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Are the Youths of Ipoh Coming or Going?

Bumper Issue

by Joanna Gough



Bimbotic mockery of Pomelos in Parody by Ipoh Lang Productions

At 3am on a Sunday morning, after clubbing at shoulder packed S.O.S. Club, Digital DJ (Ipoh's most celebrated DJ) and I sat at Nasi Vanggey, Greentown, pondering the demographics of clubbing in Ipoh. Seven days a week, the club is full of people with a minimum of 500 on ordinary days and on weekends S.O.S. is fully booked out. Throughout Malaysia, you can't find a club with 100 people on a Sunday night let alone packed to overflowing. S.O.S however, has at least 500 people on a Sunday night. It raises questions, like "Are Ipoh's youth/young adults, that into alcohol and loud music?" Or is there something else?

Continued on page 2



Sensation Of Sound (S.O.S) Club with Digi'Tal DJ
Photo by Kenny Chong

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Platform Needed: where Youth are Encouraged to Do Crazy Things and to Make Money from it

Youths! Our highly energetic population has this insatiable need to make things and put a value on it. Take for instance the latest craze of the Opa Gangnam Style. Ipoh Lang Productions created a parody of the Korean pop video in Cantonese that went viral with more than 650,000 views on the online YouTube world. Needless to say it was a hit! The production went against the conservative, well behaved stereotype of Ipoh youths and had young people dancing like looneys in public, looking a little mental with puckered lips at the Railway Station, girls being bimbotic and playing with pomelos in Old Town and boys fake beating someone up in front of Foh San. There's a saying that 'Stupid is Creative', and with 650,000 views we can applaud Ipoh Lang Productions for a marvelous job well done. The Ipoh-centric parody focuses on the many foods around the City and the culture of Ipoh society today. But the execution of choreography and video angles parodying the town was what really gave it the comic angle and pulled the stupendous response on YouTube.

PORT as Creative Platform

BESKAL, a bicycle bag designed by Ipoh boy Nik Mohd Misuarie, won Top 8 Creative Business in the World at the Creative Business Cup 2012 held in Copenhagen. This bicycle bag came about 10 years ago when Nik, an up and coming BMX extreme rider, was a student at SMK Dato' Megat Khas on Jalan Labrooy. Nik could not take his bicycle to school because 'Uncle Bas' would charge an extra RM15. So he made a bag, put the bicycle inside and carried it on the bus. The bicycle being in the bag = no charge. Ten years later, he met with people at PORT (People of Remarkable Talent) Ipoh and the bicycle bag resurfaced again. It seems that this problem is a big problem in urban Asia. Bicycles though encouraged, are not allowed on LRTs/MRTs/public transportation systems. Uncle Bas did well in charging the boy the extra RM15. BESKAL is now on its way to changing the way people go to work in cities on an everyday basis.

Platform for Visual Arts

Then there's Kim Jeow Wang, who seems to be on a streak of winning awards from around the world and Asia. This prestigious photographer started off with an education in Multimedia at the Perak Institute of Art but due to financial constraints, he did a 'Steve Jobs' and dropped out. He then picked up a job at Bridal House. It didn't focus on Multimedia entirely. The wedding gown shop focused heavily on photography. And there he resided and worked full time for 8-9 years. However, after picking up the heavy skills of photography, Kim Jeow Wang grew restless and needed more freedom in creating his compositions and photographs. He left Bridal House and soon opened U Wang Studio in the year 2010. There he created from scratch his name and fame as a Wedding Photographer. He won bronze for the Wedding Category of Creative Asia Award 2012 and First Place for Engagement at the Wedding Portraits and Photographers International Award.

When asked where he got his drive and motivation from, he said it was from the competition around the city. "There are so many wedding photographers and studios everywhere, I feel that I need to push myself to be different". With DSLRs (Digital Single-Lens Reflex cameras) being affordably priced these days, the Perak Lens Association itself has more than 500 photographers within the association and a good amount making their side incomes from weddings around the city. Kim Jeow Wang succeeds with his wedding packages of "We Do Different" by designing conceptual ideas specifically catered to the lifestyle of the client. Thanks to the strong Family Culture in Ipoh, many do want to get married and every couple looks for that idea that closely resembles who they are. Kim Jeow Wang designs that.



Team BESKAL competing at the Creative Business Cup in Copenhagen; R-L: Nik Mohd Misuarie, Amir Baharuddin and Mohd Nazrinfwat

Living Life Worth 'Dying For'

On a more prosaic level, it's the dynamism that one brings to the workplace and the energy created in the process that motivates Leeza Moorthi who is enjoying her job as an Assistant Lecturer on English and Communication subjects. Having studied Literature at an Ipoh university, the usual route would be to head off to KL to get a job. Leeza Moorthi pursued her internship in Kuala Lumpur

as a Company Secretary but realised that the KL lifestyle is not all the hype it was made up to be. A desk bound job was no place for a sociable Ipoh girl, so after graduating with a degree she came home and helped out at the Mariaville Kindergarten on Jalan Francois. The energy of children and being around such vibrant individuals (aka*Brats*) got Leeza Moorthi to realise how interesting teaching can be. Everyday a new interaction, new ideas, new worlds and as every child is learning – lots of humour and laughter around. Now she's around vibrant individuals at the university and consistently being challenged to improve herself as an Assistant Lecturer. Her drive comes from interacting with youths and from the challenge of being one step ahead of them in order to act as a guide and mentor. The energy generated makes her feel that she's contributing to society and living a 'life worth dying for'.

Its All About Collective Energy

So to go back to our 3am conversation at Nasi Vanggey which started this article, and having dissected these three success stories, Digi'tal DJ and I came to the conclusion that the youths of Ipoh are not thronging to clubs because they're trying to get themselves drunk or drown their sorrows. There's a centredness at the core of our youths and that is collective ENERGY. It's the Energy you get from being in a room of 500 people listening to the same music, watching the dancers and clapping. For some it's about the dancing and laughing and positive energy from the people who are there to have a fantastic time.

Ipoh Lang Production's energy is from the gangnam style which took the world by storm. The K-Pop Sensation was everywhere. U Wang Studio absorbs competition and exudes the energy that drives any business forward. He pushes himself creatively. BESKAL's Nik Mohd Mizuarie, coming from a lower income group, was challenged by a bus driver and from that, he turned this one unfortunate event into an opportunity to change the world. What all youths are thriving on is a continuous form of Energy of Attraction.

Our youths need and use this energy to move forward, and although in the old days, clubs were seen as a cause for social problems. In Ipoh, there just might be a positive outcome for this.

In the age of digital entertainment, our iPhones, iPads and Facebook are acting like the Big Brother of the 21st Century. Every device has a camera and every photo taken ends up on Facebook, AND that's a great thing. It allows anyone and everyone to see and be seen.

Nurture Not Nuke the Energy

In summary, Talents can only do so much with their skills on a budget: They need the financial and public support of the City in order to be a success. With the many projects that will be up and coming over the years let's continue to lend our utmost support in encouraging our younger generation not so much by talking, but by showing up and learning and connecting them to greater potentials. Ipoh is moving forward and can't always cater to the past. In order for Youth to be able to stay here, they need to express themselves. And Society needs to encourage that. Though many young adults prefer to be true to their roots and stick with family, there is still a huge need for any young, vibrant energetic individual to want to compete in a Global Market and be as successful as U Wang Studios, BESKAL, Ipoh Lang and many more.

The Energy needs to Grow. It's time we plugged that into Ipoh Society and Charge it Up.



Kim Jeow Wang awarded BRONZE at the Creative Asia Awards 2012 for Wedding Open Category



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IPOH **echo**

From the Editor's Desk

• by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

IN FAVOUR OF FOODBANKS

The long-term benefits are plentiful. It encourages an active community spirit; one that is based on volunteerism, something which is sorely missing in our Malaysian society...

If statistics on the poor, the underprivileged and the marginalised are to be taken seriously, the problem faced by the homeless and the hungry can never be taken lightly. How would you react when told that nearly 40 percent of Malaysians earn less than RM1500 a month? It is a fact. Forty percent of 28 million is 11.2 million. Therefore, over 11 million Malaysians earn barely enough to scrape through the rigors of living in a supposedly land of plenty. The definition of plenty is very subjective, depending on which side of the social spectrum you are in. Although the margin is much higher than the national poverty line of RM750, a take-home pay of RM1500 per month is relatively low, especially if one has many mouths to feed.

With the escalating price of necessities, a family of five may have to scrape and scrimp to see itself through. Life is becoming harder not by the months but by the days, as personal challenges become more acute over time.

Although the government can literally play hide and seek with figures, the reality on the ground is something else. Claiming an annual inflation rate of 2 percent based on a basketful of goods and services is absurd, as the basket is always filled with items that are picked to give the kind of figure the government envisages. Calculating CPI (Consumer Price Index) based on the time-honoured method is no longer practical. A more realistic and holistic approach in defining CPI is desirable, one which reflects reality rather than a simple single-digit number.

Since prices of essentials have much to do with the volatility of energy and sugar prices, any increase in the prices of these items will have a definitive impact on the livelihood of the rakyat. Since General Election 2004, petrol and sugar prices have been revised several times. The aftereffects are not minimal, as some would prefer to describe. With each revision in energy and sugar prices, the number of people who go hungry, broke and without homes increases exponentially. A recent case of an ex-serviceman being imprisoned for stealing some food items from a supermarket exemplifies the plight of the hungry, the poor and the homeless in our country.



If feeding these hungry Malaysians is beyond the capacity of our ill-defined and poorly organised welfare system, the introduction of food banks may be the solution. What is a food bank then?

A food bank is a non-profit, charitable organisation that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough to avoid hunger.

In the United States and Australia, food banks usually operate on the "warehouse" model. They act as food storage and distribution depots for smaller front line agencies. They do not give out food directly to the hungry. After the food is collected and sorted for quality, these food banks distribute it to non-profit community or government agencies such as food pantries, food closets, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, orphanages and schools. Outside of the US and Australia, the "front line" model is common. Such food banks give out most or all of their food directly to the end-users.

Unfortunately, the only active food banks in Asia are the ones in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. A food bank exists in New Delhi, India. The closest we have come to a food bank is something awkwardly similar in practice but not in spirit. Goods can be purchased at these "shops" at a much reduced price compared to supermarkets and sundry shops.

The proliferation of the 1Malaysia people's shops (*Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia*) seems promising at first but when accusations of sub-standard and poor quality goods are levelled at these stores, their operability becomes suspect. Today only a few remain open.

Although no concerted efforts have been taken to introduce food banks on a grand scale, the idea is worth a try considering the rise in the number of the poor and the hungry. The good point about food banks is that they provide a solution to the problem of hunger that does not require resources of the state. The long-term benefits are plentiful. It encourages an active community spirit that is based on volunteerism, something which is sorely missing in our Malaysian society.

EYE HEALTH – EYE MYTHS OR FACTS

Ipoh Echo's EYE HEALTH series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. GILL talking to us about EYE MYTHS AND FACTS.

The eyes are windows to the world around us. There are many myths that surround the eyes. You may not be blessed with perfect vision but you can take your blinkers off when it comes to eye-care. Here are some common myths about eye-care:



Dr. S.S. Gill
Resident Consultant
Ophthalmologist,
Hospital Fatimah

If you wear glasses, you get dependent on them

When you are prescribed a pair of spectacles to correct your vision because you have blurred vision, excessive use does not weaken your eyes. Wearing these prescription glasses allows you to see clearly and puts less strain on your eyes. It does not make you get dependent on the spectacles but rather, it just allows you to enjoy good vision.

Nothing can be done to prevent vision loss in old age

If you experience any eye symptoms such as blurred vision, eye pain, or floaters, do see a doctor. There are many causes of eyesight loss or blurring vision and most of them can be treated especially so if they are detected early enough. So, if you have blurring vision, seek professional help.

Eating carrots improves vision

Will eating carrots all day long give you bionic eyes? Actually, it's the overall DIET that's important. Although carrots are foods that are high in Vitamin A and does play a role in maintaining eye health, having an excess of the vitamin does not enhance vision further. Foods like spinach, broccoli and dark green leafy vegetables can help the eyes. So, you do not have to be eating carrots like a rabbit.



Reading in dim light is bad for you

Reading in dim light does not cause permanent harm to your vision but it can cause eye fatigue that can affect you significantly. It is best to avoid reading under dim light to avoid unnecessary eye fatigue. Going through the day results in enough fatigue in itself, so do the right thing and read under adequate lighting. If you do get tired, simply stop what you are doing for a while. The 20-20-20 rule is helpful – take a break every 20 minutes for about 20 seconds by looking at objects that are 20 feet away from you.

Working at a computer damages your eyes

When someone works on a computer, he or she tends to blink less times in one minute. This causes discomfort especially when you work with a computer for long. It is because the eye lubrication gets compromised, making the eyes less moist. The person's eyes end up feeling dry, gritty and sometimes with a burning sensation. Again, the key is to take a regular break in between computer work, applying the 20-20-20 rule. Applying moistening or lubricating eye drops do help. Avoid eye drops with antihistamines in them! Reducing the brightness of your monitor to a comfortable level is also helpful.

People with bad eyesight shouldn't wear out their eyes by doing detailed work

If you have weak eyes, doing fine-print reading does not make them worse. The eye is not a muscle. The eye is like a camera. Therefore, it will not wear out just because you use it to take photographs that have fine detail. Dr Gill will share more in the next issue of Ipoh Echo.

For more information, call Gill Eye Specialist Centre at Hospital Fatimah (05-5455582) or email gilleycentre@dr.com.

In The Name Of My Father's Estate

• by Peter Lee

Episode 12

While the first family of Lee Sr was gathering the details and documents of Lee Sr's estate as well as contemplating whether to reveal some of the information to Connie (Lee Sr's 2nd wife) and Dave (family lawyer) for estate administration, Connie was meeting up with her own lawyer, May, whom she had just engaged to advise her on the frozen assets of Lee Sr which are jointly owned by Lee Sr together with her and her three minor children. Connie said "May, I need some advice from you on my husband's estate in terms of revealing some information to two of my Co-Administrators who are the eldest children of his first family. "That means your step children?" asked May. "Well! You can put it that way" replied Connie. May then said, "Before you continue, I have to tell you first that legally you have to reveal all assets of your husband's either in sole name or joint name with you and your children, to the Administrators."



Connie continued by saying that she has some bank accounts under the sole name of Lee Sr, some in joint name with her and her three minor children. May then asked, "How many accounts are there?" Connie replied, "Ok, there are two bank accounts under his sole name of which one is a savings account and the other one a current account." "What about the joint bank accounts?" asked May. Connie said, "I have three joint bank accounts with my husband of which one account in Quikcash Bank has been fully withdrawn by me. I could not withdraw from the other joint account in CDS Bank because somehow the bank knew about the death of my husband and froze it. I have yet to check on the remaining joint account with Bagus Bank." "By the way, did you check whether there is a mandate given to you to sign for the current account?" asked May. Connie asked, "what do you mean?" In reply May said, "It means that if a mandate is given to you, then you can sign to withdraw the money from this account in the absence of your husband but if the bank knows that he is dead then this current account will be frozen." Connie's response was "I didn't know that and I think this kind of arrangement was never done by my husband."

"The other thing is that each of my three children, that is, Steve, Jimmy and Jennifer who are 10, 12 and 15 years old respectively each have a joint bank account with their father and they cannot withdraw their money due to their ages."

"The rest of my husband's assets, like investments in mutual funds, shares in the Share Market locally and overseas cannot be touched because they are all under his name. As for properties, I have two houses jointly with him. One of the houses is mortgaged to CDS Bank for an Overdraft facility." May then said, "under your circumstances you have no choice but to reveal all this information for the application of your husband's Letter of Administration (L.A.) to unlock all the assets." "Then what about the money I have taken from the joint name account," asked Connie. "That too, legally speaking," was May's response. Connie was rather uneasy about this because it involves a substantial amount.

To be continued...

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! – from Peter Lee

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 excelsecms@gmail.com. Website: <http://www.wills-trust.com.my>.

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Maids, Slaves or Saviours?



THINKING ALLOWED

by Mariam Mokhtar

Noor, not her real name, returned to Indonesia to look after an ailing relative. Several months later, when the relative had recovered, Noor contacted her former employer to see if she could return to work. The employer sent her sufficient funds to cover her expenses for the journey from her village, and flight to Malaysia. Noor's husband took this money and told her to take the cheaper crossing by boat. A distraught Noor phoned her employer to tell her she had arrived, but not at the airport. Many Indonesian women are easy prey – not just from members of their own family who see them as easy sources of income, but also from some Malaysians, who treat them like slaves.

Many Perak households function smoothly because of Indonesian women, several businesses would have difficulty operating without them, many of our market traders and small retail shops are manned by them, and the oil palm industry relies on them. The Indonesian worker, principally the domestic maid, can be a godsend or a bearer of grief.

Recently, the Indonesian authorities sought to dissuade her citizens from working as maids in Malaysia, following the latest scandal. The warning came after police freed 105 women, 95 of whom were Indonesians, six Filipinas and four Cambodians, who had been imprisoned against their will. By day, these women worked as housemaids and had been forced to work without pay; at night, they were locked away in a building.

Lessons have not been learnt despite a ban on Indonesian maids in 2009. Many of the women who seek employment in Malaysia face an uncertain future with little or no provision for their safety and well-being. A few endure poor working conditions.

Reports of Malaysian employers offering low wages, abuse and rape have deterred many Indonesian women. Although the 2009 ban has been lifted, thousands of women are believed to have been lured by promises of well paid jobs and entered the country illegally. Despite many press reports, Malaysian authorities have continued to fail to protect these women.

For years, the NGO Tenaganita has criticised the treatment of migrant workers, but instead of investigating their complaints, the Malaysian government has harassed its leader and accused her of sedition.

The ill-treatment of maids is not a new phenomenon, but our authorities are slow to resolve the points raised by concerned NGOs, the maids and employers. Complaints against maid agencies have

increased, but the failure to investigate these companies has prompted cries of collusion in a major cover-up exercise by the authorities and agencies.

Thirty years ago, most domestic help was sourced locally. With education and industrialisation, many Malaysian women from the rural areas preferred to work in factories, light industry and the retail trade. They cited better wages and the ability to socialise as opposed to life as a live-in domestic, where freedom was curbed, wages were low and they had to toil from sunrise to midnight without decent breaks, or any days off.

Many employers say that having a maid frees-up their own time thus enabling the wife and mother freedom to work. Today, some households treat their maids as one of the family and years after they have parted company, both employer and employee keep in touch, paying visits to each other. In a few cases, the employers have become a godparent to the maid's children.

Although a maid is a blessing, the downside is that some women have become totally dependent on their maids and have become lazy people, who spend very little time with their children. In some households, children have become spoiled and pampered, and rely on the maid to do everything for them.

Every enlightening story about maids is accompanied by an equal number of horror stories. Some maids get homesick and want to return as soon as they have arrived, some are too sickly or are not interested in working, whilst others run off.

In a few households, the man of the house has taken sexual advantage of the maid, in his wife's absence. There have been cases of maids abusing babies and toddlers. More brazen maids will entertain male visitors, when their employers are at work.

Despite all the problems, Malaysia's development could not have happened without the help of these foreign workers. We preferred migrant workers because they are willing to accept wages which are below the cost of living in Malaysia; however, this resulted in the exclusion of many Malaysians from the lower end of the labour market, with concomitant social problems.

If migrant workers were to down tools, our businesses would stop functioning, our households would be chaotic and market traders might have to scale down or cease operations altogether.

Many foreigners, especially from the west, are appalled at the treatment meted-out to some maids. On the other hand, Malaysians feel entitled to treat the maids as they please because they have provided a wage, food and accommodation.

If we would treat maids more like human beings and not modern slaves, the incidents of maid abuse would plummet. It is all a matter of attitude.

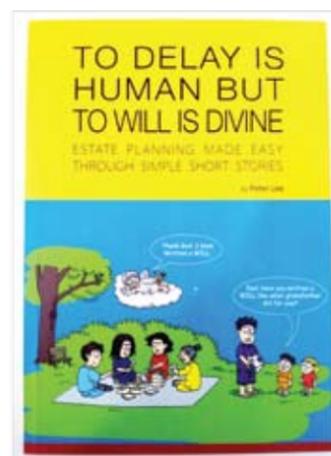
Book Review

To Delay is Human but to Will is Divine

More people are beginning to realise that human life is indeed fleetingly short. However, for most, this realisation seems to stop short at just this point, and does not extend very much further beyond this. We understand that when we leave this life we leave the world we knew and all its attachments. What we do not seem to grasp or perhaps we do, but do not really see the urgency to act on, is the importance of ensuring the loved ones we leave behind, will be able to physically go on with some semblance of financial comfort.

We often hear of friends and family who pass on suddenly and this is tragic as in almost all cases, there is no will, thus making things very difficult for the loved ones left behind, who not only have to deal with the painful loss but also now have to be burdened with a financial disaster too. If the deceased is the main income or even the sole breadwinner, things can get to a point where the loved ones left behind wish they were given the relief of death too, as living in the nightmare of trying to survive without the deceased financial contribution would be impossible. Then there is the scenario where the deceased leaves behind substantial wealth, which then becomes the doom of all, fighting for it.

Peter Lee's book *To Delay is Human but to Will is Divine* is a revelation to the very real pain and suffering loved ones endure when



there is no will in place. The implications for all members of the family having to deal with someone dying intestate, dealing with lawyers and all the nitty gritty details of sorting out the remains of the estate and when particularly large, is a nightmare.

The simple style chosen helps the reader truly understand the implications and importance of ensuring there is a will in place. The cartoon characters lend some humor to an otherwise deadly serious topic. The urgency to have a will drawn up will be an action the reader is likely to want to jump into even before finishing the book.

This would make an ideal gift for anyone and everyone, if we could just understand and look upon it as a loving gesture and not the taboo that anything involving death conjures up in our imagination.

To Delay is Human but to Will is Divine (96 pages, RM28) is available from Peter Lee (012-507 8825/05-255 4853) at 108 (2nd Floor), Jalan Raja Ekram, 30450 Ipoh, email: excelsecms@gmail.com; Rashi Mini Market (019-510 6284), 37 Jalan Perajurit, Ipoh Garden East, 31400 Ipoh and Ipoh Echo. It will also be available at all major bookstores in March 2013.

by Serena Mui



Musings on Food

seefoon@ipohecho.com.my

By See Foon Chan-Koppen

SeeFoon is served with heart and soul

I have been going to **Citrus Wine and Dine** since they opened in June 2005. Those were the early days when people would complain that they were located too far out of the mainstream dining areas, too quiet and unsafe at night, too...too...too, and as is typical of Ipohites, predicting doom and gloom for the restaurant.

What people hadn't reckoned with was the hardworking and enterprising husband and wife team behind the restaurant, Chef Simon Lee and his wife Erica. It's been seven years since Citrus opened and in that time, I have watched this duo go from strength to strength.

I have always had a personal conviction that the most successful restaurants have chefs helming the kitchen. Having the spouse in the front of the house taking care of the service is a bonus and almost a sure recipe for success.

Citrus is a case in point. Their philosophy of "**Cook with Heart and Serve with Soul**" is embodied by Simon's culinary skills and Erica's deft handling of the service. Simon graduated at Shatec Singapore in 1990 and started working as the Commis Cook II at the *Pan Pacific Hotel* and was promoted to Demi Chef after working for three years. Then, he joined the *Four Seasons Hotel* as Banquet Sous Chef from 1994 to 2004. He was posted to *Regent Auckland* in 2005 for a year. He represented the Regent Auckland in a competition and obtained a Gold with Excellent for the Three Course Meal Presented Cold in New Zealand. He also represented Singapore as the National Team for the World Food Competition in Basel in 1998 where the Singapore team was the 1st runner up.

With that kind of culinary background and with his wife Erica by his side, Ipoh is fortunate to have a restaurant where food of a high international standard is offered at prices which will not burn a hole in one's pocket. A case in point is their set lunch of: soup, choice of either chicken or pasta main course, dessert and drink for a very affordable price of RM19.90++. Some may scoff and complain that certain ala carte items are very pricey, as in the latest promotion of **Master Kobe Ribeye** at 100g for RM120, 150g for RM170 and 200g for RM210 or their **Live Tasmanian Oyster** at RM8 per piece, but when I last tasted the Kobe beef, which came in well glazed chunks, grilled to perfection, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Considering that anywhere else in the world, we'd be paying double or triple for the same portions I will venture to say that it was worth every bite.

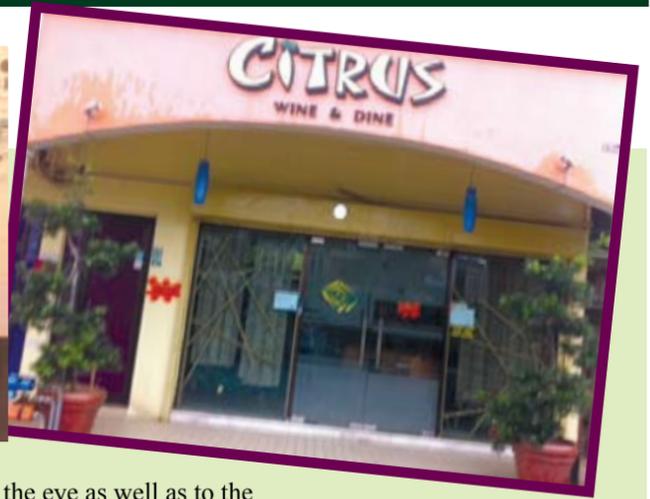
A recent dinner for the Ipoh branch of the *International Wine and Food Society* held in their banquet facilities with its two rooms which can cater to upwards of 100 people upstairs, saw us tucking into a lush Tapas appetizer that had the best fusion of Japanese and French nuances. **Scallop Tartar with Iwashi Tatami, soba salad with Shimeji mushrooms, Foie Gras Terrine, Feta and Quick seared Tuna and Brie Cheese with dried fruit chutney**; bite-sized portions of contrasting and complementary flavours, creating a symphony of tastes and textures. The main course was equally delectable, with a choice of grilled **Australian Black Angus Tenderloin served with Wasabi mashed potato, pan seared Atlantic Cod fish with Hokkaido sea scallop, and grilled Espresso marinated Rack of Lamb with onion confit**, each dish cooked to perfection and served as 'eye candy' with clever plating. The **Sticky Date Pudding with Toffee Sauce and Vanilla Ice Cream** ended the meal with panache.



Don't be misled into thinking that Citrus only serves fancy fusion dishes. Their regular menu is a potpourri of reliable standard dishes. Their pasta is always al dente, and there is a choice of 10 different sauces to choose from ranging from the **Agljo Ogljo (olive oil and garlic)** at RM15, the classic **Spaghetti Bolognese** with beef or chicken at RM18 to the **Agljo Ogljo** with seafood at RM28 (my favourite) and with **King Prawns** at RM30.

Their **Wild Mushroom Soup** as a starter is always reliable and delectable at RM9.50 and I have always enjoyed their **Golden Crab Cake served with mango salsa and garden greens** - RM20. Sometimes when I want just a light meal, I would order their **Thai Beef Salad** which is a generous bowl of garden greens with juicy beef chunks tossed in a yummy Thai salad dressing - RM17.

The *pièce de résistance* for me at Citrus is their **Foie Gras appetizer**. This is one dish I would inevitably order everytime I go, high cholesterol notwithstanding and knowing that my doctor is shaking his head in sheer disapproval. Foie Gras or goose liver is a delicacy that is hard to come by and harder to prepare. Over done and it becomes hard and underdone, it is like eating bloody jelly. Here at Citrus, the goose liver is fried to the right degree of doneness, still pink on the inside and slightly charred on the edges, served with caramelized apples and a garden salad, it arrives, plated like a still



life painting, tempting to the eye as well as to the palate - RM45.

The menu at Citrus is extensive with a dish to suit most tastes and palates. Christmas will see them offering a **4-course meal on Christmas Eve and Christmas day and night for RM93++**. What caught my eye was the interesting **Cream of Corn & Smoked Duck Chowder** and there is choice of **Turkey with all the traditional trimmings of Chestnut Mushroom Stuffing, Cranberry chutney and laced with Giblet sauce**; Beef and Fish; ending with the divine Sticky Date Pudding.

Do hurry and make your reservations.



Citrus Wine and Dine

38-42 Laluan Ipoh Perdana
Tel: **05 545 1010** - Erica: **012 527 1210**
Closed: Mondays - Pork Free

RECIPE

From Chef Simon Lee @ Citrus



Pan Seared Foie Gras on Caramelised Spiced White Peach Served with Garden Salad and Aged Balsamic

Ingredients:

Foie Gras - Cut into 80 g x 4 pieces
2 White Peaches - stone removed and cut into half
120g Baby Greens
A pinch Five Spices Powder
20g Butter
20g Brown Sugar

Garnish:

Cherry tomatoes
Pomegranate
Thyme
Star Anise

Dressing:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Aged Balsamic Vinegar
Sea Salt

Method:

1. Season *foie gras* with salt and pepper.
2. Rub the white peach with five spices powder and brown sugar.
3. Sear the foie gras in a hot pan for approximately 2 minutes on each side or till it turns crispy outside and moist in the inside. Remove foie gras from pan.
4. Put the white peaches in the pan with the butter and caramelize it.

To Serve:

1. Arrange baby greens on plate.
2. Put *foie gras* and peach in the centre of the plate.
3. Garnish with the above and sprinkle with sea salt.
4. Drizzle the extra virgin oil and aged balsamic vinegar on the salad.



News Roundup

Transfer of Technology Seminar and Exhibition



Perak Academy marked its 10th Anniversary by organising the Transfer of Technology Seminar and Exhibition 2012 in conjunction with Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) in Kinta RiverFront Hotel.

In his welcome address, Lee Chee Meng, Chairman Board of Governors, Perak Academy said that the aim of the seminar is to introduce investment opportunities available in the oil-palm based technologies. Consumption of oil palm has increased and there is growing competition from other producers. There are also other issues such as environmental, land use and labour shortage.

Dr A. Kushairi Din, MPOB Deputy Director General, informed the audience that more than 40 technologies related to oil palm plantations have been launched by the Board. They include farm mechanisation, biomass, biofuel, farm based food products, oleo chemicals and palm-related nutraceuticals (food products) which were displayed at the exhibition. It is up to the industry players and entrepreneurs to adopt the new technologies and commercialise the products. The seminar offers an opportunity to explore and discover new investment potentials.

Dato' Hamidah Osman, Chairman, Committee for Investment who officially opened the seminar said that oil palm takes up about 70% of agricultural land use in the country and is the fourth largest contributor to the national economy. Perak is the third largest state in oil palm cultivation in Peninsular Malaysia and has the second largest number of smallholders.

Six papers were presented at the seminar highlighting various aspects of oil palm cultivation including livestock integration in the plantations.

AJ

Tandoor Grill's Soft Launch

The latest restaurant in town, Tandoor Grill held a 'soft launch' recently attended by over two hundred guests mostly family and friends. Notable figures amongst the guests included Dato' S. Veerasingam, Special Adviser to Dato Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir and FMM Chairman Dato' Gan Tak Kong.

Owned and managed by Jagit Singh Randhawa and family, it offers authentic Northern Indian cuisine. The elders in the family had the honor of cutting the ribbon and officially opening the restaurant.

Guests were served cocktails downstairs before proceeding to the banquet hall upstairs for their dinner. Radio DJ, the Flying Singh, emceed for the night with shows by lithesome belly dancers. Ultimately bhangra dancing got the guests on the dance floor and they later participated in a bhangra flash mob dance choreographed by Flying Singh himself.



JAG

Healy Mac's Officially Opened

Healy Mac's Irish Bar and Restaurant at Greentown held their official opening recently. With premises packed to the gills, several Irish were present that evening such as Healy Mac's proprietor Liam Healy seated together with his brother John, cousin Vivian, Jerry Galvin, Healy Mac's manager and Bryan Fogerty from Galway, Ireland currently based at Tronoh.



Undoubtedly the most prominent Irishman present that night was Dato' Brother Vincent Corkery who did the honours of cutting the ribbon and officially opening the restaurant.

As the night wore on, in the lilt of Irish laughter you actually could hear the angels sing with smiling eyes to steal your heart away.

JAG

Young Perak

Mighty Minds Challenge

It all started with the Mighty Minds State Challenge. Going into the competition Thuvina, Arathi and I were relaxed. Our objective was to gain experience. We never imagined being one of the 15 teams to get to the hands on challenge and scoring the highest points in it. The most unbelievable thing was winning first place in Perak. It was simply amazing.

We started preparing for the National Challenge immediately. On Friday, October 19, we left Ipoh for Kuala Lumpur by train. During welcoming dinner that night, we were briefed on the upcoming events in the competition. We were the only 14-year-old kids in the lower secondary category.

The next morning we gathered at the hotel ballroom for the competition. The Innovation, Creation and Business Acumen Skills Challenge was the first item on the programme. We were asked to create a toy for children aged between 3 and 5 years to help them develop their cognitive thinking and motor skills. We were given 40 minutes to plan and were then sent to Carrefour in Mid Valley Mega Mall to buy the materials for our model with a budget of RM150.

We had one and a half hours to build the toy. We decided to make a fun box with 3 elements within it, consisting of a jigsaw puzzle and a set of numbered blocks that could be used to play jenga or to teach simple mathematics. We filled our questionnaires and cleaned our work area on time. Arathi gave the judges a one minute presentation on our creation.

Next was the multiple-choice quiz. Unlike the one during the state challenge, we weren't allowed to confer with our teammates. When they showed the half time scores, we were in first place. In the end we finished the quiz in second place with 390 points, 5 points behind the leading team. They then announced the top 5 teams. Our team was in third place.

After dinner we prepared our speeches for the oral presentation the following day. This time we were given 5 minutes to speak. Miss Syikin was a great help, giving us moral support and helping with the speeches. Even Arathi's mother in Ipoh chipped in. We went to bed feeling exhausted.

We continued practising after breakfast. We were the first team to present our model. The final part of the Mighty Minds National Challenge was the buzzer quiz. We were a bit disappointed, as we knew many of the answers but didn't get to press the buzzer fast enough. Whatever the outcome, we would be happy and proud to have represented our school and state.



Before they announced the results, we were asked to line up near the stage. We were ready to claim the prize for 5th placing but it wasn't our team's name that was called out. This continued until they announced the winner and the first-runner up. We were ecstatic – the silver state won silver.

Returning home we realise what an amazing experience it was. We managed to learn so much and made so many friends. We couldn't have done it without everyone's help and support. Our parents came with us; our friends called us everyday and helped keep our spirits up. It wasn't all sweet but it was well worth the effort.

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Christmas Roundup

by Susan Ho

“Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells...” The Christmas mood is in the air, with Christmas music being played at every shopping mall. Christmas is coming up and there are plenty of things to do like getting the tree and lights up, buying presents and more. With so many things to do, why bother figuring out how to cook a turkey when you could have it in Fine Dining Restaurants and Cafes?

Here are some suggestions on where you can have some of that turkey or special dishes this festive season.

At **Healy Mac's**, there will be a Christmas Eve and Christmas Day set at the price of RM88 nett per head with a soup, starter, main course – (free-range) turkey and ham, dessert and house pouring wine. They are also having a New Year's Eve BBQ Buffet at only RM48⁺⁺ per head – beef burger, pork, chicken and sausages.

Shuttle service will be provided upon request.

Healy Mac's Irish Bar & Restaurant
No. 2 Ground Floor, Persiaran Greentown 4
05-249 3627



Euro House will be serving a course of either Turkey or Pork at the price of RM32 nett each from December 10.

Euro House
49-51, Jalan Hussein
05-255 5532

Impiana Hotel will be celebrating a **Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Buffet Dinner** at RM78⁺⁺ per adult and RM39⁺⁺ per child at ages 6-12 years from 7pm-10.30pm. There will also be a Christmas Day Hi-Tea from 12pm-4pm at RM38⁺⁺ per adult and RM19⁺⁺ per child of ages 6-12 years. Enjoy 1 complimentary buffet for every 5 paying guests. Private parties are available for a minimum of 50 people.

Impiana Hotel
18 Jalan Raja Dr Nazrin Shah
05-255 5555

Beacon Point will be having a Christmas Eve Set Dinner and a Christmas Day Set Lunch.

Christmas Eve Set 4-Course Dinner (December 24) is categorized into 2 seatings: 6.30-8.30pm and 8.30-10.30pm. Prices vary from RM32.80 for Tagliatelli to RM56.80 for Roast US turkey.

Christmas Day Special Set Lunch (December 25) is at 12.00 noon.

Beacon Point also offers a whole turkey ranging from RM238 to RM328 depending on the size. They also have Leg of Lamb, Shepherd's Pie (Beef/Chicken) and a Christmas Log Cake during this festive season.

Beacon Point
41, Lintasan Perajurit 6,
Taman Perak
05-546 9916

Indulgence is offering a 2-day special, on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day itself.

On Christmas Eve (RM98⁺⁺)
• Mozzarella Balls, Chicken & Duck on the Go



- Marscapone Cream On Christmas Day (RM98⁺⁺)
- Scallops Thin
- Blood Orange Infused Glaze on stuffed chicken, calamari, fig paste, potato balls and small leaves
- Apple Cherry Phyllo Cracker (vanilla ice & crème brulee tart)

Indulgence Restaurant & Living
14 Jalan Raja DiHilir
05-255 7051

Berlin's Bier Houz will be having 3-course dinner sets on Christmas Day and Christmas Eve at the price of RM68⁺⁺.

Berlin's Bier Houz
12 Ground Floor, Persiaran Greentown 4,
Greentown Business Centre
05-241 8118

St Patrick's Irish Bar is having a special dish of Arrosto Di Petto Di Tacchino (roast turkey breast with minced pork stuffing in turkey juj).

St. Patrick's Irish Bar
60 Tingkat 1, Jalan Raja Ekram
016-529 1075 / 018-311 2176

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements must be sent by fax: 05-2552181; or email: announcements@ipohecho.com.my, by the 9th or 23rd 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.

Lymphoma Patients' Family Day (for Lymphoma Patients/ Clients only), Saturday **December 22**, 3pm to 5pm at Medical Mall, Level 3B, Pantai Hospital Ipoh. Free admission. The event will be conducted in English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin. For more information, contact En Harith or Ms

Renuka at 05-540 5715/5712.

Ipoh Christian Chapel's Musical Concert Entitled, 'Who Do You Say He Is?', Saturday **December 22**, 8.15pm at 72 Jalan Raja Perempuan Mazwin, Taman Rishah, Ipoh. Admission Is free.

For further details, contact: Mr Chan 019-5733020 or Mr Low 016-5669945 (For non-Muslims only).

'Preparing Pongol Contest' organised by Thamilar Thirunal Committee, **January 14** in Little India at 4pm. For more information contact Mrs Ramanayagam 019-570 0160.

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News Roundup

YBU to Open New Pawn Branches

Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan's (YBU) collaboration with Al-Rahnu-YaPEIM (Yayasan Pembangunan Islam Malaysia) in the pawn business is beginning to show positive results. Buoyed by a very robust market, the team is spreading its wings to cover the whole state. Of immediate interest to the foundation is the establishment of a counter at the soon-to-be completed Urban Transformation Centre (UTC) located at the once jaded Super Kinta shopping complex. The reason is simple – to optimise on opportunities offered by UTC's location and accessibility, being in the centre of the city.

"It falls in perfectly with our scheme of things," said Irwan Kamil Ridzuan, the Chief Operating Officer of the foundation's pawning wing to Ipoh Echo. "It's an ideal spot to operate as it provides us the exposure and the visibility required. These factors are important if we want to reach out to the poor and the marginalised and in the process expand our business," Irwan added.

The advantages are obvious. The centre caters to both the business community and the general public, as it is a one-stop centre for almost anything dealing with the government. It will become a focal point of sorts which will benefit both sellers and buyers from in and out of Ipoh.

One of the major attractions of the YBU-Al-Rahnu YaPEIM's pawn operation is its terms. "We charge 10 sen for every 110 gm of gold ornaments pawned. The rate is low and is therefore attractive," Irwan posited. "That's our selling point, one which is unmatched by other operators in the business," he declared.

The counter will also disburse microcredits to successful applicants. The terms are tailor-made for the poor and the marginalised. "To qualify for this privilege, however, the applicants must be registered under e-KasIh," said Irwan.

RM



"Walk the Talk"

Soroptimist Ipoh's "Walk the Talk", part of a nationwide fundraising and awareness campaign on violence against women, organised by SIROM (Soroptimist International Region of Malaysia), flagged off at Kinta City Ipoh recently.

Soroptimist International is a world-wide women's only service organisation working for the empowerment and best interests of women. Many may have read in newspapers and magazines of the problems faced by women in society, in particular sex crimes, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and violence. Many women don't know what to do or where to go to when such things happen to them. That is where women's organisations come in to assist.

This year, three Malaysian Soroptimists from Sabah, Datuk Elizabeth Maurice, Clarice Painsi Mojigoh and Rose Moguloi are embarking on an inspiring walk from Perlis to Sabah. They will be covering a total of 940 km in Peninsula Malaysia, fly and walk into Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. Their objective of this inspiring walk is to create awareness and deliver a powerful message: "Stop Violence against Women." This project is supported by The Royal Police Malaysia, Maybank, Etiqa and Power Bar.

The four participating NGO beneficiaries are WAO (Women's Aid Organisation), WCC (Women's Centre for Change), PWW (Perak Women for Women society) and AWAM (All Women's Action society Malaysia).

The walk was held in tandem with the United Nations call for 16 days of activism, which officially began from the International Day to End Violence against women on November 25 up to the International Human Rights Day on December 10.

The walkers were everywhere at Kinta City by 4pm. It was a very successful event based on the crowd that participated. Many were equipped with caps, umbrellas, bottles of water and sunglasses. There were young and old from all races and gender. It was a sight to see as young teenagers were also in support of this event.

The event started off with a short speech outside of McDonald's and after a photograph session, they started off at 5pm sharp. St John Ambulance, some police officers on their bikes and another van followed them as they continued their 4km journey towards Canning Garden, past Tambun Road and back to Kinta City.



Net proceeds went towards creating awareness on violence against women through educational talks and workshops throughout the country.

To join Soroptimist International Ipoh or for more information, call or email:

Ms Kuan 012-501 9205 (khoosbb@yahoo.com)

Ms Lanka 012-519 0189 (lanka_rk@yahoo.com)

Ms Jean 012-588 2313 (jean.chai@yahoo.com)

Find out more about Soroptimist International at: www.soroptimistinternational.org or www.soroptimist.org.my

Susan Ho

Unity Through Arts and Culture

Believing that culture is the uniting factor in a country, Perak Cultural and Arts Department (Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negeri Perak) took culture to the people in Gopeng by organising a day-long cultural programme. The objective was to expose the community to the culture and traditions of other races and to accept and respect their uniqueness.

The programme, which began with a gotong-royong in the morning, also saw the community participating in a colouring contest, aerobics, congkak and other traditional games. Members of the community were also taken on a tour of Gopeng's pride – the town's museum and heritage house.

Local celebrity, Angelina Tan, conducted a workshop to raise awareness on health issues as part of a programme by the Malaysian Health Promotion Board.

The day ended with traditional dance performances by major races of Malaysia, including a segment by a local aboriginal group, witnessed by guest-of-honour State Executive Councillor Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon and community leaders. Mah later presented food hampers and cash donations to the underprivileged.

Guests were then feted to a sumptuous dinner at Gopeng Square.

Emily



Business

MICCI Highlights Issue of Royalty on Minerals and Gas Supply



The MICCI Perak Branch recently gave a media statement which was read out by its Chairman Leong Hua Kooi. The statement highlighted the problems faced by mineral related industries specifically the Quarry Operators and Cement and Kaolin manufacturers on the issue of Revised Royalty on Minerals Act.

According to Leong, two dialogue sessions were held with the Minerals and Geoscience Departments since October. While the dialogue sessions were a good platform to understand the issues facing the industry, the industry players say that the royalty rates fixed earlier this year are not acceptable to many as “the rates will cause competitiveness issues and hinder local and foreign investment”.

Leong said that the industry players have acknowledged that most of the rates have been finalized and are currently pending approval when tabled at the next sitting of the State Assembly. The industry players are now requesting that the negotiated rates when approved be fixed for the next five years with the expiry date at December 31, 2016 in order to assure investors of the certainty of doing business here.

Gas Supply

Another topic of concern raised was the the request of gas supply which, according to Leong, “has been a long standing request by all the Chambers ie MICCI, FMM and PCCCI”.

Leong lamented that the scheduled meeting on November 26 to discuss the issue of gas supply was postponed to a later date and hoped that the state government would take a serious view to address the issue with the federal government.

“If necessary we welcome more dialogue between the industries and government similar to the dialogue with PTG in order to enable a more conducive business environment in the state,” added Leong.

JAG

Property

Peter Chan Bags Another Award

It is definitely an acknowledgement of sorts for Peter Chan’s onerous struggle to put Ipoh and, in default, Perak, on the world map. His project, the Haven Lakeside Residences in Tambun earned him another prestigious property award recently. And this time around it is not the run-of-the mill “back-patting” award that is reserved for those who tow the line for some inexplicable reasons.

The Editors Choice Property Awards, incidentally, is given to projects, services, companies or personalities which editors feel have contributed to the betterment of the property market over that particular year. The editors who do the bidding are from publications that dabble in properties, namely the Malaysian Reserve, Get Real of the Malay Mail and the independent Property Times.my. Their credentials are significantly attractive to warrant their views and comments in arriving at a conclusive decision on the winners of the award.

The Editors Choice 2012 Property Awards was held at the ballroom of the Sunway Resort and Spa in Bandar Sunway, Petaling Jaya on Friday, November 23. Peter was one of the winners in the Personalities and Companies category, one of the four in contention. He bagged the Best Perak Developer Award thus proving his temperament as a developer of standing in Perak. The fact that he had won the same award not once but twice is an excellent endorsement of his ability to meet challenges head-on.

The selection of winners is a rigorous process that involves the evaluation of reports plus onsite inspections of properties before a conclusive decision is made. Past and present articles written on the short-listed properties are a major criterion in the selection process. The fact that property publications took the trouble to highlight Peter’s Haven Lakeside Residences vis-à-vis its role in preserving the environment

is proof of his insistence on quality and adherence to local needs. Peter Chan’s achievement in a market marked by uncertainties peculiar to Ipoh is the icing on top of the cake. Suffice to say that he has come a long way to be where he is today. The Haven Lakeside Residences in Tambun should no longer be viewed with askance.

Kudos Peter, you have done Perak proud.

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RM19++ per child (6-12 years old)

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News Roundup

Widow to Get a Reprieve



Tangamani, 53, a widow and mother of two college-going boys, is in dire straits. She is incapacitated as both of her legs are weak due to paralysis. This restricts her ability to move about freely. Her husband passed away last year adding to her misery.

Before occupying the council flat in Taman Harmoni, Buntong, the family was living in a run-down shack in Kampung Baru Jelapang. The move was on orders from Chief Minister, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir who visited them during Deepavali in 2010. Having no means to pay the RM124 monthly rent, Zambry got Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan (YBU) to assist. The foundation paid RM2,976 to Ipoh City Council so the family could stay for two years rent-free. The tenure will end on December 31 this year.

As the deadline approaches, Tangamani is beginning to get edgy. She has asked for a reprieve considering her condition and plight in raising her two boys, the eldest is a student at University Sabah Malaysia, Kota Kinabalu while the youngest is pursuing a technical course at a polytechnic in Arau, Perlis. The widow's only source of income is the RM200 she gets from the state welfare department. "It is barely sufficient for my medicines," she told Ipoh Echo.

"We'll consider her request for an extension," said Hairul Mohamed Noor, YBU's Chief Financial Officer who was at the flat during a media interview recently. Hairul handed over the payment receipt for November to Tagamani.

"The plight of the poor and the marginalised goes unreported," said Hairul. "We'll make it our duty to identify them and provide them with the necessities they so require. No Perakeans should be deprived of the opportunities they rightly deserve."

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by Rosli Mansor

Temenggor Lake – Nature's Gateway



Our tedious 200-km ride from Ipoh was amply rewarded on our arrival at the Banding Lake Jetty. Situated on the western extreme of Temenggor Lake, the jetty is both the entry and exit point for guests of Belum Eco Resort which is located on one of the many islands dotting the lake.

With a surface area of 15,200 hectares, Temenggor Lake is the largest man-made lake in Perak. The manifestation of this lake is the result of the damming of Temenggor River in the mid-1970s for the construction of the Temenggor Dam.

The panoramic Banding Lake, which greets motorists traversing the East-West Highway, is only 217 hectares in size. The body of water provides an overview of the natural charms of the Belum-Temenggor Forest Reserve. Believed to be over 130 million years old, the rainforest is one of the oldest in the world – older than both the Amazon and the Congo.

Steven, a management staff of the Belum Eco Resort, was on hand to receive us. The trip to the resort requires a 20-minute ride in a boat specially built for the purpose of transporting guests. The layout of the boat provides guests with a 360-degree view of the surroundings, the placid water, the submerged trees and the denizens of the lake who surface either to breathe or to make their presence felt.

Belum-Temenggor is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna including 14 of the world's most threatened mammals which include the Malaysian tiger, Asiatic elephant, Malaysian sun bear and tapir, all of which are high on the endangered list. The depth of the lake is over 200 feet at the deepest point. The lake floor was once valleys and gullies of the Belum-Temenggor Forest Reserve. Inundating this region was part of a strategic cum tactical plan mooted to deny passage for Communist terrorists plying the mountainous routes in and out of Perak.

We were briefed on the activities arranged for us for our 3D/2N sojourn at the Belum Eco Resort. The resort, incidentally, is located on one tiny island at the heart of Temenggor Lake. Guests have the option of staying in a houseboat or in one of its 12 chalets built along the fringe of the island. The chalets blend in with the environment, true to its concept of being eco-friendly. The tour package comes with organized activities to keep guests occupied throughout their stay at the resort.

Pulau Talikail

Pulau Talikail is the first on the tour itinerary. The island is in fact a sunken mountain whose lofty summit was once the tallest in the Belum-Temenggor forest. Today only some 600 feet remain above water. Atop the hillock is an 80-metre watch tower where one can survey the lake and its surroundings uninterrupted. Reaching the top requires a 45-minute walk along a well-defined track built for the purpose. The trek to the watch tower was a breeze as the sight of the flora and fauna literally took our breath away. This reinforces the statement that there are merits in maintaining the ecosystem for posterity. Our future generations must feast their eyes on this beauty of Nature.



Water Sports

On returning we joined the rest for tea at the terrace of the resort. It consisted of the usual snacks that are normally laid for afternoon tea. We had a good helping of fried meehoon and curry puffs and washed them down with piping hot black tea. It was most exhilarating considering the time of the day. The next item on the itinerary was water sports. The choice was limited:

swimming and kayaking. We decided to laze on the deck chairs and watch the day go by.

Island Hopping

The following day's activities were more exciting. I looked forward to island-hopping which was emphasised by our tour guide. The highlights included a visit to Kampong Chuweh, an Orang Asli settlement within the Temenggor Complex, a trek to the Sungei Enam waterfalls and finally a visit to Pulau Besar where Rafflesia, the largest flower in the world, grows in abundance.

Kampong Chuweh is a quintessential Orang Asli village, one of the few in the area. The inhabitants, quite used to tourists ogling at them, are never shy and will respond when spoken to. The Asli children, like all children, will cringe when approached but in Kampong Chuweh they remain coy when teased and will open up without much coaxing. We took some snapshots of them and of an enterprising octogenarian, Anjang Pisang, who was apt at hand-crafting rings, bangles and tobacco pouches from rattan. We bought some of the knick knacks that he offered for sale.

The Sungei Enam waterfalls are slightly off the beaten track. It is located about two kilometres from the lakeside. Thirty minutes of footslogging is forgotten as the beautiful landscape compensates for the tiresome journey. The cool mountain water cascading over the rocks is a sight to behold. We took a dip in the deeper end of the pond where few dare to tread.

Pulau Besar, as the name suggests, is big in comparison to the rest. It is home to a small variety of the Rafflesia indigenous to the region. We were lucky as we needed to only walk a short distance up the slope to reach our first blooming Rafflesia. This parasitic flowering plant grows profusely on Pulau Besar as there is little or no threat to its existence.

Conclusion

Our 3D/2N stay came to an abrupt end when we suddenly realised that it was time to leave. The one impression that will remain etched in my mind is the sensitivity of the ecosystem in the area. The flora and fauna in the Belum-Temenggor Forest Reserve need to be preserved at all cost. Lose them, and we stand to lose our identity as well.



News Roundup

10th Anniversary Perak Lecture

Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian was the guest speaker at the Perak Academy's 10th Anniversary Perak Lecture series held at the Kinta Riverfront Hotel recently.

The talk was a continuation of a seminar cum exhibition on investment opportunities in oil palm-based technologies held at the same venue earlier in the day. The 250-odd audience consisted of the crème de la crème of Ipoh society led by Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan.

Being a prime mover in the palm oil industry, as expected, the talk by the CEO of KLK Berhad, revolved around the product, a subject close to his heart. The palm oil industry, according to Tan Sri Lee, contributes heavily to the Malaysian economy. "We're currently one of the world's largest producers and exporters of palm oil and its products, next only to our neighbour, Indonesia." The trend, he insisted, is changing as South America is slowly catching up with the rest.

"Palm oil," said Lee, "is a very volatile industry, as it faces many challenges and threats. The scarcity of land and labour, which the industry is heavily dependent upon, has affected its growth to a certain extent."

He theorised that the rising cost of production, as a result of these threats, prompt industrial players in Malaysia to look to Indonesia for their expansion programmes. To counter the rising cost of production the country is looking into ways of enhancing yield

through use of better planting materials, improving plantation management skills and mechanisation. "Unfortunately, the local universities are not churning out suitable graduates to replace the present lot of managers," Lee lamented.

The claim by Western pundits that palm oil consumption is linked to clogged arteries leading to cardiovascular disease has been proven unfounded. Refined palm oil is rich in tocotrienols and tocopherols which contain high levels of Vitamin E. Tocotrienols reduce the cholesterol level in the body, as well as inhibit the growth of cancer cells.

Touching on the usefulness of palm oil, Lee alluded to the numerous downstream products which have their origins in the plant. "Even the fronds and husk can be used for the production of biogas and biodiesel, among others." This conclusion brought the talk to a close.



SH Ong

LETTERS

We reprint some of our reader's comments from our online paper. Go to <http://www.ipohecho.com.my/> to read more. The views expressed in these letters are not necessarily shared by the Editorial Board. We reserve the right to refuse or modify the letters we publish.

Perak's Water System: Doing It Wrong

I refer to your front-page article (Ipoh Echo 155, November 16-30, 2012) titled, "Perak Water Board, doing it right the first time". I wish to point out that building the Sultan Azlan Shah dam across Sungai Ulu Kinta was not the right thing to do.

About eight years ago, I wrote to the former Perak Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Mohamad Tajul Rosli bin Tan Sri Mohd Ghazali to inform that since Mudajaya constructed the filtration system at Parit to extract water from Sungai Perak, the largest source of water to the greater Ipoh region, there was no need to build the dam across Sungai Kinta. As we all know Sungai Kinta is only a small stream in comparison to Sungai Perak. He did not respond to my letter.

Subsequently I wrote him another letter that he should get a reputable independent engineering consultant to prove me wrong so that when he increased the water tariff to recover the additional cost of more than one billion ringgit (this cost includes the dam construction, new filtration system, new reservoirs, distribution pipes, etc.) consumers would not feel cheated. There was no response from the MB or his aides to this letter too.

In view of the heavy and unnecessary financial burden put on Perakeans, I spoke to the press and pointed out that savings through other methods could possibly amount to half the money spent on the water expansion project in Kinta. The mainstream media, predictably, failed to publicise my complaint.

Although there is a new administration in Perak, the issue of the mismanagement of Perak's water resources is as relevant today as it was eight years ago.

The current Perak Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir has assured of greater transparency and accountability in Perak's administration. To prove his words, he should answer the following questions:

1. Before the Perak Water Board (PWB) decided to spend more than one billion ringgit to build the dam across Sungai Kinta and all the ancillary works, did the PWB engage a famous independent Engineering Consultant to make a comparative study to save costs? Without an independent opinion no one can know whether this huge investment is a mistake or not. It is so easy to show profit by increasing the water rate as consumers have no alternative choice.
2. Did PWB consider expanding or making improvements to the existing filtration system in Parit to produce more water? Surely this should have been the first logical step rather than building an entirely new system.
3. Did PWB consider working overtime or at night using the improved facilities in Parit to produce more water? This cost-effective method to increase production is usually taken by

private competitive manufacturers.

4. Did the PWB consider building additional service reservoirs to store the additional water produced at night to provide for day use? If we had more reservoirs to store water there would not be any water shortage.
5. Since the total cost exceeded one billion ringgit, how did PWB select the Consultant, bearing in mind consultancy fees amounted to tens of millions ringgit? Was it an open and transparent tender-award process?
6. How did PWB select the contractors? Did they invite open competitive tenders? Did they award the contracts to the cheapest bidders?
7. Why is our water rate higher than the rate in Penang despite our having more accessible and superior water sources?
8. How many billion ringgit does Perak still owe the Federal Government as a result of the new system? Do we need to pay back the loan?
9. Finally, since PWB is operating a monopoly business, it is easy for it to make a profit. It was reported that for 2011, the Board's revenue was RM275.46 million and the profit was RM104 million, and also that the 1100 employees will be given a 4.5-month bonus. Shouldn't the PWB consider reducing the water rate to benefit the consumers first before giving its staff such a fat bonus?

I trust the Perak Menteri Besar will look seriously into this matter which affects all Perakeans and look forward to his full response to my questions and concerns.

Koon Yew Yin

Don't Cut the Trees, MBI

Ipoh City Council (MBI) announced recently that it will redevelop the Waller Court flats. These flats are in a run-down condition and redevelopment will certainly help improve the living conditions of the low-income tenants there. Being one of the oldest low-cost developments in the city, these flats are surrounded by majestic trees and greenery which give the area a cool and refreshing atmosphere right in the middle of the city.

I urge MBI to ensure that the trees and greenery around the flats will not be destroyed during the redevelopment works. Many times a developer will promise "minimal" damage to the environment but when all is done, we find that the only thing "minimal" is their care for the surrounding greenery.

I implore the council to stipulate in the contract agreement that no trees are to be cut when the redevelopment project is undertaken.

Robert Percival
Taman Tambun

Community

Vale Greening Coastline through Volunteerism

One thousand five hundred mangrove saplings were planted in Teluk Muroh in conjunction with V-day Celebration. This programme is in conjunction with the *Vale Volunteers V-Day Celebration* – a volunteer action day held every year on the first Sunday of December, where all of Vale's volunteers around the world gather and participate in an activity with the community where Vale is present.

Clad in Vale volunteer T-shirts, more than 150 people comprised of volunteers and staff, local authorities as well as members of the Manjung community, planted a total of 1500 mangrove saplings at Teluk Muroh, aiming to maintain and restore the mangrove line, preventing it from retreating. This initiative is a proactive measure from Vale that will benefit all Malaysians and not only the local community.

The mangrove forest is a unique ecosystem generally found along sheltered coasts where they grow abundantly subject to periodic fresh and saltwater inundation. The



planting of these saplings is important because they protect coastlines, prevent salt waters from intruding into rivers, and they also retain, concentrate, and recycle nutrients among others.

William Sarayeddin, Vale CSR & Communications Manager, said during his welcoming note at the event, "In line with Vale's mission and values, the *Vale Volunteer Programme* serves to promote the volunteering culture by strengthening dialogue and contributing to the development of the places where we operate, with participation from the company's employees and families, vendors, communities as well

as local partners."

Vale continuously reinforces its commitment to the local community by embarking on a series of social initiatives geared at improving community life. To date, Vale has committed up to RM14.3 million for the implementation of CSR projects in the District of Manjung that encompass health, environment, economic, infrastructure and social initiatives.

Focus Group Discussion

Ipoh Mayor, Dato' Roshidi Hashim launched a focus group discussion on the preliminary study of *Ipoh City's Special Area Plan* or RKK (Rancangan Kawasan Khas) at the Town Hall recently. The discussion was split into six focus groups: land use, infrastructure, utility, open space, urban economics and heritage. The 60 participants were representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organisations and members of the public.

The main topics of discussion were the conservation of heritage buildings and the rejuvenation of Ipoh, particularly Old Town. Side discussion was on the development plans for Ipoh Sentral, which is the area in front of Ipoh railway station, including the Town Hall. The theme of the discussion was "Tin Heritage City".

This inaugural focus group discussion is to check on issues faced by the Ipoh community. The outcome would be used as terms of reference in the RKK draft plan at a later date. The Federal government has allocated RM400,000 for the preparation of this ground study and to engage a consultant once issues, problems and potentials have been identified.

It is hoped that with the RKK's focus on heritage conservation and preservation, Ipoh will achieve a UNESCO Heritage City status in due course.

Emily



Ipoh's Cleanest Restaurant: Ray of Hope Café

Ray of Hope Café located in Bercham was the winner of MBI's *Cleanest Restaurant Competition* held in conjunction with the council's Innovation Day 2012 activities.

The competition only involved restaurants and café shop houses that have a recognised grade and did not include fast food premises (franchises) in business complexes.

A criteria for participation is the outlet must have a MBI Grade A certification for a period of 12 months. Additional criteria required the premise to have a grease trap, cleaning schedule, clean toilets and surroundings with a pleasant environment.

Ray of Hope Café is operated by a charity organisation whose front line service staff consists of people with learning disabilities. Nevertheless the outlet is clean and the environment very pleasant.

When contacted its Manager, Datin Mary Yeoh, said that she had not entered the competition. MBI officers showed up one morning and said they would be registering the Café.

A tour of the outlet revealed that Ray of Hope had met all of the criteria and a bit more. Their ingredients are stored neatly and labelled whether in the pantry or refrigerator which even impressed the MBI Officer who visited the premises.

The aim of the competition is to highlight as well as appreciate the initiative and commitment of Grade A restaurant operators to maintain its certification and recognise its implementation of innovative improvements in order to provide quality food and drink services.

Dim Sum Cafe Sdn Bhd, Greentown took second place followed by Restoran Foh San Sdn Bhd.

JAG



Business

Seri Iskandar Business Centre

The *Seri Iskandar Business Centre* (SIBC), an iconic landmark and commercial development, is set to transform the lifestyle and economic landscape of this up and coming business address. Responsible for this change is *Setia Awan Holdings*; one of Perak's leading property development and management companies.

The much-anticipated SIBC consists of three main developments – *D Mall & D Hotel* complex, a network of shop-office units as well as a wholesale centre comprising of more than 220 retail outlets.

D Mall & D Hotel Complex

Designed as an 8-storey high development, the *D Mall & D Hotel* Complex will be the tallest building in *Seri Iskandar*. Unmistakable from afar, once completed, *D Hotel* will attract the patronage of tourists and business professionals alike with its 170 hotel rooms, coffee house and meeting facilities. In addition, *D Hotel* is also designed to accommodate multiple functions, parties and gatherings at its banqueting halls, making it the place to hold special celebrations.

D Mall with a little over 308,000 sq ft of tenantable retail space, is set to become the latest shoppers' and entertainment paradise in the northern peninsula of Malaysia. Among the major anchor tenants who will be operating here are *Billion Hypermarket*, a 7-screen *Cineplex* by *Lotus Five Star*, a 30-lane bowling alley by *Pacific Bowling* and *Cobay* family amusement centre.

Shop Office Units

Entrepreneurs and individual business owners will also find it hard to refuse an address at any of SIBC's shop offices comprising of double, 3, 4 and 6-storey shop office lots priced from RM498,000 upwards. With the expected increase in business activity and high flow of human traffic to SIBC, businesses will find a ready clientele literally at



their doorsteps.

Wholesale Centre

Perhaps the 'largest' of all three developments at SIBC is the up-and-coming wholesale centre, *Persatuan Peniaga Nilai 3*. A sister development to its namesake in *Negeri Sembilan*, this centre in SIBC will be the largest one-stop wholesale centre in northern Peninsula Malaysia with over 220 retail shops offering all types of goods from clothing to household products, fashion & accessories, car care products, etc. The wholesale centre is projected to become a major tourist attraction and play a significant role in driving economic growth within the property market in *Seri Iskandar*.

To date, the wholesale centre has attracted investment worth approximately RM300 million. With such great potential expected of this development, it is no surprise that tenantable spaces at SIBC are quickly being snapped up. *Seri Iskandar's* first 24-hour *McDonald's* drive-through outlet has already made its way to SIBC!

With its strategic location, high accessibility from the *Ipoh-Lumut Expressway* and complemented by its proximity to *Universiti Teknologi Petronas*, *UiTM* and *Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara* among others, SIBC is poised to be the focal point for the general public, be it for business, shopping, recreation or relaxation activities.

For more information, please call 605-372 3888 or alternatively, log on to www.setiaawan.com.

Tourism

Taiping's First Matta Fair



Taiping is noted for its many firsts in the country. It took another bold step by planning to organise the town's first Malaysian Travel and Tour Agency (MATTA) Fair slated for December 21 to 23.

The event, jointly organised by the Taiping Tourist Association (TTA) and MATTA (Perak Chapter), is expected to attract about 60 exhibitors. It will be held at Raintown Plaza in Panorama Hotel, Jalan Kota. The fair will be among the highlights of the Taiping Fiesta coming at the tail end of Visit Perak Year 2012.

Taiping Tourism Association Chairman, Abdul Halim Yahaya, said the objective is to promote the town's heritage attractions and nature destinations to local and foreign as well as first-time visitors. The selection of the dates is to coincide with the on-going Taiping Zoorama and Lake Gardens Carnival.

The fair has the tacit support of the state government, Tourism Malaysia, the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority, Taiping Municipal Council, Perak Tourist Association and is sponsored by mineral water giant, Spritzer.

Entrance is free. Among the attractions are lucky draws, stage shows, complimentary air tickets, travel and holiday packages, product discounts and special offers. There will be free shuttle services to ferry visitors from the Taiping Zoo to Raintown Plaza.

Executive Councillor for Tourism, Dato' Hamidah Osman, will officiate at the launch.

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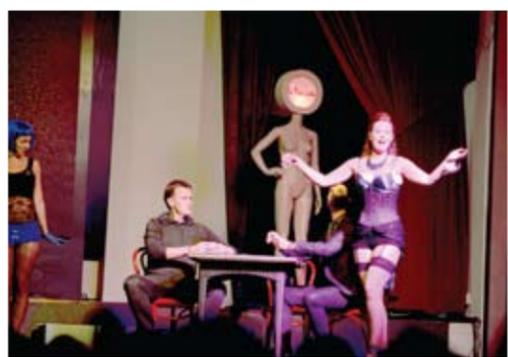
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All items mentioned in the above specifications shall follow strictly according to the approved plans and are subject to variations/modifications and substitutions as recommended by the Developer's Architect or Engineer or relevant approving authorities.

Arts and Culture

'La Traviata' for All

There is nothing better than a love story in an opera, unless of course, it is a tragic love story. Verdi's ever-popular romantic opera *La Traviata* was recently performed in Ipoh by the *Merry Opera Company* from England. The singing cast of 13 accompanied by a 3-piece musical ensemble, gave a fabulous rendition at the Kinta Riverfront Hotel in aid of the multipurpose building fund of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church.



This adaptation, with an English libretto specially written by Kit Hesketh-Harvey, seemed somewhat unconventional, and to some opera purists, a bit sacrilegious. The audience, however, soon got used to the surtitles projected on stage; it helped the audience follow the story closely. The second half saw



the audience transfixed by a very emotional and tragic ending.

Modern props and costumes brought this opera from 19th century Venice to modern-day London. Talented young singer-actors, like Claire Egan, who played Violetta, Robin Bailey, who played Al, and Oliver Brignall (Gaston), Dario Dugandzic (Baron), Kristin Finnigan

(Flora), Matthew Quirk (Jermain) and others, gave credence to the storyline.

For opera buffs, this modern English version of *La Traviata* had all the drama and emotion, not to mention the powerful vocals of the performers, of the original. For the uninitiated, it was a chance to appreciate a classic. Culturally-deprived Ipoh will be looking forward to more of the same.

VWSL

Sport

Coronation Cup 2012

The most prestigious annual classic race for Class 1 horses, the Coronation Cup, was raced over a 1600-metre long course on Sunday, November 25 at the Perak Turf Club (PTC).

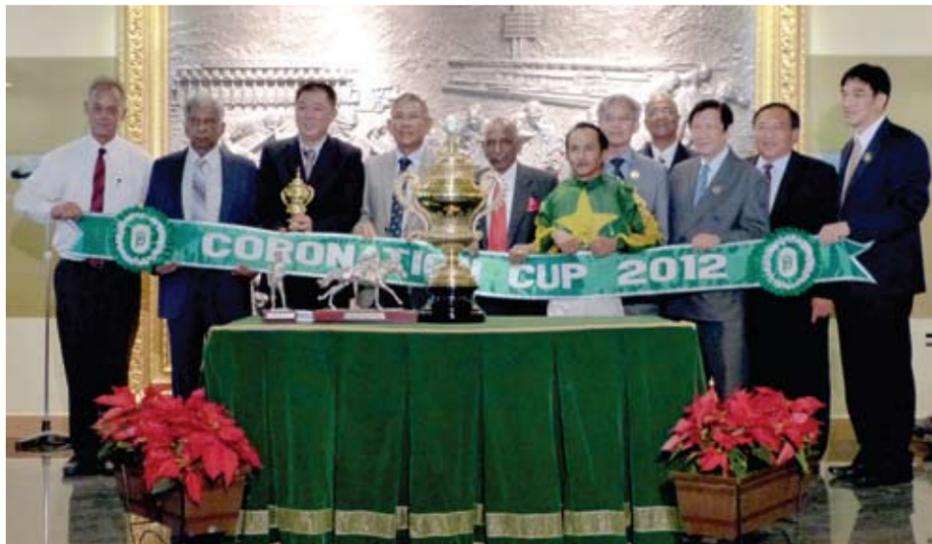
The 2010 Cup winner, "Speed Baby" of Golden Knight Stable owned by Beh Chin Pheng and ridden by jockey Azhar Ismail, was the runaway winner this year. The horse won by 1 1/4 lengths from its runner-up. South African Kevin Coetzee was the trainer.

The Coronation Cup Race was inaugurated in 1985 to honour HRH Sultan Azlan Shah, on his installation as Sultan of Perak. It carries PTC's highest stakes money of RM700,000 together with a golden challenge trophy.

At the prize presentation ceremony, where trophies and prizes were given away for the Coronation Cup as well as the Perak Turf Club Charity Cup, 52 charitable organisations and homes were presented with donations amounting to RM200,000.

Beneficiaries included the Red Crescent Society (Perak), Vision Home, Kelab Orang Berida Perak, Persatuan Warga Istimewa Perak, and Persatuan Penganut Sri Muniswarar Ipoh.

Emily



FA Foreign Signings Finalised

Perak FA have confirmed the signing of defender Rafael Novais and forward Karim Rouani as their two foreign players for the 2013 football season.

The Seladangs have been on a revamping mode since their dismal Malaysia Cup outing earlier this year. But despite making early initiatives to rebuild the squad, they had to rush to secure the two foreign players, as the registration period ended on Thursday, December 6.

With rumours linking them to players such as Frederic Mendy and John Carew, Perak secured their first foreign signing by snapping up former Bangkok Glass defender, Rafael Novais. The tall defender had previously played for Palmeiras and Rio Branco in 2009 and 2010, before making the move to Asia with Thai side, Buriram PEA.

The suspense heightened with Perak fans hoping for the signing of former West Ham player, John Carew, to fill the one remaining foreign slot. But as the negotiations faltered at the very last minute, Perak rushed to complete the signing of Karim Nouani (pic left), who was rejected by PKNS FC prior to this.

The French forward was previously playing for Budapest Honved in the Hungarian league before joining BEC Tero Sasana in the Thai league. However, Karim's time there was cut short after a dispute with some club officials. And though there are doubts about

his true form, Azraai Khor (pic above) is optimistic about the prospects of Karim playing for Perak FA next year. "Karim certainly has the qualities of an excellent forward. I believe he'll bond with the other players in due time," said Azraai to reporters.

As for the man himself, Karim is certainly looking forward to playing in the *Malaysian Super League* after having heard plenty of positive things about it. "I was only with BEC Tero Sasana for six months, but I am looking forward to playing in the Malaysian Super League now. I hope I can play a lot of games for Perak and make a big impact on the team."

As far as the Perak FA are concerned, their bid to shine in the 2013 season begins in earnest now. Preparations have already begun with players grouping-in for pre-season training in Ipoh. Azraai Khor has a much bigger challenge ahead. After the massive squad revamp, it will be interesting to see how he is going to find the right concoction to inspire the team forward.

Keesh



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Property

by Emily Lowe

Demand for High-End Properties in Ipoh a Reality

Known derogatorily as a “piss stop city”, Ipoh is rapidly developing over the past three years to the delight of property developers, owners and investors. New residential developments are fetching over a million ringgit per unit, something unheard of just a few years ago. Surprisingly, for a city with ample land, condominiums are much sought after too. The property market in Ipoh is more vibrant than what many thought.

Views From Developers

Sunrise Palace Sdn Bhd recently launched *Clearwater Bay Resort (Phase 2B)* in Bandar Lahat Mines, Lahat with 26 units of 2½-storey Zero Bungalows. Standard lots are priced from RM1,088,880, and so far, twenty units have been booked. Although not a new developer in Ipoh, this is the company's first million-ringgit residential development. According to company director Rodney Lee, the reason they decided to venture into the uncharted high-end residential market is because there is a demand for such properties. The majority of buyers of these million-ringgit Zero Bungalows are from Ipoh, while the rest are from Kuala Lumpur, Cameron Highlands, Sitiawan and Penang.

When asked about the profile of buyers, Lee revealed that they are business people purchasing them for investment purposes. According to him, it is a good sign for property investors, as Ipoh property prices continue to rise. The reason properties here are selling “like hot cakes” is because properties in more developed cities like Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru are too highly priced. The unobstructed view of the nearby lake of Clearwater Bay Resort's 2½-storey Zero Bungalows is a major selling point.

Taiko-Straits Developments Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Taiko Properties Sdn Bhd., is the developer of *The Thompson Bungalows*, along Jalan Tun Dr Ismail (formerly Thompson Road), which is right in the centre of Ipoh. Thirty eight out of the 47 available units (almost 81 per cent) are already sold, despite its hefty price tag of RM2.95 million and above.

Eunice Foo, manager of *Taiko-Straits Developments Sdn Bhd*, said that their buyers are mainly from Ipoh. They chose *The Thompson Bungalows* in order to upgrade their lifestyle. Others are foreigners from Singapore, Hong Kong, Switzerland and England, who bought them as holiday homes. A Japanese expatriate bought one for his family and was pleasantly surprised when the value of his property rose by almost RM500,000 within eight months!

The major selling points of *The Thompson Bungalows* are their strategic location and freehold land status. The other is its coveted neighbourhood. The name, “Thompson” too has an intrinsic advantage.

One of the early high-end gated-community developers in Ipoh, *Megayear Corporation Sdn Bhd*, sold out all 15 of its million-ringgit bungalows in Taman Tawas Idaman. Company director Rave Lim decided to venture into the high-end market upon acquiring the company from his father, because he wanted to bring the concept of upscale living to Ipohites. It is not a surprise that all 15 buyers are from Ipoh. They like the contemporary concept and the security that *Tasek Square Residence* offer. The value of houses has since appreciated by 20%.

Riding on the success of *The Enclave*, *Anjung Hijau Sdn Bhd* owned by KAB Group who also owns the IMPIANA group of hotels, launched Enclave 11 a few months ago. Sales have been brisk with almost 50 per cent of its units sold.

According to Francis Chung, IMPIANA Group's Executive Director Corporate Strategies and Hotel Operations, who also oversees the Sales and Marketing activities of Anjung Hijau Sdn Bhd, *The Enclave* is located at the best prime address in Ipoh – Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah or better known as “Tiger Lane”. It is the “Bangsar of Ipoh”.

Chung said that upgrading to *The Enclave* is a natural progression for any property buyers looking for a premier address. Besides, Anjung Hijau is one of the first developers to introduce modern and innovative designs that were previously only found in the Klang Valley.

Peter Chan, Chief Executive Officer of *Superboom Projects Sdn Bhd*, the developer of *The Haven Lakeside Residences*, stressed that Ipoh property market is playing catch up with more developed cities in Malaysia and there is still plenty of room for appreciation. With its laid back lifestyle and fresh air, Ipoh is a very attractive city to live in. Many people bypass Ipoh and do not appreciate what it offers; hence, the city has been underrated thus far.

Chan shared that about 50 per cent of purchasers of *The Haven* are from Ipoh, while 25 per cent are from outside of the city. The rest are foreigners buying as holiday homes. When asked why these buyers opted for condominium-living, he said, “They want the security and the vast range of facilities that we offer. Moreover, the natural surroundings appeal to them.” *The Haven Lakeside Residences* are slated to complete by the third quarter of 2013.

Views From Property Valuers

Thoo Sing Choon, Director of *Jordan Lee and Jaafar Sdn Bhd* said that not only are people buying million-ringgit homes, they are also willing to pay a huge sum of money to purchase old houses, demolish and rebuild them according to their taste and design.



Francis Chung



D. Henry Arther

A fine example is *Canning Garden*, an upper-middle-class residential area in Ipoh, where facilities and services are already in place. He said, “Canning Garden is in a prime location, a short distance from city centre. Compared to newer housing developments, this area is not secluded, with easy access to the North-South Expressway. Although land size is relatively small, averaging between 5000 to 6000 sq ft, houses here are currently going at a minimum rate of RM100 psf.”

Director of Landmark Valuers & Consultants, Loh Nyit Mee, identified prestige as the deciding factor for this group of buyers who are rebuilding houses in older residential areas, like *Housing Trust*. The others are infrastructure and accessibility.

The Principal of *D. Henry Valuers Realtor*, D. Henry Arther, was of the opinion that it is a seller's market for high-end properties in Ipoh. Buyers are willing to purchase for the location, especially if it is a gated and guarded neighbourhood within an affluent area. The reason why purchasers relocate themselves to

older residential areas, according to Henry, is because of the freehold land status and secured neighbourhood.

Discerning Buyers

With improving lifestyle, it is little wonder that high-end properties in Ipoh are selling like hot cakes. Most of the buyers of such properties are from Ipoh, some worked overseas and are back to replant roots and to retire here, while a smaller number of buyers are foreigners looking for a second, or retirement home. The costs of living and housing in Ipoh are relatively cheaper compared to other major cities in Malaysia.

Buyers of Ipoh's high-end properties are very discerning. They look for security, quality, space, sports and recreational facilities within their community. Demanding they may be, they are willing to pay good money for these conveniences in a modern-concept neighbourhood, especially one with an alluring address.

Francis Chung of IMPIANA Group stressed that Ipoh is the perfect city for retirees and young married couples. He said, “I strongly believe there is a huge potential for the property market here, especially developments that are strategically located. Ipoh is just two hours away from Kuala Lumpur by road or rail. Shopping centres and private hospitals are just within ten minutes' drive from city centre. And there is an international school to cater to the expatriate community.”

He added, “The average price of high-end landed properties in prime locations in Ipoh is between RM400-RM480 psf, whereas it is between RM800-RM1200 psf in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor.”

Bubble or Boom?

The upscale housing market in Ipoh may seem all rosy at this point in time, but is the Ipoh residential property market in a bubble or is it a normal housing boom?

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an officer with a leading bank who is in charge of housing loans does not think that there is a bubble. The increase in land value along with costs of building materials and workmanship, plus strong demand from both local and foreign buyers, contribute to the increase in prices of high-end condominiums and houses.

If at all an economic meltdown happens, purchasers would have to bear the consequences and continue servicing their housing loans. There is, however, the option to refinance or reschedule repayment.

And since the majority of buyers of upscale properties are from the moneyed class, chances of them going bust is unlikely. They buy the properties based on several factors; perceived value and the prestige the properties offer them. And having made a life-time commitment, there is little likelihood they will retract.



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