day of the recent sittings went on without incident, the second day saw the house descending into an uproar almost immediately from the start which culminated with the opposition staging a walk-out.

As a result, the debate on a vote of thanks to the Raja Muda and as well as the question-and-answer session were hurriedly conducted and the meeting ended abruptly.

Under normal circumstances, the state assemblymen would participate in the debates and as well as getting their questions answered.

"The people had elected their representatives to air their views and grouses which can only be addressed effectively at the State Assembly forums", commented president of Ipoh City Watch, Mr Augustine Anthony. "Since for the last three sessions there had been only a few hours of work done it would be best to dissolve the assembly and have a re-election to enable a workable government."

President of the Perak Bar Committee En Mad Diah bin Endut remarked that the elected representatives should do their job as expected from them even under difficult situations.

Ipoh City is represented by 13 State Assemblymen each of whom are allowed to submit three oral and five written questions to the house per sitting.

Overall the general expectation of the public who called Ipoh Echo to air their views was to have a working



state government and hoped it would happen at the next State Assembly meeting. They felt that both the Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat should stop politicking and concentrate on issues that would benefit the people and the state.

JAG

## SUBSIDY FOR UTILITY USAGE



The Perak State Government provides subsidies for utilities used by national-type schools in the state. Schools which spend less than RM200 in utility usage per month will be given a hundred per cent subsidy while those whose bills are in excess of RM200 will be paid 80 per cent. This was revealed to the media by Dato' Mah Hong Soon, the Executive Councillor for Local Government, Public Transport and Non-Islamic Affairs at a cheque-presenting ceremony recently. "The allocation is given to schools once in three months", said Mah. Some 111 Chinese and 83 Tamil schools in the state will benefit from the scheme. Within Kinta District alone there are 22 Chinese and 9 Tamil schools.

RM

# CATARACT SURGERY – 'MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE'

### Introduction

There are an estimated 160 million people worldwide who are visually impaired and cataract accounts for almost 50% of this visual impairment. It is the leading cause of blindness and in the local context, a national eye survey found that cataract accounts for 39% of blindness.

### Anatomy

The eye functions like a camera i.e., there is a lens which focuses light onto the 'film' (retina). In the eye, images from the retina are processed into electrical signals and sent to our brain which then interprets these signals as images.

With age, the lens becomes cloudy, hence, forming a cataract.

### Causes of Cataract

The most common cause for cataract is age. However, in specific illnesses (such as diabetes) or in association with certain types of medication (steroids), there is an increased risk of cataract. Increased UV exposure can also lead to the development of cataract.

### Symptoms of Cataract

The most common symptom is blurring of vision (Figure 1). Other symp-



Figure 1 – Simulation of vision through an eye with cataract (right)

toms may include colours appearing dull, glare and halos around lights, difficulty reading, watching TV or driving at night.

### Treatment of Cataract

The only proven 'cure' for cataract is surgery. Contrary to popular belief, there is no eye drop or medication which can treat a cataract.

### How Is Cataract Surgery Performed?

Modern cataract surgery is called phacoemulsification and involves the use of high frequency ultrasound (not laser) delivered through a handheld probe to break the cataract into little pieces and remove it. An artificial lens implant is then placed into the eye. The whole procedure is carried out through a wound of less than 3mm

and no stitches are required. (Figure 2).

### Advancements in Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery is constantly changing and technological advancements in the machines as well as significant developments in the types of lenses have contributed to improved quality of vision as well as quality of life of the patient.

### Challenging Surgery

There are many different types of cataract and to the ophthalmologist, the technical difficulties presented by the different types of cataracts during surgery is a very real issue and a challenging one.

**Dense cataracts:** A significant number of patients only seek help when

they are almost blind from cataracts and in these cases, the cataracts would be very dense. In a dense cataract, more energy is required during surgery and there is an increased risk of damage to other structures within the eye.

**Unstable cataracts:** In certain circumstances such as in an inherited condition (Marfan's syndrome) or following injury to the eye, the lens may be dislocated from its original position. Complicated manoeuvres to stabilize the lens will be required during surgery for these situations and should only be performed by an adequately experienced surgeon.

**Small pupils:** A dilated pupil is essential during cataract surgery but pupil sizes are variable and in certain conditions such as diabetes or glaucoma the

pupil can be particularly small. The surgeon will be required to use various different techniques to mechanically 'dilate' the pupil in order to operate safely.

### Cataract and Other Eye Diseases

Cataracts often co-exist with other eye diseases and in the appropriate hands, combined surgery can be carried out.

**Cataract and glaucoma:** Glaucoma is characterised by high pressure within the eye causing damage to the optic nerve. Patients lose peripheral vision first and eventually their central vision as well if left untreated. Glaucoma and cataract often co-exist and cataract surgery combined with trabeculectomy (a filtration procedure to lower eye pressure) can be carried out.

**Cataract and diabetes:** Diabetes can cause severe bleeding in the eye and this complication from diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in the working age group. Vitrectomy is a specialised microsurgical procedure which is often carried out in patients with severe diabetic eye

disease. As cataracts are also more common in diabetics, combined cataract surgery and vitrectomy are often performed.

### Conclusion

As illustrated above, there is a lot 'more than meets the eye' when it comes to cataract surgery. It is important that patients understand the options available to them when told they require cataract surgery. Discuss all visual requirements with your ophthalmologist to find out the best option for you.

It is also important that patients understand the potential complexity of cataract surgery. No doubt cataract surgery may be trivialised to be a simple procedure which takes minutes to perform, but patients should be aware that it is still an operation which carries with it certain risks and should not be taken lightly.

Finally, be aware of other conditions which may affect the eye as we age. Regular visits to your friendly ophthalmologist will go a long way in picking up problems early and nipping them in the bud.



Figure 2 – Cataract surgery is performed with the surgeon looking through a microscope.

This information is brought to you from the Lee Eye Centre, 44 Persiaran Greenhill, Ipoh. Tel: 05-2540095, 05-2545541. Fax: 05-2540273. Email: [enquiry@lec.com.my](mailto:enquiry@lec.com.my).



## By DINESH K PHANTASIEREN 2010



Aptly named "Phantasieren" which means "fantasy" in German, the Perak Girls School (PGS) all-girls marching band displayed its talents during a concert recently. Led by two brilliant conductors, Cheah Wai Kean, the band's coach and Lim Choong Chun,

a renowned musician from Singapore, the band thrilled the crowd. The objective of the concert, according to PTA Chairman, Yip Chee Keong, was to raise funds for a basketball court, buy new musical instruments and to upgrade facilities in the school. In his speech, Yip highlighted the plight of semi-aided

schools like PGS, which received limited funding from the government. This, he said, was contrary to the 1Malaysia spirit. Guest of honour, Puan Sri Leong Wan Chin, of Taiko Group, thanked well-wishers for their generosity in donating for a worthy cause. She acknowledged the band's achievements and encouraged the girls to maintain their excellence. The 1,500-odd crowd that thronged the school hall helped the organisers in collecting the RM300,000 required. The band belted out upbeat versions of "Shrek Dance Party" and "If We Hold on Together" thus ensuring their versatility.

## GAVEL CLUB TABLE TOPICS COMPETITION

The Gavel Club of SMK Gunung Rapat held its first ever table-top competition since its formation in April 2009. The competition was divided into two categories – lower forms (Forms 1 to 3) and upper forms (Forms 4 and 5). A total of 22 students took part. The panel of judges consisted of members of the Ipoh Toastmasters' Club led by Peter Ng and assisted by Cheah Thong Kim and Peter Bucher. Club advisers, Nur Aida and Narinder, were in



attendance. Gavel Club President, Jerinder Kaur, was very pleased with the response and hoped more would participate in future competitions. Esther Kuah and Harkrishan Singh were adjudged winners in their

respective category.

The primary objective of the competition is to encourage the usage of communicable English among students, as well as instilling confidence in public speaking.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

**Home for the Aged Simee Ipoh Family Day Food Fair.** April 25, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. For coupons contact: 05-5473252.

**Ex-Tarcisians Association (ETA)** Ipoh is holding its Biennial General Meeting (BGM) on April 25 at 4 p.m., SM Tarcisian Convent. All ex-pupils are encouraged to attend. Call Veni at 05-5278563 or Mutharasi at 017-4872795.

**Kechara Ipoh Study Group Recycling Activity** on the 4th Sunday of every month. Commencing April 25 at the carpark opposite Tan Sri Chong Kok Lim Building, Jalan Che Tak (off Jalan Yang Kalsom), Ipoh. Between 8-11 a.m. Call Wan Wai Meng at 012-215 0968 or Dr Ming at 012-284 1009 for further details.

### Perak Community Specialist Hospital (PCSH)

(i) Prostate Awareness Screening. April 24, 8.30 a.m.-12.00 p.m. For men 50 years and above. Free blood test, ultrasound & consultation for the first 50 participants. Contact: Juliet Choo 018-5713955.

(ii) Special offers for Pap Smear (RM28) and Mammogram Screening (RM70). Validity March 27 - April 27. For appointment: 017-2951982 (Ms. Angeline) or 012-5061515 (Ms. Selena Yee).

**Datuk Bandar Turun Padang Zone 19** (Sg Rapat/Pgkln Pegoh/Pgkln Gate). April 28 at 9 a.m. Venue: Carsem Banquet Hall, Kg Melayu, Sg Rapat.

**Perak Academy Dinner Talk "NEP vs NEM"** by Dr. Lim Teck Ghee. April 30 commencing at 7.30 pm. Venue: Level 4, Syuen Hotel, Ipoh. Call 05-5478 949 or 016-5518172 for details/reservations.

**9<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Hospice Congress** entitled, "Communication for Better Care" on May 7-9, Impiana Hotel Ipoh. Contact: Perak Palliative Care Society, 14 Lebu Woods, Canning Gdn, 31400 Ipoh, Tel./Fax: 05-5469021, email: [ppcs95@streamyx.com](mailto:ppcs95@streamyx.com).

## SMJK (I) BAGAN SERAI, PERAK-FORM THREE 1975 GATHERING

Class of Form 3-1975, SMJK (I) Bagan Serai, Perak, will be holding a grand gathering on the 12-06-2010 at SYUEN HOTEL, in Ipoh, Perak.

For more details kindly contact:-

Ganesan: 016 551 9486 Mat Said: 016 019 413 5774 or  
Lau Chin An: 012 518 1318

## ACS IPOH SPORTS DAY 2010

March 12 marked an important date in the ACS calendar, as the school held its 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Sports Day. Deputy District Education Officer, Ahmed Shaker Lazim, was the guest of honour. Oldham (Red House) emerged champion for the fourth consecutive year. Eu Tong Sen (Purple House) and Aziz (Yellow House) came in second and third respectively.

The Eu Tong Sen tug-of-war team, cheered on by its vociferous supporters, won the blue ribbon event with relative ease. The much anticipated interschool 4x100m relay was won by the ACS quartet who left teams from SMK Buntong, SMK Sg Pari and SMJK Yuk Choy trailing far behind. In the march pass competition, the police cadet and Oldham teams won honours in their respective categories. Like previous years, the annual sports day helps



The ACS 4x100m relay team (l-r) standing – Eric Lum & Tuen Zhi Hao; front – Jayapratip & Jaiprakash

bring together ACS-ians, old and new, in the spirit of brotherhood and sportsmanship.

## IPOH HERITAGE WALK



Tourism Malaysia, will launch the Ipoh Heritage Trail Map 1 that covers the North-Western portion of Ipoh Inner City. Produced by Kinta Heritage Sdn Bhd, this map represents the first of four that together will cover the whole of the Old City centre. This and the other maps to follow are intended to be used as tools to encourage tourists to visit Ipoh's heritage sites.

About 120 Ipohites from the private and public sectors involved in promoting Ipoh as a tourist destination will be participating in a familiarity tour of a portion of Ipoh City on April 25.

The tour, commencing at the Ipoh Town Hall at 8.00 a.m., will visit a total of 24 heritage build-

ings located within the perimeter of Club Road (Jalan Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab), Post Office Road (Jalan Dewan), Clayton Road (Jalan S.P. Seenivasagam) and Belfield Street (Jalan Sultan Yussuf).

The event, jointly organised by the Perak Tourism Association and

The organisers, recognising the need for those involved in promoting tourist attractions to be very well informed of the products they promote, will during the tour provide an in-depth briefing of the history and architecture of each of the heritage buildings and the locality.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

PLIGHT OF A FORGOTTEN  
LA SALLE BROTHER

Brother Vincent Corkery, who had served a span of over 60 years in educating thousands of our citizens, only wishes to be a Malaysian Citizen and spend the rest of his life in this country.

However, his application for citizenship was rejected some years ago without explanation in spite of him having obtained the necessary pass in written and oral Malay.

The 82-year-old Brother Vincent, the former principal of St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, was admitted to Fatimah Hospital just before Christmas last year and was discharged after a three-week stay.

He had a rare bacterial infection between the toes of his left foot. Before this problem could be cleared up, his right foot developed the same problem.

He then decided to seek treatment in the Ipoh General Hospital. He was admitted on March 1 and was discharged a few days ago after a 27-day stay. Now he has to go back daily for treatment as an outpatient.

I have been visiting him quite frequently and almost on all occasions I was the only visitor. It seems that the La Salle Brothers have been forgotten.

Several of our important leaders of the nation, including our Prime Minister Dato' Sri Abdul Najib Razak, Home Minister Dato Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Sultan of Selangor, Raja Muda of Perak Raja Nazrin Shah and many others have had their education in my alma mater St. John Institution, Kuala Lumpur.

I am sure that if they are aware of the plight of Brother Vincent, they will act promptly to remedy it.

**Dedicating To Education**

Brother Vincent came from Ireland in 1948. His main contribution has been to St Michael's Institution in Ipoh where he served since 1958. In addition, he took an active interest in Malaysian education.

In the 1960s, he was the state supervisor for oral English, and served in the early 1970s as secretary-general of the national conference of the Heads of Secondary Schools. For some years he was an active member of the Malaysian Historical Society.

As with other Brothers who taught in Malaysia, the financial remuneration to him has been barely adequate. His last drawn monthly salary as Principal was RM1,000, and when he retired in 1988, he did not qualify for a pension or for

other retirement benefits. Since retirement, the La Sallian communal fund has provided him RM1,000 a month for his food and car maintenance.

In retirement, he heads a centre for programmes for student leadership and for staff groups at La Salle Centre in Ipoh, and serves as secretary for the Brothers Councils for Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

**During the Japanese Occupation**

The La Salle Brothers made their first appearance in Asia in 1852 when they founded St Xavier's Institution in Penang. Since then a network of Lasallian schools has developed throughout the country. When the British left Malaya, the Lasallian Brothers stayed on to manage their schools.

During the Japanese occupation of the country all the foreign brothers were imprisoned. My old teacher, Brother Lawrence Spitzig, a Canadian, was imprisoned in Changi, Singapore. Brother Lawrence retired as principal of my alma mater, St John's Institution and died last year on August 18 in Assunta Hospital, Petaling Jaya, at the age of 92 after long service to the nation.

These Catholic schools have continued to flourish even when the Brothers have greatly diminished in number. The foundations were well laid, and Lasallian education continues to be an important part of our education system even in these changing times.

In terms of their service and loyalty to the country and the various communities, the Brothers hold a torch that is second to none. Their dedication and commitment to the country was perhaps most evident during the Japanese



Brother Vincent

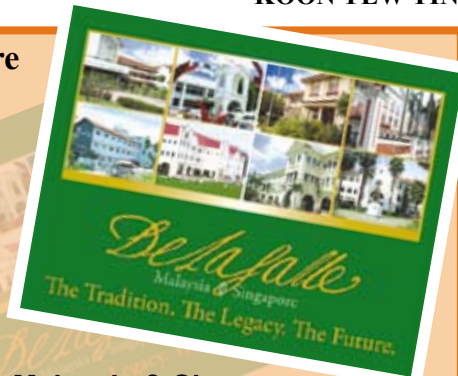
Occupation period. Despite the warnings of many friends that they would be perceived as enemy aliens by the Japanese and of the dire consequences following, the Brothers opted to stay with the people. They paid a horrific price for this loyalty.

The consequences included incarceration in Changi prison where 15 Brothers were held; Taiping and Pudu jails where 12 were held; and at Bahau, in Negri Sembilan, where some 30 were held under primitive conditions in a mosquito-infested jungle settlement, surviving only on the food they managed to grow.

Once the Japanese surrendered, in spite of what they had endured, the Brothers returned to their posts and reopened their schools without delay. The fact that they had not run away but had chosen to stay with the people and share their pain, greatly enhanced their standing in the post-war years but this seems to count for little today.

I urge the authorities to do the right thing for Brother Vincent and for all other LaSallian and missionary educators who have sacrificed so much for our country. Provision of a gratuity and a pension, automatic approval of citizenship, appropriate medical and other civil service benefits – surely the country can afford this minimal humanitarian assistance.

KOON YEW YIN

**Read more about the La Salle Brothers:****DeLaSalle. Malaysia & Singapore The Tradition. The Legacy. The Future**

Coffee-table hardback. Full colour. 168 pp  
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Available at: LaSalle Centre Ipoh, Meru Valley Resort, Ipoh Echo & leading book stores.  
A portion from the sale of the book will be channelled towards Yayasan DeLaSalle in KL.

## ART

SOLO ART EXHIBITION  
BY SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST

A self-taught local artist, A Loo Win, will hold his 6<sup>th</sup> solo exhibition featuring about 50 paintings – 32 in water-colour and the rest are 'line and wash', from April 24 to May 1 at the First Floor of the Syuen Hotel Ipoh.

Born in 1945, Loo Win's interest in art began in Shing Chung primary school in Sungai Siput Utara. Having retired from a clerical job in the private sector some ten years ago, he now spends a lot of his time painting.

He gets his inspiration from scenes he observes and the whole composition is made up from his imagination. It usually takes him 1 to 2 days to complete a painting; 80 per cent of which is done on-the-spot and finishing touches completed at home.

His work focuses on traditional culture, heritage and modern buildings, limestone hills, mining ponds, villages, etc., in and around Ipoh; Ipohites may recognise a lot of the scenes. He mainly paints subjects that he likes but will do a painting if commissioned.

A half-size painting (38 x 56 cm) can sell for about RM1,500-RM2,000, and a full-size (56 x 76 cm) watercolour for about RM4,000.

He hopes that his exhibition will create awareness for the preservation and cleanliness of the environment, and also raise the standard of painting. Loo Win can be contacted at:

016-5533027.



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## SPORT

## LOOKING FOR A GRAND MASTER

First GM Chess Academy, which aims at producing Malaysia's first chess grand master, has been established at Bercham in Ipoh.

"Malaysia has never had a chess Grand Master. Furthermore our five International masters earned their titles more than 10 years ago", said Raymond Siew the coordinator of the academy.

As in all sports the only way to improve one's game is to consistently play a challenging game. That reasoning is the purpose of setting up the academy to enable other like-minded chess enthusiasts to improve their skills.

The academy's philosophy is to develop and

nurture a positive environment where children are trained to sharpen their mental skills. By asking the right questions and applying analytical methodologies to the challenges before them enables students a high level of thinking under increasing pressure. As Siew summarized it "we focus on teaching how to think as opposed to what to think".

Present on opening day was 28-year-old International Master (IM) Lim Yee Meng who shared his chess experiences with the guests. Lim has been playing chess since age 10 and became a national champion by age 14. However he only achieved the title of International



International Master  
Lim Yee Meng

Master 12 years later at the age of 26, which he acknowledges is too long a gap.

Lim feels that with proper training and guidance Malaysian players could become global ma-

terial. He recommends players to participate in four tournaments per year to improve their ratings. With each tournament lasting five days, that takes some planning which would involve funding, sponsorship and logistics and is the reason why First GM was initiated.

IM Lim is a consultant with the academy while their chief trainer is Abd Ur-Rahman bin Mohamed Amin.

During the launch day 10 students played simultaneously with IM Lim in which he quite naturally 'creamed' the field.

As a testimony of the potential of our Perak players, the Malaysian

Chess Federation (MCF) had recently offered three Perak players who were successful at the National Junior Chess Championship held at Dewan Sri Pinang, Penang, in March the opportunity to represent the country at the upcoming ASEAN Chess Championships (Age Group) at Subic Bay in the Philippines in June.

"This is the first time in almost 20 years that Perakeans have been asked to represent the country", stated Siew.

Unfortunately the offer to represent the country does not include funding and participants have to source for their own funds to compete at the tournament.

One of the players Mark Siew is from the academy and can be assured of assistance. The other two players Nur Munirah bt Mat Rahim and Putri Nurfariza bt Ahmad Darji, though not with the academy, will get help to source for sponsors. Each participant needs RM4,600.

It is good to note that there are concerned citizens around that see the benefits in the game of chess. More so when they attach a Grand Master title as the goal complete with a structure to attain that goal.

To know more of the academy please visit their blogsite at <http://firstgm-chessacademy.blogspot.com>.

JAG

## BUSINESS

## PERAK TRADE EXPOSITION



A trade exposition is in the pipeline to showcase products from Wenzhou, China. The expo will be held at Stadium Indera Mulia from June 24 to 27. Existing good ties between Ipoh and Wenzhou will go a long way to make the show a success. Opportunities, according to Dato' Hamidah Osman, Executive Councillor for Trade, Tourism and Women's Affairs, are aplenty for businessmen

from both cities. "In fact, the Wenzhou business community is looking for ways to do joint ventures with its counterparts in Ipoh", she told the media recently. "One such project considered is the water front city development along Kinta River in Lahat".

Tourism is another area of interest. "The tourism industry will benefit from this two-way flow of communication", she remarked. Indeed there is

much to be gained from the bilateral relationship, trade being the priority. "Some 300 Wenzhou traders have indicated their desire to participate in the June exposition."

Hamidah introduced the newly appointed CEO of the restructured Tourism Perak Berhad, Puan Zameema Mohamad Ariff. "Zameema's appointment is in line with the state government's desire to re-vitalise the infan-

tile tourism industry", she said. "The concentration will now be focused on eco-tourism and historical sites, for which Perak is noted."

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