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JERRY VANDERBILT

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INDULGENT DELIGHTS



One of six delectable suites in Indulgence Boutique Hotel

Julie Song has single-handedly put Ipoh on the culinary lifestyle map, winning yet another international recognition for Most Innovative F&B Personality from HAPA, Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards 2008-2010 Regional Series. This will be the fourth international recognition for excellence that has made her passion, Indulgence Restaurant and Living synonymous with fine dining and living not only in Ipoh but throughout Malaysia. (More on page 2).



MISS ECHO

JANUARY



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INDULGENCE RESTAURANT AND LIVING - IPOH'S VERY OWN

Hobby turned Passion

For Julie, it all began as a hobby for cooking that turned into an all-consuming passion, a love affair of thirteen years that has seen her small cafe in Canning Gardens evolve into the "grande dame" holding court on Jalan Raja DiHilir, that is Indulgence today.

"It started with day trips to KL with close girlfriends to sample the top restaurants and trips abroad to taste the best that the West had to offer," Julie said as she looked back with nostalgia. "Then we moved from tasting other chefs' cooking to doing it ourselves and began sharing pot-luck lunches in one another's houses. My mother was a great cook and loved baking and it became a natural for me to follow in her footsteps. Even in my school days I was baking cakes and sharing them with my classmates regularly".

Julie's passion for fine cuisine continued unabated while in University in London where she would use every opportunity to dine in exclusive restaurants and observing the highly synchronised dance of food service and fine dining. "Never in my wildest dreams then did I imagine that I would end up as chef and owner of a precious jewel that is Indulgence today."

CAFE IN CANNING GARDENS

After a long and futile search for decent western food in Ipoh, the kind of wholesome, honest, "unMalaysianised" fine cuisine that she had been exposed to, Julie opened Indulgence Cafe in May 1996. Utilising half the shop and serving only cakes, good coffee, sandwiches and some snacks, opening from Thursday

to Sunday, Julie tested the market.

When the response was positive, Julie renovated the whole shop in August that year and a new fuller menu with proper main courses was created. The restaurant has since gone from strength to strength. In February 2000, it expanded into two shop lots with the addition of a Jazz Room and three private dining rooms. Private parties and big functions became the mainstay of the business and soon Julie was catering for some very important functions indeed.

CATERING FOR SPECIAL FUNCTIONS

Some functions of note included the occasion when the ambassadors of European countries had an audience with the Sultan at the Royal Palace. Indulgence catered a five-course lunch after the ambassadors presented their credentials. Another grand affair was the Cartier special dinner at a private mansion in Ipoh where Julie provided a special four-course menu. In April 2002, Oxbridge held their annual dinner at the Casuarina Hotel and Indulgence provided the catering at the banquet room. These are just some of the special outside catering that Julie excels in.

NEW PREMISES

As the demand for her catering grew, more and more companies were clamouring for space to host their events and Julie began looking for bigger and better premises. The new Indulgence Restaurant and Living opened in November, 17, 2005.

Taking over an old mansion on Jalan Raja DiHilir opposite the Taman

Budaya, Julie brought her magic touch in decorating to the fore and created a whimsical ambience combining eclectic touches with comfort and luxury. Nooks and corners lend intimacy to cosy tete a tete while curtains delineate spaces for some measure of privacy.

Numerous editorials in Millionaire Asia, Flavours, Cuisine, The New Straits Times, The Star, and The Edge lauded Indulgence and its food. And so began Julie's journey towards international stardom, bringing recognition and visitors to Ipoh.

ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

October, 30, 2003 marked a very important day in Julie's life when she was awarded a Platinum award from World Asia Publishing for Excellence in Hospitality: Entrepreneur of the Year 2003-2004. This award recognises dedication in the hospitality field and attainment of the highest standards in whichever category nominated. World Asia Publishing embarked on a Hospitality Asia's Personalities Book - a coffee table book named 'The Pinnacle' which featured the industry's selected creme de la creme of hospitality who have made significant contributions in their respective fields. Julie was nominated as one of the most outstanding individuals and was featured in this inaugural edition.

OTHER AWARDS

Soon after, recognition came fast and furiously for Julie: Best Western Cuisine Chef Personality 2005-2006, Best Western Cuisine Restaurant 2006-2007, culminating in Regional Series (Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and



All dressed up for a banquet

Thailand), Best Innovative F&B Personality and 7 Finalist Awards 2008-2010.

BOUTIQUE HOTEL INDULGENCE

Julie is one hospitality entrepreneur who does not rest on her laurels. In November 2007 Boutique Hotel - Indulgence Living opened its doors to much local curiosity and scepticism. "How will she survive with the rates she's charging? The Ipoh market will never support such extravagance!" the naysayers were whispering with malice. With two themed suites and four themed deluxe rooms, another of Julie's dreams turned into reality. A lot of thought and pleasure went into creating her rooms, each one a different mood and ambience, reflecting not just the hospitality aspect but also creating a lifestyle for her guests.

Now a year later, she is proving her critics wrong. Not only does Indulgence Boutique Hotel get the room rates of RM420++ and RM620++ it charges

but at certain peak seasons there is a waiting list. It has a small but growing fan club of its own with people coming from Europe and the USA, guests who come to explore Ipoh and its surrounds.

Indulgence Restaurant and Living, Ipoh, was featured recently in a half hour show on Astro Awani in October 2008 as "Destinasi Malaysia". Further international publicity is on the cards, bringing with it more exposure for Ipoh, a welcome development for what has always been considered a sleepy backwater between the vibrant attractions of KL and Penang.

Tourism officials need to take note of the contribution being made by Julie Song as she has single-handedly put Ipoh on the international culinary and lifestyle map. Ipohites too should be proud of their own home-grown talent. Her strap-line in advertisements and her web site says it all:

"Indulgence Restaurant and Living will always be Ipoh's very own".

SFCK



Julie with latest award



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HOW WILL IPOH FARE IN 2009

What some industrial players have to say about Ipoh's economy

Since September 2008 the world has been trying hard to gauge the extent of the credit crunch in America and how it has affected the American public. The United States is the largest market economy in the world and is Malaysia's biggest trading partner. Whenever America sneezes other nations will jump, literally.

An economic slump is expected to cause much hardship across the globe and Malaysia is no exception. A drop in external demand for our goods has affected our export market tremendously. Factories are closing down more frequently now. A sudden influx of jobless Malaysians from Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan will undoubtedly have an effect on our declining economy. How will Ipoh fare in this

time of uncertainty?

Ipoh Echo did a survey of the local industrial sector to better appreciate the problem. Needless to say, the first to suffer the aftershocks are those in the electrical and electronic sub-sectors.

BUSINESS DOWN

A quick check with the few micro chip companies around Ipoh revealed that their business has gone down by 20 percent. Most have initiated a 4-day-work week with no overtime. Other initiatives taken include a plant shut down beginning Christmas till January/February 2009 and compulsory annual leave for the staff. These micro-chip companies now review their performance on a monthly basis rather than the quarterly observed before.

A major consumer electronic factory is as pessimistic. Sales of their products during this festive season will determine its future. If sales drop, the forecast beyond the next six months will be revised by between 30 to 50 per cent. Although year-end orders are traditionally slow, one of its sub-contractors in Bercham has closed down recently, as no assembly job orders were forthcoming.

The manager of a major steel foundry is feeling the effects of the meltdown. His factory produces finished steel components for the mining industry. Its export markets are mainly USA and Australia. Since prices of metal have been plummeting, orders are beginning to dwindle. Customers are adopting a wait-and-see attitude waiting for the economy to stabilise. His foundry is now

on a 6-day week when it was all-year-round previously.

Despite the gloom there is a silver lining. The General Manager of Top Glove, Tasek, K.Nagapen, said that their order book was "normal for the next 12 months" and their Meru Klang facility was "expanding".

Top Glove manufactures clinical gloves for hospitals. Their orders are seasonal. "We are still paying out bonuses to our workers. However, we are cautious with overtime payout," he remarked. Another major glove manufacturer is rumored to be expanding. It is transferring a European operations facility to Ipoh.

Voith Paper Fabrics located at IGB Industrial Park is another European company that is expanding its operations. Voith manufactures dryer fabric

for use in the paper industry. Business Manager (Operations), Lam Cheong Fatt, confirmed that work on the new factory is currently underway. "Voith's operations are semi-automated. We'll require an additional 100 workers for the expansion," he said.

O & G SECTOR

FMMPerak Chairman, Gan Tack Hong, provided a snapshot of the manufacturing scenario. Beside the electrical and electronic sector, he said, industries linked to the construction sector would also be affected. "O and G is the only sector not affected," said Gan.. Kencana Petroleum, an integrated service provider specialising in engineering and fabrication services for the oil and gas industry is said to have a book order well beyond twelve months.

It is located at Kg Acheh, Lumut.

"A survey done by the FMM in November has changed rather drastically in December. Hence we will be monitoring the situation closely" added Gan. His sentiment is shared by David Ho of Hovid Bhd and Carotech Bhd. "The next two quarters will be tough and demand for goods and services are expected to be lower in the following quarters."

On the whole the prospects for 2009 are not too rosy. There will be those who would be retrenched. The state government is prepared to tackle the problem head-on but nothing seems definitive as yet.

We have to keep our guard up lest we get caught napping. It is better to be prepared than to regret. During hard times cash is always king.

JAMES GOUGH

EDITORIAL

CUSHIONING THE EFFECTS OF AN ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN

The signs are there for all to see. A marked decline in demand for goods and services, reduction in the number of working days and the oft-repeated complaints by traders that business is far from rosy.

The country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth for the third quarter was 4.7 per cent compared to 7.4 per cent in the first and 6.7 per cent in the second quarter. These lower than expected figures have prompted the government to revise GDP growth forecast for 2008 to 5 per cent from 5.7 per cent. An even lower figure of 3.5 per cent has been estimated for 2009 from the original 5.4 per cent.

On the domestic front the spiralling cost of living is attributable to the 41 per cent hike in petrol prices in June. In spite of six consecutive reductions in the pump price of petrol the impact on living costs is minimal. Electricity is still highly priced. This affects industrial players most as it impinges on their competitiveness. The end-result may prove

disastrous to factory workers. Carsem of Ipoh is on a scheduled shutdown reducing the number of working days from seven to four.

World Bank has encouraged governments around the world to spend in order to cushion the impact of the economic slowdown. Experts fear that this will cause panic spending by the government in its eagerness to conform to the theory.

The downturn is mainly due to the softening in external demand and it has affected our exports considerably. Exports for the month of October fell by 2.6 per cent.

The Government has recently announced a RM7 billion package to stimulate the economy in line with the recommendation made by the World Bank. This additional fund will only add on to the RM30 billion deficit announced in Budget 2009.

As to whether the RM7 billion fiscal stimulus will be prudently spent for the benefit of the rakyat

is yet to be seen. Already RM2.1 billion is being earmarked for refurbishment of police stations, army camps, government quarters, repair of roads, construction of community halls and preservation of public amenities, on top of existing budgeted expenditure for the same purpose. Needless to say, the suspicion that the government will embark on panic spending is now becoming apparent.

Lowering of interest rates by Bank Negara is another way to encourage domestic consumption. But how will the rakyat spend when they have little or no cash to spare? Living on credit is definitely not an option.

A simple way out is to exercise prudence in your spending and avoid unnecessary wastage. You have to differentiate between what you need and what you want.

A difficult choice to make nonetheless, but make you must.

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THINKING ALOUD

TODAY WE BEGIN A NEW YEAR

By G. Sivaprasagam

Our wish list for 2009. Some of the issues that could serve as a basis for inspiring unity of purpose. Topping it is the eradication of poverty....

As we bid goodbye to the old year and welcome the new it might be an appropriate time to reflect on the events of 2008 and speculate on what 2009 might have in store for us. Year 2008 was a momentous year globally and nationally. A member of a minority community in the United States was elected to lead it, the meltdown of First World economies resulted in the demise of age-old financial and business giants and the Barisan Nasional government that dominated Malaysia since its independence lost control of five state governments and its two-third majority in parliament.

The New Year will see president-elect Obama inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States and Datuk Seri Najib Razak installed as the 6th Prime Minister of Malaysia. As Obama selects those who will form his government, Datuk Seri Najib will be finalising his cabinet. Unlike Obama who can choose anyone Najib's selection will be tempered by political realities.

Foremost, in Najib's mind must be the issue of unity. In spite of repeated proclamations about its importance and efforts needed, we still remain divided.

A factor that has often been blamed for the continued division is the special rights accorded to Bumiputeras. The perception cannot be valid as the program is based on an economic agenda and unity is a social and emotional occurrence.

The way forward may be to put on the back burner all issues that divide us, for no matter what we do, there will always exist differences.

The vast majority of the people want nothing more than peace and stability, an opportunity to earn a decent living, a future for their children and a measure of dignity. For this they are willing to empower their leaders. Neither are the expectations of the people unreasonable nor are the obligations of the leaders onerous. Problems only arise when some people want more than is just and authority forgets to administer their powers responsibly.

Perhaps unity could be attained by identifying common missions that no one can possibly object to and harness the whole nation towards its realisation. Often people come together in the face of a common threat or for a mutual benefit.

Issues that could serve as a basis for inspiring unity of purpose could be eradication of poverty, reduction of crime, conservation of our environment, increasing the ability of the masses.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY

The NEP proclaims as its principal objective the eradication of poverty irrespective of race. It is quite unacceptable that this nation with such rich resources still continues to have citizens who are poor. Getting them out of the poverty cycle will not only enable them to progress but will turn them from being dependents on society to contributors. Perhaps a high powered unit should be set up to address this problem once and for all.

REDUCTION OF CRIME

In spite of what is claimed the popular belief is that

crime is on the increase and if not addressed it may become uncontrollable. Perhaps the way to solve it is to adopt the same method as was employed to rid the nation of the communist terrorists. Conduct an audit of the urban environment, divide them into parcels classifying them as white (crime free) and black (crime prone) areas. Structure and implement a strategy to sustain the classification of white areas and turn the black areas into white.

CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In the future, the wealth of nations will be defined by the natural resources it possesses - water, clean atmosphere, cultivable land and intact nature. Sustainable development continues to be only a fashion statement. Natural resources belong to each and everyone and should be calculated as a cost if used, abused or mismanaged. Perhaps we need to apply E.F.Schumacher's advice in his book, "Small Is Beautiful".

ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF THE MASSES

Information

Technology has emerged as the foremost driver of communication, dissemination of information, sharing of knowledge and business networking.

The English language dominates this new medium. By making it our mission to have all our citizens fluent in this language will not mean that the national language loses its place of importance in our society but will provide people an easy access to boundless knowledge and the entire world.

What could assist us in our mission is an identity that defines us as a single entity distinguishing us from other nations. At the moment we suffer from an identity crisis.

What brands us as Malaysians is something that we need to discover, formulate and claim ownership of.

Only then can we liberate ourselves from the sense of insecurity that plagues us and assert a place in the community of nations.

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MUSINGS

by See Foon Chan-Koppen

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A Carrot, An Egg and A Cup of Coffee

New Year Resolutions Retold



See Foon



mother?'

FACING ADVERSITY

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. Each reacted differently.

The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak.

The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting in the boiling water, its inside became hardened.

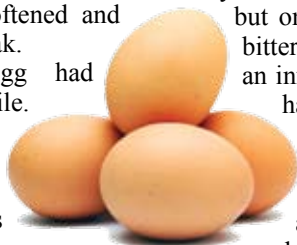
The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After being in the boiling water, the beans had changed the water. They had infused the water with their special flavour and aroma.

'Which are you?' she asked her daughter. 'When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean?'

So my thought for the new year is: Which am I? Am I the carrot that appears robust and strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt and become



soft and lose my strength? — Am I the egg with a soft heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial and tribulation, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with an inflexible spirit and hardened heart? Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very condition that caused the pain. When the water gets hot, the bean releases its fragrance and flavor. The longer it is boiled, the stronger the coffee becomes. Like the bean, when times are tough, do I give more of myself to change my external circumstances? When the hour is the darkest and trials are at their greatest do I elevate myself to another level? The question as we begin this New Year is: How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean? My New Year Resolution for 2009 is: **Be Coffee!**



The start of a brand new year is often a time of celebration, anticipation and wondering what the coming year will bring. As we begin 2009, the general pessimistic outlook of the global economy will certainly dampen any ray of sunshine we may find on the financial horizon. Yet it is precisely at times like these that we're tested and given opportunities to discover gifts of gold within ourselves which can help us rise above the prevailing doom and gloom that meets us at every turn.

NEW TWIST ON AN OLD TALE

I am reminded of the story of the carrot, an egg and a cup of coffee.

A depressed young woman went to her mother bemoaning how hard life was. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, a new one arose. She felt that she had reached the end of her rope.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high

fire. Soon the pots came to the boil. In the first, she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She allowed them to boil, without saying a word.

After twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She scooped the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a cup.

Turning to her daughter, she asked, 'Tell me what you see.'

'Carrots, eggs, and coffee,' the daughter replied.

Her mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked the daughter to take an egg and break it. After removing the shell, she observed the hard boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, 'What does it mean,

FOOD

CHAR KUEY TEOW



Have you ever met anyone who does not like char kuey teow? – not in Ipoh anyway! What is it about these noodles, fried with bean sprouts (Ipoh has the best, of course), prawns, cockles and *ku chai* (chives) – cooked to a smoky flavour, which makes one want to savour every mouth-full? Our 'team', through much time and effort, picked 4 stalls (it's a hard job but someone's got to do it) – and this is how we have rated them:

NAME	WHERE?	GOOD	BAD	PRICE (RM)	RATING
Mee Goreng & Minuman Seng Loong	Stadium stall #32	fried enough prawns fresh cockles not overcooked	Sold out often by 12.30pm	3.50	4/5
Night stall	Stadium stall #18	cockles not overcooked prawns are fresh	No smoky taste	3.50	4/5
Penang Banana Leaf Fried Kuey Teow	Hollywood Restaurant Jln Lee Kwee Foh, Canning Garden	cockles not overcooked prawns are fresh	no 'ku chai'	3.30	3/5
Banana Leaf Char Kuey Teow	Nam Heong Kopitiam Jalan Bandar Timah, Old Town	cockles not overcooked prawns are fresh	Too wet and quite bland.	3.50	3/5

This is a new column we're running in every issue. If readers would like us to review their favorite hawker food, please write in to ipohecho.vw@gmail.com

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ADVERTORIAL

BP Healthcare Centre

currently manages 25 diagnostic centres throughout the country.

The BP Healthcare Group, started 26 years ago by Dato' Beh Chun Chuan in Ipoh, initially offered only healthcare screening services. It has since incorporated diagnostic testing in order to provide a more comprehensive service to customers. The group

why doctors recommend regular check-ups as a form of prevention.

Taking a drop of blood for screening or to identify risk factors is inadequate. It will be more thorough if a comprehensive testing is done.

All BP diagnostic centres undertake digital x-raying and ultrasound imaging. They also provide audiometry and biop-

sy services. The ultimate objective is to provide the public with a wholesome diagnostic and preventive healthcare screening at an affordable price.

BP diagnostic centre has two medical officers and two specialists on hand and is supported by nutritionists and pharmacists. All services are ISO9001 certified. The centres' laboratories are ISO 15189

accredited-a quality management system requirement particular to medical laboratories. Therefore, the benefits of taking health screening at these laboratories are obvious. All results are evidence-based.

BP diagnostic centres are currently conducting a health awareness campaign and are offering the public screening packages ranging in prices from RM199 (44 tests) to RM1299 (64 tests).

The Ipoh centre, at 275, Jalan Kampar, covering an area of over 0.4ha, is the company's headquarters. It has both laboratory and diagnostic facilities. Some additional programmes on offer at this centre include Occupational Health Services and Community Health Education.

LETTER FROM ULU KINTA

writer's email: letterfromulukinta@yahoo.com

DISAPPEARING MALAYSIAN TREASURES

Modernity has sounded the death knell for the grocers-on-wheels.
Soon the "keling-botol" and the "surat-khabar-lama" man will follow suit.
Where do we go from here?

Ten years ago, we lost Ah Hong, our grocer-on-wheels. No, he hadn't died or moved away. He found that his little business just wasn't viable anymore. We pleaded with him to continue his services and even offered to buy from him five days a week rather than the current three. He shook his head, and said quietly, "Minta maaf. Ta' boleh. Ini kerja ta' ada duit lagi".

The mushrooming of supermarkets and supermarkets had sounded Ah Hong's death knell. He took out his 'Tiga Lima' book, tabulated our household purchases for the month, cross-checked his final figure with my mother's and graciously accepted the money offered. He put the cash in an old biscuit tin, then stashed it under his seat, amongst the rags, raffia string and plastic bags. After securing the top of the ikan keli tank, and the big container of pickled cabbage, he jumped into the front seat, started the engine and drove off into the morning sun waving his right hand as he departed.

His little white van with the open back and the various vegetables, sweets and other produce, swaying madly from hooks at the back, looked like they too were waving goodbye to us. It was the last we saw of him.

There would be no more toot-toots from Ah

Hong as he sounded his horn and waited for one of us to open the front gate to receive him. There would be no more haggling over the price of fish, no more hoots of horror from my children as they prodded the fish's eyes, no more treats for them from Ah Hong's "confectionery" corner, which was the passenger seat of the van. No more convenience of the wet market being brought to our doorsteps without the hassle of traffic, parking space and the sweaty smell of the morning shoppers. Most of all, we missed the gossip, especially the kinky stuff. Ah Hong was the local tabloid gossip columnist on wheels. He was well placed to know about the various comings and goings in the houses where he plied his wares and he relished in telling us every detail. All that Ah Hong represented came to an end too soon.

Two years later, Ah Fatt, our sundry shop delivery boy went the same way as Ah Hong. I remember Ah Fatt plonking the sack of rice on the kitchen floor and the box of cooking oil, cans of beans and soup and other dried food stuffs on the table. Wiping the sweat off his forehead, he told us that that was his last delivery. Ah Fatt's towkay had instructed him to tell us that their sundry shop in Kampar Road was going to close down. The business was losing money. The supermarkets had

effectively driven business away. There would be no more trips from school, stopping off at Ah Fatt's towkay's shop to pick out the goods we wanted for home. That was the end of a personalised and friendly service. It was also the end of a way of life for many millions of Malaysians who were brought up with the Ah Hong's and Ah Fatt's of this world.

Then a few years later, our roti man announced that he too was unable to deliver any more bread to the home.

The grocer-on-wheels, the sundry-shop-delivery-boy and the roti man, much like the knife sharpener, ice cream vendor or the barber-on-the-bicycle of my parents' vintage were all once familiar features of the Malaysian landscape.

I recall as a child waiting excitedly with my siblings, for the distinctive hoots of the roti man's motorbike as he merrily announced his imminent arrival. His timing was impeccable. He would be there, come rain or shine. We would rush forward towards him as he cut the engine. We'd throw the loaf of bread destined for the house on the nearest chair and quickly grab cakes or buns - roti kelapa, or roti kismis - being firm favourites - hanging off the back

of his motor.

The attraction with the roti man continued with my children, till he too came to an abrupt end.

It is sad that all these roving peddlers are gone. They are a vital link in our community especially for the elderly who are more or less living on their own, and those who do not have easy access to the shops.

These men provide a useful service in more ways than one. They may not give you the variety that a supermarket offers but at least fresh produce is delivered to your doorstep. They take credit, which supermarkets don't. They allow haggling, which is half the fun of shopping, whereas supermarkets have only fixed prices. They save us time, transport and parking charges. There is no opportunity to be swayed into buying unnecessary items. They all offer a personal service. They indirectly help to reduce congestion and pollution on our roads. They generate employment opportunities and most are self-employed. And for isolated households, he is the regular, familiar friendly face and possible link to the outside world. As we found with Ah Hong, he was also our entertainer.

These men are our fast disappearing Malaysian treasures.



Other peddlers, like the keling-botol man and the surat-khabar-lama man, both of whom provide a useful recycling service of collecting and paying for empty bottles and old newspapers are still around. But for how long more?

I dread the day when the newspaper vendor delivery man or the recycling people, tell me they are unable to provide their services.

I strongly believe that as our nation gets more developed, our roads more congested, our lives increasingly hectic and our

households extra busy, we ought to preserve our roving peddlers. I, therefore, urge more households to utilise the services of these people, so as to regenerate growth into this declining trade and preserve our uncluttered way of life.

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PARENTING

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NEW YEAR, NEW RESOLUTIONS

Real parents in Ipoh share New Year resolutions that are doable and practical for 2009

One of the things that usually accompany a new calendar year is the New Year resolutions that 90% of us will make. We love the clean slate of a brand-new year. Whatever parenting blunders we have made in 2008 (from getting lazy about healthy eating to SMS-ing through family dinners), we can breathe a sigh of relief that these are all in the past now, and we can look forward to a better year ahead. I too find myself unconsciously reflecting on the months that have whizzed by, and making a mental list of resolutions for the New Year that will help me improve as a parent.

We asked real parents in Ipoh for their doable resolutions for 2009. May these short messages inspire and encourage us on our journey to becoming better parents this year!

BUILD A HOME OF PEACE AND REFUGE

"I want to make my home a place of peace and refuge for my kids; somewhere they can feel loved and secure at all times come what may. I believe we must love our children unconditionally; this is especially necessary if you have teenage children who are exposed to substantial peer pressure on a daily

basis." Dr Melanie Hew, mother to Jessica (18), Michelle (16), Hannah (11), Samantha (4).

SPEND MORE TIME WITH FAMILY

"In my line of work, I tend to work late and so I don't get to spend as much quality time as I would like to with my family. This year, I will work on the following; keep all appointments as much as possible within working hours, keep working hours productive so I can leave early, take an interest in my children's school work and help them with their homework, watch less TV and interact with my kids more, and take my family for outings during off days and holidays." Ramesh Kumar, father to Delon (10) and Nisha (8).

OFFER CAREER GUIDANCE

"As my older son will be in Form 5 this year, I want to help him explore the different possibilities open to him for his future career. Other than bringing him to the various education fairs, another good exposure would be to arrange to have him observe and learn from our friends at their respective workplaces." Mimi Wong Siew Chern, mother to Andrew (16), Jeremy (14), Leanne



(10).

INCULCATE LOVE AND TRUST

"I wish to enhance the values of love and trust in my family. I will demonstrate my love to them on a daily basis as I want my family to know that I love them very much and that they can always count on me to be there for them at all times. I believe that love and trust are the milestones in cultivating a loving, happy and healthy family." Padmaloshini, mother to Perithiv (5), Githikhaa (2).

BE A BETTER HUSBAND

"I believe that to be a better father, you must first be a better husband. Because my wife is loved and is contented, my children have a greater sense of security and happiness and we are able to communicate well with each other. This makes my job

as a dad easier! To sum up, start by being a better husband!" Andrew Ong, father to Andrea (17) and Aaron (14).

FAMILY HOLIDAY TOGETHER

"I will make it a point to take my children for a holiday this year as we have been busy and have not had one for many years. We really deserve an extended holiday together, and it will be good just to relax, enjoy each other's company and have fun together". Haslinda binti Zubir, mother to Mohd Shafiq (14), Nur Atiqah (12), Mohd Firdaus (9).

ENCOURAGE SERVICE TO MANKIND

"I believe that Service to Mankind is Service to God, and this sums up how we can all become better human beings. I

want to encourage this trait amongst my family by helping those who are genuinely in need and we will not expect anything in return. We will practice patience, kindness and tolerance towards others." Subasini Uthra, mother to Moganavishnu (11).

LAUGH AND RELAX MORE

As for me, I endeavour to laugh and play with

my children more, dance and twirl my 3-year old girl around so she squeals more, and carry my digital camera with me when we go out. I will also make it a point to date my husband fortnightly, have nightly cuppas with him and tell him I appreciate him more often than I did last year. Have a meaningful and rewarding parenting year ahead for 2009!

WERN SZE GILL

FAMILY NEW YEAR RESOLUTION LAUGHS – 6 months later!

- Jan 1st: We will eat only wholemeal breads and healthy snacks
- July 1st: I will reward my kids with sweets if they finish their dinner!
- Jan 1st: I will make homemade organic soya bean milk this year
- July 1st: I will allow my kids one can of soft drink every other day
- Jan 1st: I will encourage reading by bringing my kids to the library often
- July 1st: I will let them watch all the TV they want during weekends and Public Holidays!
- Jan 1st: We will stop eating food in the car this year
- July 1st: We will throw out all food wrappers at the end of the journey
- Jan 1st: I will make it a point to teach my children some local history
- July 1st: I will show them where I used to eat apom balik after school

PHASES & FACES



BADMINTON ICON CELEBRATES 90TH BIRTHDAY

Seng Khoon recalls his playing days when he represented Malaya in the Thomas Cup

Teoh Seng Khoon, the only surviving member of the badminton team that won the Thomas Cup in 1949, celebrated his 90th birthday at Indulgence Restaurant recently.

Pictured here with his daughter Foo Mei Ling, Seng Khoon reminisced on the halcyon days when the Malayan team beat the Americans in the semi-finals 6-3, and in the fi-

nals, trounced the Danes 8-1 – not bad for a country most had never heard of. There was no monetary gain though – he played the game for the passion. The only reward he got was £3 for winning the All-England doubles with Ooi Teck Hock.

Seng Khoon also had a career in the Times of Malaya and Straits Echo as bureau chief.

Badminton, during his day, was played with Dunlop and Slazenger wooden racquets. Training was at the mercy of the elements in outdoor courts and shuttlecocks were re-used – good as new they were after sticking back the fallen feathers.

No fancy training centres, coaches or psychologists – one had to rely on one's own drive and dis-

cipline to achieve excellence. Through the Foong Seong Cup, state players had to fight for the right to play on the squad. It was a privilege and an honour to represent one's country.

People like Teoh Seng Khoon are the true sports heroes and he serves as an inspiration to our young sports men and women.

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YOUNG PERAK by PETER KHIEW

Teachers and students from schools are invited to write about their respective institutions of learning. E-mail articles to: ipohecho.pk@gmail.com

LOOKING FORWARD TO NEW YEAR



Twenty boys at the Tambun Salvation Army Boys' Home can now look forward to a warmer and cosier New Year; thanks to members of the Millennium Heart Caring Society, who presented the boys with twenty sets of bed sheets and blankets. Besides receiving toiletry items like shower

gels, soaps and shampoo, the boys were also presented with school shoes and socks in preparation for the new school term. Prior to that, 17 inmates at the Salvation Army Home at Jalan Kampar were also presented with similar items. Society's adviser, Datin Jenny Lim, presented the gifts.

A GATHERING OF BADMINTON GREATS

Malaysia's badminton greats gather annually at ACS Ipoh



Aspiring badminton players with their mentors

For some 60 former national and state badminton players it has become a ritual to gather for day-long friendly matches at SMK Methodist (ACS) Ipoh.

Players like Goh Lai Yong, Ng Kar Lok Thomas Voo and Koe Lai Yin have never failed to play at the school's famous Teerath

Ram Hall whenever the group is back for their annual get-together dinner.

BREEDING GROUND

ACS Ipoh has bred many outstanding badminton players like Suffian Abu Bakar, Lai King Hing, P. Kavendran and Gopal Krishnan who

donned national colours in the 70s and the 80s.

Cheah Soon Kit, who studied in the school after his Form Three, spent most of his time practising in the hall. Cheah played for the Malaysian team since 1986 in the doubles, partnering Ong Beng Teong from 1986 to 1989 and Soo Beng Kiang and Choong

Tan Fook in 1998. When Cheah was studying at SK Cator Avenue Ipoh and later at SMK Seri Kepayang, he already possessed the agility and prowess of a great badminton player.

ACS IPOH

That was when coach Ang Seng Ket recommended him to move over to ACS Ipoh. "He had the keenness and commitment of a seasoned player", said Ang, who was also with the group. Among the players Ang had coached were Foo Kok Keong and Lee Wan Hwa.

Many of these badminton greats, despite their age, are still around to provide a helping hand to the younger players.

CHEF WANNABES



Exhibiting their culinary skills

Four aspiring chefs combined their efforts to make their graduation a memorable occasion. Armed with culinary skills they acquired at Kolej Syuen, Khoo Cheng Aik, Mohd Eder Adamy Mohd Fadzil, Teo Khaei Ling and Chan Ken Lung impressed their tutors, principal and the media by preparing a set lunch never tasted before

in Ipoh.

They spent a tedious four hours to showcase "Mad Mad Kerabu", "Fantasy Chicken Kebab", "Rain Sweet Treat" (scoop of vanilla ice-cream served with Malay dessert) and "Dragonwell Green" (hot/cold green tea).

Their efforts were worth their while, judging by the smiles on everyone's face after the meal.

The restaurant, named "Mad About Food", reflects the very essence of being "mad" in presenting a variety of Malaysian dishes.

It also denotes the "madness" of the students in presenting their creations without boundaries and limitations.

For those wishing to patronise Restaurant Mad About Food please call 05-2548486 for details.

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IPOH IN BRIEF

More pics at [ipohecho on line](http://ipohecho.com)

PROMOTING MALACCA



The Chief Minister of Malacca, Datuk Mohd Ali Rustam was in Ipoh recently to promote Malacca, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The promotion programme titled *JOM KE MELAKA* was organised by Tourism Malaysia and was held at Ipoh Parade. Seen here with the Chief Minister is the State Assemblyman for Manjoi YB Dato' Nadzri Ismail. A presentation of Malacca culture was held in conjunction with the promotion.

INTERFAITH DINNER



Over 400 guests attended the annual interfaith dinner organised by the Malaysian Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism at Chin Woo Hall, Ipoh on Saturday, December 13. Executive councillor, Sivanesan, thanked the diners for their presence and promised a larger turnout next year. He reassured everyone that the PR-led state government would do its utmost to preserve the integrity of all faiths.

MINDLESS IN IPOH



A look at the pile of garden rubbish is enough to turn anyone off. This unsightly collection of broken tree branches is found at the back lane of a housing estate in Bercham. It is not something new. Illegal dumpsites appear in all parts of the city as long as there are mindless residents who don't give two hoots to cleanliness. When will they learn that littering is not only dirty but downright obnoxious.

RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE



Rum Jungle Bar and Restaurant, in collaboration with Chivgas Regal, brought in two international acts recently to spice up the city's night scene. They were DJ Davide Succi and the Asia Dolls. The Dolls is a 3-piece violin string band from China that sings and plays dance music. DJ Davide Succi complemented the band's performance with background arrangements. The Dolls' music and showmanship electrified the night. Together with Davide's selection of music, in between their performances, the audience was gyrating the whole night through.

A CHRISTMAS CONCERT



SONG or Students Outreach by the New Generation organised a hip hop Christmas concert at the YMCA on Wednesday, December 10, 2008. The event was opened to all teenagers from various schools. Starting off the afternoon was the InFuse band from Full Gospel Assembly belting out lively Christian songs which got the crowd singing along.

Organiser Sharene Wan explained that SONG was for wayward teens. "Its aim is to reach out to those who have strayed and guide them to the righteous path".

MISS IDEAL TEEN 2008

"It's not another beauty contest" said Lynnette Tan, the Organiser of YMCA Ipoh's Ideal Teen 2008. It certainly wasn't. The contestants were made up of both boys and girls from the various schools in Ipoh. They had workshops on communication and presentation skills. They were also taught to cat walk.

On the contest night, 31 participants, dressed in their best had to answer an open-ended essay entitled "Money".

Seventeen year old Jessica Lee Jiun-Xiu from Methodist College was crowned Miss Ideal Teen by 2007 winner, Joel



Shanjana and Jane Lam Wai Chuin. Jelisa also won the "Most Popular Teen" award.

MP for Gopeng, Dr. Lee Boon Chye, gave away the prizes.

RESIDENTS UP IN ARMS

Residents of Taman Tanjung Emas and Taman Tanjung Mewah near Tanjung Rambutan showed their displeasure by demonstrating recently. The object of their dissatisfaction is a petrol station which is under construction in their midst. Residents' association chairman, Aladin Hamid, said that the petrol kiosk is located less than 10 meters from the nearest house. He feared that the on-going construction would inconvenience households. The authorities said Aladin should consider the residents' welfare before approving the project. However, city council's Director of Town Planning, Azizuddin Alias, said that the construction of the petrol station was legal. Stop-work order he said could only be issued with reasons.



THE SIX-MILE TUNNEL

Unbeknown to many Ipohites there exists a man-made tunnel somewhere within the hills behind Sunway City, Tambun. This tunnel is known to nature buffs as the "six-mile tunnel" although in reality it is only about 800 meters long. It was built by Communist Terrorists during the Malayan Emergency (1948 to 1960). The tunnel was used by the terrorists to hide food supplies and armaments. It was also a convenient hide-out for their terrorism activities in the Ipoh region. The tunnel is a potential tourist attraction and should be developed and maintained by the authorities. A deal with the Sunway Group seems a likable option. Tourism Perak should take the initiative and not allow such opportunity to slip by.

ADVERTORIAL

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your skins but also heals it. There is, therefore, no need to categorise skin as dry, oily or normal as Eumora could treat, improve and heal all skin types.

It is also easy to use. Just wet your hands, lather the facial bar and apply on your face gently. Leave it for 3 minutes and wash it off.

And the result - a healthy, shining and smooth skin.

LETTERS TO EDITOR



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



A DISSERVICE

I was at the Ipoh Garden Post Office on Friday, December 12 to pay my utility bills. It took me almost 20 minutes to be attended by the counter staff. Of the eight counters only two were opened. Since it was Friday the only reason why most of the counters

were closed was obvious - Friday prayers. I don't see why the rush to pray as it was just around noontime.

On my way out I noticed a framed certificate proudly displayed on the post office's wall. It was awarded to the Ipoh Garden Post Office in recognition for being an exemplary branch at the national level competition some years back. What is the point of framing and displaying it on the wall when service is next to nothing?

Public expectations are high. Gone are the days when one has to queue for

hours to be served. With the advent of modern technology the waiting period at counters is shortened. However, a system is only functional when the people behind it are functioning.

The Ipoh Garden Post Office manager is doing the public a great disservice by displaying the certificate. It is not indicative of things happening on the ground. You need not be a rocket scientist to run an office with the number of staff available. Just don't allow all to pray or go "shopping" at any one time.

Mohd Taib, Ipoh.



YOU'RE A GEM

YB Wong Kah Woh (Adun Canning) has proven to be, figuratively speaking, the 'Lee Lam Thye' of Ipoh for rendering stellar service with a human touch.

He is one politician who walks the talk.

His response to a text message on Wednesday, December 10, 2008 was prompt and least expected. Wong was at the Ipoh Garden playing field in a jiffy.

Located at the edge of the field, around the corner of a slip road, is a cluster of unkempt bamboo trees which has seen better times. The withered trees, nearing the end of their lifespan, pose a danger to passers-by and residents who frequent the padang. Wong not only agreed to resolve the problem post-haste but enquired what other difficulties they

faced. He promised immediate actions by enlisting the help of the appropriate authorities.

Wong's demeanour is a welcome change indeed. Ipohites are blessed to have an elected representative who is not only responsive but proactive as well. We hope that such a shining example is emulated by other politicians, officers and staff of MBI and civil servants for the betterment of Ipoh, in particular and Perak, in general.

Yang Berhormat, we salute you. Keep up the good work and let this not be just a flash in the pan.

Patrick Goh, Ipoh.

SPORTS

More pics at ipohecho on line



NATIONAL TAEKWAN-DO CHAMPIONSHIP 2008

The International Taekwan-Do Federation Malaysia (ITFM) held its national championship in Ipoh on December 13 and 14. Organised by ITF Perak and held at the Ipoh Parade Shopping Complex, it was an exciting two days for shoppers given the opportunity to witness some powerful displays of this particular form of martial art by the participants.

In his opening speech, Organising Chairman Wan Koon Seng, thanked the state government for its support in ensuring the smoothness of the event. Assemblyman for Tebing Tinggi, Ong Boon Piow, officiated at the opening of the tournament.

ITFM President, Haji Mohd Yaacob Mohd Kassim, in his address,

advised contestants to use the tournament as a preparation for next year's world championship in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Participants from all states, with the exception of Sabah and Perlis, took part. This year's championship included an event

for veterans, the first time ever.

The winner in the Male Category was Chia Yee Leng from Perak while in the Female Category it was Tor Sock Wei from Wilayah Persekutuan. The winning state was Wilayah Persekutuan.



Jacqueline Lian from Wilayah Persekutuan

INDOOR HOCKEY



The victorious Irian hockey team

The 1st Asian Indoor Hockey Tournament for the Sultan Azlan Shah Challenge Trophy was held at the Indera Mulia Stadium from December 10 to 14.

Hockey teams from five countries namely Singapore, Iran, Uzbekistan, Thailand and Malaysia participated. Malaysia fielded two teams (Team A and Team B)

Spectators were treated to some very exciting

and hard-fought matches right from the first day. Iran, undoubtedly, was the strongest of the teams and also the crowd's favourite. They were the eventual champion beating lesser known teams in their march to victory. On the first day they thrashed Thailand 8-1 and Uzbekistan 11-1. On the second day they demolished Malaysia A 7-0.

However, when Iran met Malaysia A in the final the scoreline was at a heart-

stopping 3-2 which clearly showed that the Malaysians had learnt quickly from their earlier mistakes.

From the first whistle the Malaysians matched the Iranians stick for stick but luck was not with them. Despite two penalty corners, Malaysia went down to Iran 3-2. Both the Malaysian goals were scored by S.Kuhan.

9 A-SIDE FOOTBALL CARNIVAL

The 5th Ipoh City International Veterans 9 A-Side Football Carnival was held from December 12-14 at the Ipoh Padang. A total of 32 teams from Kelantan, Selangor, KL, Kedah, Perlis and Thailand took part.

The winner of the tournament was MP Kajang B from Selangor who beat Pilihan Pasir Mas Kelantan 4-2 on penalties. The score at the end of 30 minutes was one all.

Third placing went to MP Kajang B who downed MBI A with a 5-3 scoreline.

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IPOH FACTS AND FANCIES by HO TAK MING

LUMUT LOST OUT TO PENANG

Lumut was long considered as a suitable port for Perak but the Colonial Government wanted none of that. Penang was still the pick...

Teluk Anson (now Teluk Intan) was the seaport of early Ipoh. Although it played an important role in the early growth of the town, being the point of embarkation for many immigrants participating in the Kinta Tin Rush of the 1880's, by the beginning of the twentieth century it had outlived its usefulness.

Located on the estuary of the Perak River, its harbour was not deep enough for big ocean-going steamers, which after over 20 years of mining in the interior, was getting badly silted up. Port Weld (Kuala Sepetang), on the other hand, had performed magnificently during the Larut Wars of the early 1870's, but its harbour was not deep enough for the needs of either Larut or Kinta. Moreover, its

location was too far up north to be of much use to the tin mines of Kinta.

Thus, by the early twentieth century Perak did not have any suitable seaport of its own. When the idea of a modern port for the Federated Malay States was mooted in 1901, the Perak Chamber of Mines, under the chairmanship of F. Douglas Osborne, proposed Lumut. It had an excellent natural harbour, the best deepwater harbour east of Suez, according to an informed source. It could accommodate the entire British Navy. It was less than fifty miles from Ipoh. And if a railway line were to be built connecting it to the richest tin field in the world, it would be the perfect port, not only for Perak but the whole country!

However, vested in-

terests worked against Ipoh with the inference that, like a mushroom that had sprung up overnight, it could just as quickly wither and die as soon as tin deposits were exhausted. The country's port should be situated near the Federal capital, Kuala Lumpur. It was an expensive mistake, as the Government had to spend millions of dollars in dredging works to keep Port Swettenham from silting up.

However, Douglas Osborne was a tenacious Irishman. He kept pestering the Government to build a seaport for Ipoh, with a rail connection. Although the FMS Railways built a branch line from Ipoh to Tronoh, the line stopped dead at the famous Tronoh Mines. In 1909 Osborne, soon to be appointed the first Unofficial Member of

the Federal Council from Perak, collected more than 10,000 signatures and petitioned the High Commissioner, Sir John Anderson, requesting for the transfer of the district capital from Batu Gajah to Ipoh, and to make Lumut the port for Ipoh.

Osborne did not anticipate the vested interests of the British colonial authorities. Lumut, which was part of Dindings, belonged to the Straits Settlements, to which it was ceded in 1826 because Perak could not deal with the pirates infesting the coast and offshore islands. However, it was too far away from Penang to be effectively administered by the Penang authorities; as a result it was forsaken. By the early twentieth century, Penang was handling much

of the trade of Ipoh. Not only was the rail journey long but trains stopped, not on the island, but on the mainland at a little wharf in Prai. There the goods had to be trans-shipped to Penang, doubling the costs of transportation.

A port at Lumut would benefit Ipoh but it would be a death knell for Penang as a port. There was no way the Governor of the Straits Settlements (who was also the High Commissioner of the FMS) was going to develop a British territory (Lumut) to the detriment of another British territory (Penang) for Perak, which was not a British colony but only a protectorate. The Governor preferred to spend \$20 million to turn the mud creek of Prai into a harbour for ocean-going vessels, (which turned out to be a fiasco) rather than

spend a fraction of the sum to develop Lumut harbour.

Throughout the 1910's and 1920's the agitation for a suitable seaport for Ipoh was a cause celebre for Ipohites. Successive Unofficial Members of the Federal Council from Perak raised the question in the Council. The Ipoh newspaper, the Times of Malaya, editorialised the subject countless numbers of times. The growth of Ipoh was being hampered by high transportation costs and by delays in delivery of its tin. When was a suitable port going to be built for it? But the Government would not be moved. In the pecking order, Penang was more important than Ipoh. The colonial government was unwilling to let it be a third-rate port, which it invariably would, with the rise of Lumut.

BOOK REVIEW



“MY ADVENTURE” BY COL ROBERT RIZAL PGB

Robert Rizal's name struck fear in the hearts of communist terrorists hell-bent on creating havoc for our infantile nation. During *Operasi Jelaku 6* in Sarawak in 1973, Rizal personally killed three and, along with his men, accounted for a total of nine. Rizal was bestowed the country's second highest gallantry award, the *Pahlawan Gagah Berani* (PGB), at the tender age of 25. He was a captain then.

The 169-page autobiography details the exploits of this mild-mannered Iban from the interior of Sarawak. How he evolved from a fledgling youngster to a warrior within a period of time. And, foremost, how he motivated men of the Kilat Platoon, the forerunner of the present day combat

intelligence platoon, to achieve the unimaginable and earned for himself national accolades. Rizal served with the country's second most decorated infantry battalion - The Third Battalion Royal Ranger Regiment.

The book is about sacrifices, sweat, tears and courage beyond the call of duty. It is a story about soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice so that this wonderful country remains unmolested and free. Robert Rizal and the many unsung heroes epitomised the resolve of young Malaysians then who answered the clarion call to help free their homeland from the clutches of terrorism.

Robert Rizal's book is most timely as it comes at a time when race relations

are reaching a new low and when racial politics have taken centre stage. It takes us back to a time when race and beliefs were inconsequential. Back to an era when Malaysians of varied backgrounds made a unified stand in fighting a common enemy. And to a time when warriors like Robert Rizal thrived.

The book makes good reading for those who pine for a local hero and as reference for students of military history.

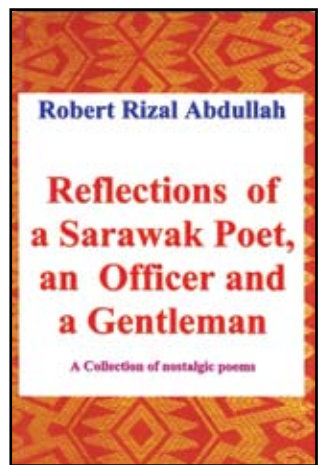
Rizal's second book, "Reflection of a Sarawak Poet, an Officer and a Gentleman" is a collection of poems detailing the writer's coming of age from a student to being an officer in the Malaysian Army.

"My Adventure" and "Reflection of Sarawak

Poet" are available in soft cover and sold at leading bookstores and newsagents in Ipoh and Taiping. They are priced at RM45 and RM35 respectively. You can also purchase the books at Ipoh Echo's office and at Perak Academy.

For inquiries call Ong at 05-2495936.

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PERSPECTIVE

A SHOCKING STATISTIC

Combating crime and improving public confidence is numero uno. There'll be no success without commitment



Ipoh is not immune to violent crime but the worrying thing is that such crime is on the increase. There have been armed robberies, car ramming, arson, fights that ended with one or more people being slashed, attacks with golf clubs, fatal stabbings of employees in isolated businesses such as petrol stations and others too numerous to mention.

The cost of business crime affects several - the employee, employer, customer, community. While the effects on the employee and employer are obvious, the customer may not be

aware that ultimately, the cost will be passed on to them. For the community, the frequency of crimes in their area is an indication of how safe or otherwise, their neighbourhood is.

The budget allocation for the police has recently been increased. Hopefully, this money will be spent wisely and effectively in combating crime and improving public confidence in the police. The police presence in many areas of our city is poor. Sometimes, all that is necessary in combating youth crime or crimes involving anti-social behaviour, for example, is a highly visible

police presence. A simple solution is more policemen on the beat or police manning a *pondok polis*.

FIGHTING CRIME

We see police cars occasionally on the streets, but their presence is few and far between. And when policemen in their cars do not use their seatbelts, flout simple traffic rules and abuse the law, our confidence in them quickly evaporates. Public perception of the quality of service provided by the police - speed of response to their calls, paperwork for a police report, attitude and

behavior of police personnel - are also important.

It is convenient for society to blame immigrant communities or our errant youth for the increase in crime. That is wrong.

Fighting crime is not merely the appearance of a policeman on our streets in a patrol car. Crime can only be tackled effectively when the public, the police and the criminal justice agencies work together and create a form of local partnership.

Factors for discussion should include neighbourhood policing, a stronger public voice, support for the victims, assistance for witnesses, visits to schools to explain the work of a policeman, community youth projects, a dedicated police support officer to advise businesses and households on simple ways to combat and prevent crime.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CCTV

Less dependence should be placed on Closed Circuit Television. Whenever these are installed, many tend to rely heavily on

them. A false sense of security sets in - that they can reduce crime.

CCTVs do not reduce crime. They only deter. Even if we ignore the argument of the minority that they are a violation of civil liberty and privacy, much can go wrong with these CCTVs. The control rooms may not be fully manned. Moreover, CCTVs cannot capture clear images, especially at night from the glare of artificial lighting. They have blind spots too.

Studies from Europe showed that CCTV failed as a crime-fighting weapon. Its only success was to reduce vehicle crime in car parks.

The best weapon is for the police to interact with members of the public. Various aspects of crime such as gang crime, drug and alcohol related crime, domestic violence, gun crime, youth crime, business and retail crime, all have different solutions. In addition, an effective crime strategy, should include ways of tackling repeat offenders.

Not everyone has the luxury of living in a gated

community, with security guards. This is very American, very snobby and much beloved by the *nouveaux riche*.

But what is most important is that the money set aside for improvement and enhancement of our *Polis Di Raja Malaysia* should be spent on recruiting more 'real' police personnel, not just on hardware or software.

MARIAM MOKHTAR

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If you have anything newsworthy please contact James at: 016-5208075

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