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ISSUE **119**

- The Continuing Saga of the Unlucky 13

PG 3



- The Decline of the Traditional Malay Kampong House

PG 4



- Gender Equality

PG 10



- Hidden Danger Lurks in Scenic Beauty

PG 12



What is Happening to IPOH AIRPORT?

By James Gough



Much has been said and written about the Ipoh Airport or the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport. Hence when it was reported earlier this year that Sunway Construction Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Sunway Holdings Bhd, was awarded the tender to upgrade the airport, it was greeted with much expectation. Finally, a positive outcome seems imminent. The value of the contract was reported to be worth RM37.36 million.

Continued on page 2

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Perakeans To Look Forward to September 2012

The current Sultan Azlan Shah Airport or Lapangan Terbang Sultan Azlan Shah (LTSAS) was developed from a small Fokker airfield to accommodate medium-range jetliners such as Boeing 737s and an instrument landing system was installed in the late 80s when Sultan Azlan Shah was the then Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia.

Many would remember that the airport was readied in time for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II who paid a courtesy visit to the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar in 1989 the same year that HRH Sultan Azlan Shah was crowned the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. The current 'short cut' road linking Jalan Lapangan Terbang to Jalan President Kennedy was also opened at the same time, just for the visit.

Although the federal government had provided an allocation of RM60 million for its upgrade last year, there was still talk of relocating the airport to the Dindings district as well as construction of a new airport up north within the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

A check with Dato' Samsudin Hashim, the Chief Executive of Perak State Development Corporation – the state authority overseeing the project, provided an insight of what Perakeans can expect come September 2012, the date for completion of the project.

According to Samsudin, most of the work is being handled by the Ministry of Transport (MOT) and he thanked the federal government for accommodating the requests of the state government. The work is not confined to extending the runway by 200 metres but covers the whole airport.

Operations' Background

Samsudin provided a background of the airport's operations, saying that in its heyday when MAS was operating from Subang, over 500,000 passengers passed through its doors and it also had a healthy cargo operation.

Subsequently, when the North-South Expressway was opened in 2005, domestic travel between Ipoh to Penang and Kuala Lumpur became more practical by car.

The abrupt stop of services by MAS followed by a similar termination by Air Asia in 2006 turned the airport into a white elephant. Air Asia's reason for stopping their Ipoh-Senai (Johor) route was due to their switch of aircraft from Boeing B737-200 to Airbus A320, with the explanation after the switch, that Ipoh Airport's "current runway was just too short to accommodate the new aircraft".

Air service has become more competitive since the introduction of double tracking and electric trains which run right to the centre of Kuala Lumpur. Due to



the accessibility of these services, Ipoh Airport has to reconsider its strategy. It now embarks on becoming a truly regional airport.

Scope of Work

According to Hj Mohd Rosli, MOT's Undersecretary (Development Division) the upgrading plan includes extending the runway by 200 metres, improving the airport's terminal and apron, extension of the building and upgrading the existing customs and immigration facilities. Aircraft refuelling facilities available now will also be upgraded. "The completed airport will have its current passenger and visitor capacity increased by more than 10%," added Rosli. Cargo handling and aircraft maintenance services have also been included into the upgrading plan, clarified PSDC Samsudin when asked.

twice daily to Singapore. "PSDC will be approaching other Flight Operators and hopefully other budget airlines will offer their services".

Other Commercial Services

Providing cargo services is important and all sectors whether trading or manufacturing will be positive beneficiaries, acknowledging that the aquaculture and agriculture industry players have been requesting for this service earlier.

Another service that the state is promoting is aircraft maintenance services especially for helicopters and small aircraft which it views as having "good potential".



Dato' Samsudin Hashim



Eighteen Months Too Long

When enquired if the 18 month duration for the completion of the airport was too long, Rosli from MOT replied that, "Ipoh Airport is a running airport. You have commercial flights daily and a lot of activity is contributed by the flying school...18 months is normal."

Tourism

Regarding the tourism industry Samsudin advised the stake holders to take note of the date September 2012 as an "opportunity to expand their business value. There should not be a delay targeting September 2012."

Airport a Catalyst

Samsudin added that, "Logistics support is a key component for industrial development. The state's objective is to position Ipoh as a regional airport and be economically viable by linking it with other international service airports within a radius of 2.5 hours."

"Industrial development cannot depend on the domestic market any longer and has to go regional. Whilst in the process of promoting the State's industrial development we will also be promoting the airport's services".

Ipoh's position within the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) is strategic and this has been indicated to the IMTGT member countries. "This is a way forward for the airport and we will be promoting it to other ASEAN countries" giving the example of Singapore who "has been a significant contributor to the State's industrial development."

According to Samsudin the most important factor in this upgrade is the Flight Operator. Currently only Firefly is using the airport



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IPOH **echo**

From the Editor's Desk

● by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

The Continuing Saga of the Unlucky 13

The prosecution's arguments did not hold. The defence shot them down at the outset. The inconsistencies and inaccuracies were simply too glaring...

Thirteen PAS supporters who were tried for unlawful assembly received their court ruling on Friday, April 22, with mixed feelings.

The 13, including a woman, were collectively charged under Section 145 of the Penal Code for participating in an illegal assembly and an alternative charge of disobeying police orders to disperse under Section 27(4) of the Police Act 1967.

The judgment by Sessions Court Judge Puan Norsalha Dato' Hamzah was read to the accused by Judge Amran Jantan, in her absence. They were ordered to enter their defence for being participants of an unlawful assembly under Section 145 of the Penal Code. However, all 13 were acquitted of the more serious charge under Section 27 (4) of the Police Act 1967, as the prosecution failed to prove a *prima facie* case against them.

The case, which had dragged for almost two years, witnessed some very emotional moments involving the protagonists, their defence team and the Police. Moments which epitomised the simmering conflict between the *rakyat* and the authorities.

It all started on Friday, February 6, 2009 during the swearing-in of Dato' Seri Zambray Abdul Kadir as the new Menteri Besar replacing Dato' Seri Ir Nizar Jamaluddin. The ceremony was held at Istana Iskandariah in Kuala Kangsar. Emotions were riding high following the ousting of Pakatan Rakyat from the seat of the government.

Being a Friday, the Ubadiyah Mosque, next to the *istana*, was filled with the faithful who had gathered to perform their obligatory Friday prayers. The convergence of these two events was coincidental. The resulting ruckus prompted the Police to "overreact". Thirteen people were arrested and duly charged.

It was definitely not lawyer Augustine Anthony's day. On the morning of that day he was informed that the oath-taking ceremony for Ipoh City Council councillors, which he was to be one, had been called off. He was running a high fever and had just completed a battery of tests at a government clinic to ascertain his illness.

Later in the afternoon a call came through his cell phone informing him that scores of people were arrested in Kuala Kangsar. The caller sought his assistance to negotiate their release from the Kuala Kangsar police station. As he was in no position to make the journey on his own, Augustine was driven to Kuala Kangsar, post haste.

"There was complete chaos. Police roadblocks were everywhere. FRU trucks were going up and down and there I was, parked right in front of the police station," he rapped.

Augustine feared that those arrested would be beaten up. However, all 13 were released on bail without any harm. That was the beginning of their two-year ordeal.

The case was mentioned at the Kuala Kangsar Sessions Court in March 2009 and the first hearing was in April. It went on till late 2010 when both prosecution and defence were finally told to make their submissions. "I'd prefer an oral submission but this was not possible as the presiding judge, Puan Norsalha, was transferred to Sungai Petani," Augustine recalled.

Thirty nine prosecution witnesses, mostly police officers, gave evidence. An assort-



ment of items such as rocks, stones, broken glasses, sticks and broken helmets, complemented by hundreds of still photographs and five video clips, were produced by the prosecution to prove that the accused not only assembled unlawfully but rioted as well.

The prosecution's arguments did not hold. The defence shot them down at the outset. The inconsistencies and inaccuracies were simply too glaring. Augustine had a field day exposing them during cross-examinations. This was why the charge under Section 27 (4) was thrown out.

The defence team consisting of Hj Aminuddin Zulkifli, Yusnita Yusoff, Mohd Zamberi and Bah Tony offered their services *pro bono* pursuant to Section 42 of the Legal Profession Act 1976. "Under such circumstances money is no longer a criterion," Augustine remarked.

Their commitment, however, was rewarded by their clients' kindness, which was totally unexpected.

"They prayed for our well-being. One of the wives even prepared *sambal ikan bilis* when we mentioned it casually during lunchtime." Seeing their lead counsel dozing off in between breaks during one appearance, they bought him a box of ginseng-laced coffee mixture to keep him awake. "I was humbled."

In spite of it being seen as a Malay problem, the reaction of other races was equally heart-rending. "I had dinner in a Chinese restaurant once and was pleasantly surprised when told that my bill was settled by a stranger who had read about me in a Chinese daily," Augustine recalled.

The end is not yet over for the thirteen. Their case will be heard at the same Kuala Kangsar court on Monday, May 30. All had chosen to fight. "We'll be there for them," said the Ipoh-based lawyer.

The continuing saga of the unlucky thirteen will keep Augustine and his team busy for the rest of the year. Circumstances have brought people of diverse backgrounds together for a common aim – the quest for justice in a civil society.

Vote for Change

● by Peter Lee

I went to a hospital one early morning to take my medical test. While I was waiting for my turn, I heard a woman crying in one of the doctor's rooms. Shortly after, a few people arrived and the woman dashed out from the room crying and informed those people that her husband had died. She then took them to another room and from outside I could see her deceased husband clad with T-shirt and shorts lying on the bed. Everyone present looked shocked and lost for words because at that point in time no words could comfort her. Then I overheard the woman saying that her husband apparently suffered a heart attack while returning home with her after their morning exercise. He died on the way to the hospital. If we imagine ourselves in her position at that moment, it is unlikely that we would be able to think straight and say we have planned well for our family. This is one of the incidents which I am sure all of us pray will not happen to our family members. But praying alone is not sufficient as we are not immortal.



The funny thing is people never learn to plan even if they could rewind their lives. Take for instance, a man phoned me one morning and asked whether I could come to the hospital where his father was admitted and wanted a will to be prepared urgently. I asked whether he was conscious and knows what he wants. The reply was "Yes". So I went to the hospital and by the time I arrived an hour after the call, his father had just lapsed into a coma. The son then told me his father had recovered from a stroke and heart attack sometime ago and had been talking about doing a will but never did because he had fully recovered. Unfortunately, he just suffered another severe stroke and heart attack which left him paralysed. I told the son, with his condition now, I could not prepare his will.

Vote for change is a common phrase nowadays but have we thought of applying it to our family before applying it somewhere else. For example, with the two real life stories as a lesson, have we asked ourselves whether we have voted in our lifetime for our family first with a written "will and trust" so that we can change the destiny of their future, from uncertainty to certainty, when we pass away? If the answer is 'no', then it's time to take action now. It is puzzling to observe people saying they are too busy to do their will but can drop everything and spend the whole day standing in the long queue at the Tax department on the last day of filing their tax returns. You don't need to stand in a long queue when you prepare your will. All you need to do is appoint at least two Executors/Trustee or a corporate Executor/Trustee like Rockwills Trustee Bhd. Then appoint a guardian if your children are still minors. Subsequently, distribute your wealth according to your wishes and if minor children are involved then include a "Testamentary Trust" in the will so that the Executors/Trustee can have a clear idea how the estate money is going to be disbursed to the minor children. If you have a problem drafting it, just call the Estate Planner for help.

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 excelssec@streamyx.com. Website: <http://www.wills-trust.com.my>.



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Thinking ALLOWED • by Mariam Mokhtar**The Decline of the Traditional MALAY KAMPONG HOUSE**

This photo of the “transformed” kampong house (traditional Malay dwelling) reminded me of the entrance to Room 101. Room 101 is a place in George Orwell’s novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Room 101 is a torture chamber in the Ministry of Love in which the Party attempts to subject a prisoner to his or her own worst nightmare, fear or phobia.

I don’t think anyone who has seen the before and after pictures of the kampong house (above) is prepared for the shock. The first photo shows a pretty little Malay kampong house in an idyllic, albeit litter-strewn setting.

Like most traditional Malay homes, the timber house raised on stilts, is at one with the environment. The long driveway, the fruit trees in the garden, the ornate woodwork and shutters help give the Malay house an identity of its own. In the olden days, the roof would have been made of *attap*, which was soon replaced, by corrugated iron or zinc sheets.

The person who took the photos is angered by what has happened to the house. She claims that it is one of her favourite kampong houses just outside of Terong, Perak, on the way to Lumut. She has taken photos of the house over the years and “was totally shattered to find it had been turned into a swiftlet house with speakers blasting like crazy”.

Several Issues are at Stake

First. The Malays are losing their heritage if they permit vandalism of their traditional homes. What is being done to address this?

Second. Swiftlet farms are profitable commercial enterprises. Why are these businesses allowed to flourish in residential areas?

Third. Penang has seen an explosion of swiftlet farms. Is Perak going to suffer the same fate? Are these businesses regulated by the authorities?

Fourth. Anyone who owns a home beside these swiftlet farms suffer intolerable noise (from the tape recordings of birds), odour and other health concerns from the bird droppings. Is the Department of the Environment monitoring noise, amongst other things?

Fifth. What has the government done to preserve traditional Malay homes or is it only interested in promoting bricks and mortar, in the name of progress and development? Successive governments have ignored the socio-economic, cultural and environmental patterns of house owners. They have also ignored the psychological effects of overcrowding in cramped ‘modern’ town residences.

Sixth. Those living close to these swiftlet farms find that swiftlets encroach upon their homes.

The traditional Malay house was evolved by the Malays over generations and they adapted it to their needs, culture and environment. The house also reflects and expresses their way of life.

If kampong houses are now being converted to swiftlet hotels, then this is a serious threat against the continued existence of the traditional Malay house.

Many Malays have now abandoned their traditional dwellings and relocated to the cities in search of work. Have unscrupulous swiftlet farm operators moved into these abandoned dwellings without the permission of the original home owner?

In many cases, the inheritance laws of the Malays/Muslims mean that no one person inherits the house. Homes that are not lived in easily fall into disrepair. Homes with several owners, suffer as no one person feels obliged to maintain the home.

Perhaps, this is where the swiftlet farm operator takes advantage of the situation and pays a small fee for use of the premises. It is cheaper to modify a traditional home to house swiftlets, than to build a swiftlet hotel from scratch. The operator pays a small rental to the various home owners for the use of the home, but he gets to keep the massive profits enjoyed by selling the birds’ nests.

Elsewhere, swiftlet operators are upsetting many people. Residents in the centre of Georgetown in Penang, complain that commercial premises are being converted to swiftlet farms. In Kuala Lumpur, the residents in an up-market area of Damansara, are angry about the noise of the birds as well as the tape recordings of the birds, from nearby swiftlets farms.

Here in Perak, many of our buildings of great heritage and architectural value have been destroyed.

Now that swiftlet farming seems to be a craze and a money-spinner, the traditional Malay house is now at risk and is undergoing a retrogressive use. This vulgarisation may cause the traditional Malay house to become extinct in the near future.

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Musings on Food

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By See Foon Chan-Koppen

SeeFoon blisses out on Char Kway Teow and Kai See Hor Fun

Ever since I've lived in Ipoh, I have always been on the lookout for the definitive 'Char Kway Teow'; that ubiquitous fried rice-noodle dish that is found in many a coffee shop. Nostalgia always overwhelms me as I watch: the fire blazing away, the welcoming sound of the spatula resonating against the wok, as the cook throws in a smidgen of chopped garlic, followed by a handful of the broad rice noodles, soya sauce, adding bean sprouts here, some prawns there, the de rigueur cockles, and the final touch of an egg topping. I am salivating already and hoping with each encounter.... Is this the definitive *Char Kway Teow* of my childhood growing up in Singapore? I have spent the rest of my adult life seeking out this one dish, only to be disappointed time and again; although in latter years I have found satisfaction in Penang.

Quintessential Char Kway Teow

But no longer do my gustatory yearnings go unsatisfied in Ipoh. I have found the quintessential *Char Kway Teow* stall that satisfies me on all counts, from the generosity of the bean sprouts and *koo chai* or green chives, to the addition of sliced Chinese preserved sausage (*Lap Cheong*), and *cholesterol-be-gone* pork lardons which add its inimitable crunch to the whole dish. A bonus is the willingness of the cook who will add the right amount (as per your request) of chilli to fry with the noodles (other stall cooks may nod their head, then fry bland noodles and put a dollop of watery chilli sauce on the side) fry till dry, which is just the way I like it and top off with more lardons when requested. For me pure bliss!

This stall, run by two sisters in the **Jen Jen** coffee shop behind the Tow Boo Keong temple is open only for breakfast and finishes by around 1.30 p.m. or until supplies run out. All the other stalls do the same with some running out sooner than others. Big – RM4.30 Small – RM3.80.



A Breed Apart

Another wildly popular stall in the same place is the *Ipoh Kai See Hor Fun* stall. Here the family-run stall of father, mother and son do a brisk business in this famous dish that tourists come by the busloads to savour. However, not only is his chicken/prawn soup one of the most 'umami' and with minimum MSG, but his chicken is absolutely melt-in-mouth tender. What sets this stall apart is the two additional dishes he sells to go with the bowl of noodles; Big – RM4; Small – RM3.50. Extra chicken RM5 per plate deboned. Extra bean sprouts RM3 per plate.

Additional Specialties

Lau, the man behind the Lim Kee stall, is a purist and on good days when he finds absolutely fresh large prawns, he'll purchase them for sale at his stall. Simply blanched in his incredibly scrumptious soup, it is served with just a dollop of prawn/chilli oil and you peel them yourselves – seasonal price.

Another dish which Lau sells that is wildly popular is the *jellyfish*, blanched and served in exactly the same way as the prawns. His jellyfish is cut in large chunks and dipped in just long enough to puff up and remain springy and crunchy in mouth feel. This is a must-have for those who like jellyfish. RM5 – enough for at least two persons. Go before noon to ensure he's still got all the ingredients.

Other Stalls

Other stalls in this large corner coffee shop include a morning only 'Kueh' stall that has the most delectable vegetarian *Woo Tau Ko* or Taro cake, a *Wonton Noodle* stall whose wonton is passable but the noodles are wonderfully "al dente" especially when ordering the 'dry' variety, a *Prawn Noodle* stall that also sells out by 1.00 p.m. but I found to be quite run of the mill and a *clay-pot noodle* stall on which I cannot comment as I have not tasted their offerings.

While there, other than the usual soft drinks, try their *Sum So Koek Fah Ginseng* 'whiskers' with chrysanthemum tea, served either hot or cold. They have it both with and without sugar which is a bonus for non sugar lovers like me.

Jen Jen is certainly one of my favourite breakfast or brunch spots since I was introduced to it through the courtesy of my friend Datin Marjie Foong. Today if I had a choice between the popular Kong Heng in old town and **Jen Jen** to take my out-of-town visitors, the latter is my first preference.

Restoran Jen Jen

22 Jalan Chew Sin Oon, Off Jalan Tokong.

HAWKER FOOD

Nasi Kandar

Nasi Kandar is a popular Malaysian dish, said to originate from Penang. It is a meal of steamed rice which can be plain or mildly flavoured, and served with a variety of curries and side dishes.

It can be equated to the Chinese version of 'Economy Rice', where one gets to choose from a selection of dishes; the difference being that the dishes offered in a Nasi Kandar outlet are mostly curries.

The word 'Nasi Kandar' came about from a time when *nasi* [rice] vendors would *kandar* [balance] a pole on the shoulder with two huge containers of rice meals. The name has remained and today the word Nasi Kandar is seen on most Tamil Muslim or "Malaysian Mamak" restaurants and stalls.

The rice for a *nasi kandar* dish is typically accompanied by side dishes such as fried chicken, curried mutton or beef, fried fish, prawns or squid. The vegetable dish would usually be *brinjal* (aubergine), okra (lady fingers or "bendi") or bitter gourd. A mixture of curry sauces is then poured on the rice. This is also called 'banjir' (flooding) and imparts a diverse taste to the rice.

Places to try:

Nasi Kandar Ayam Merah

Yong Suan Restoran, 2, Jalan Yang Kalsom, 30250 Ipoh.

Business Hours: 10.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. daily

RM4.20 for rice with a piece of fried chicken, one lady's finger, some cucumber, *sambal* & gravy.

Gerai Makanan Dan Minuman Rahamath

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Nasi Kandar Pelita

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Nasi Kandar A.K.

No. 6 Jalan Labrooy, 30100 Ipoh

Business Hours: 7.00 a.m. – 11.00 p.m. daily

RM4.90 for rice with a piece of fried chicken, vegetables & gravy.



RECIPE

By Margarita Lee

Mapo Doufu



Ingredients:

1 block soft tofu
100g ground beef
4 tbsp corn starch mix with 5 tbsp of water
1 tbsp spring onion (for garnishing)

(A)

1 tbsp soya bean paste
1 tbsp minced ginger
½ tbsp minced garlic
½ tbsp minced chillies
2 tsp ground Szechuan pepper
½ tbsp fermented black bean
½ tbsp chilli powder (optional)
1 tbsp chopped spring onion (white part)

(B)

1 cup chicken stock / water
Salt and pepper to taste
Oil for cooking

Marinade:

2 tsp soya sauce
1 tsp corn starch
½ tbsp egg white
1 tsp sugar

Method:

1. In a bowl, marinate the ground beef with soy sauce, corn starch, egg white and sugar for 30 minutes.
2. Drain and cut tofu into ½-inch cubes.
3. Heat oil in a wok, stir-fry ground beef in high

heat until it changes colour. Dish out for later use.

4. Heat 3 tbsp oil in a wok, add in (A) and stir well on high heat for 2 minutes.
5. Add in tofu and ingredients (B), bring to boil.
6. Add in ground beef, simmer on low heat. Do not stir the tofu, but gently shake the pan.
7. Add in corn starch bit by bit until gravy thickens.
8. Season with pepper and salt.
9. Garnish with spring onion.

community

Health Programme

"Nestle Walking Day" a joint-health programme organised by Nestle Products and Ipoh City Council was held at Polo Ground on Saturday, April 23. The event attracted well over 300 participants of all ages and sex. The participants were required to walk around the park along the walking track. The hour-long programme was flagged off by Dato' Rahim Md Ariff, Ipoh City Council Secretary. Present at the launch was Nestle Products' Customers' Service Manager, Haji Mohd Hanif Haron. Since public response was encouraging, Hanif hoped the walk will become a feature in the city's calendar of events.

Ed



Micro-Financing



Twenty small-time entrepreneurs were given micro-credit by Yayasan Bina Upaya (YBU) to finance their respective ventures. The handing-over ceremony was held at the foundation's multi-purpose hall in Greentown, Ipoh recently. Dato' Saari Mohammad, Chairman of Yayasan Bina Upaya, gave away cheques, ranging in amount from RM3,000 to RM20,000, to the successful applicants. "The money is to help the poor and the marginalised realise their dreams of becoming self-sufficient. The applicants' willingness to improve themselves is an important consideration in the selection process," said Saari to Ipoh Echo.

The recipients were from the districts of Kinta District, Perak Tengah and Larut, Matang and Selama. The nature of their businesses include poultry farming, frozen food, motor repairs and school bus service. Since the programme's introduction last year, some 251 small-time business people have benefitted from the scheme.

Khairul Azwan, CEO of YBU, reminded the recipients to make good their pledge to perform.

RM

Essay Competition

An essay-writing competition, in conjunction with DYMM Sultan Perak's 83rd birthday celebration, is in progress. The competition is jointly organised by Wanita Umno Perak and the Perak State Education Department. Its objective is to encourage Perakeans, especially the young, to appreciate the role of royalty in a constitutional monarchy like Malaysia, said Datin Normah Hanum, Wanita Umno Perak Chief to reporters. The competition is being divided into four categories based on age. Category A is for primary school students. Category B those in lower secondary. Category C upper secondary students and Category D for college students and others. The subjects and length of essay differ with each category. Only Category D is still available for consideration, as the competition period is from April 19 to May 19. For details call Rohani Idris at 012-5273443 or Datin Normah at 012-5111888 or visit Umno Perak's website: www.umnoperak.my.

RM



Zambry Engages Online Friends

Realising the influence of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, has on youths today, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir decided to engage his adoring fans over teh tarik recently. The venue of his 'cuppa' session was none other than Vanggeh Restaurant in



Greentown, an eatery most familiar with Mamak-food

lovers in Ipoh.

Twenty-five of the MB's Facebook and Twitter online friends were present along with representatives from the local media. Questions ranging from social re-engineering, education, economics, tourism, job opportunities, etc., were posed by the youthful audience.

Zambry took time to



explain to them in detail emphasising on the need to attract investors, both foreign and local. "More investments mean more jobs

for Perakeans," he said.

Alvin Monteriro of Taman Cempaka was overjoyed at being invited to the meeting. "I hope the

MB will have more of this in the future," he told Ipoh Echo. "This is a good way to reach out to the Internet-savvy youths of Perak."

RM

young perak

Rocket Science Workshop

What the mind believes, the body can achieve. That was what participants of the recently held Rocket Science Workshop were inspired to believe in. In conjunction with the Science and Mathematics Month, SMK Raja Perempuan welcomed Dato' Dr. Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor Al-Masrie, Malaysia's only astronaut, to give a motivational talk to students of the school. Principal Cik Rusnani Sharuddins said that the event was aimed at increasing students' intrinsic motivation and to inculcate interest in rocket science and aerospace engineering.

The students listened attentively to Dr. Sheikh who recounted his 11-day stint in space. "This experience has changed my perception of life," he said, "I now look at the big picture and issues such as pollution, abuse, and poverty." He hopes to be able to work among children in Africa.

Both students of Raja Perempuan and others participated actively in the question and answer session. Dr. Sheikh noted that it was a joy to see the students being inquisitive and certain of their career ambitions.

Despite his tight schedule, Dr. Sheikh spent 2 days in Ipoh. He advised the students to aim for the sky and to be proficient in English. Eric Joseph Pereira, 16, of SMK Teknik Brash was so inspired by the speaker that he is seriously considering mechanical engineering as his subject of choice. "I'll take the challenge. Who knows? I might be the second astronaut," he told Ipoh Echo.

In an effort to make science a niche area for the school, Cik Rusnani hopes that such a workshop will be an annual affair.

LYW



Interacting for a Reason



Members of the student Interact Clubs of Ipoh gathered at St Michael's Institution (SMI) recently for the International Understanding Day. Aimed at fostering better relationships between members, the event was themed "The American Dream" because youths can identify with one another through American music, films and ways of life. It was a day of fun and fellowship, as the members were entertained by performances. RJ and The Band impressed the crowd with their musical numbers, while Sean Lim did his Michael Jackson jigs. SMI's two-time state champion military band performed several popular American hits. They also promoted their upcoming concert on April 23. President Beh Ee Jian said, "The American Dream is the national ethos of America where freedom promises the possibility of prosperity and success. We want to inspire them to achieve that." The highlight of the day was a live performance by local indie rapper, Caprice.

LYW

Wellness

Age Well – Stay Vibrant

By Dr. Manuel K. Punnia Raj



Getting older brings with it a variety of new physical, emotional and mental challenges. However, the aging process doesn't have to leave you feeling overwhelmed. The wealth of information and resources available today make it possible for people to manage many aspects of the aging process. As we age, our body changes in many ways that affect the function of both individual cells and organ systems. These changes occur little by little and progress inevitably over time.

Geriatrics is the branch of medicine that focuses on health care of elderly people. It aims to promote health by preventing and treating diseases and disabilities in older adults. The aged body is different physiologically from the younger adult body. The presentation of disease in elderly persons may be vague and non-specific.

Geriatric ailments which threaten older adults include immobility, instability, incontinence and impaired intellect/memory. Impaired vision and hearing loss are common chronic problems among older people. As we age, we face many physical and emotional changes that can affect our level of function and well-being. Remember every one of us will be geriatric individuals one day.

Rehabilitation maintains functional independence in the elderly. Rehabilitation of geriatric patients is imperative for the patients' well-being and for society. Essential to geriatric rehabilitation is communication, specifically improving any sensory impairment including those related to vision and hearing. The prevention of falls and osteoporosis can improve the patient's health and longevity.

Joint problems are extremely common and are the number one cause of reduced activity as we get older. Joint problems are more difficult to identify and treat in older adults compared with younger people. The x-rays and blood tests used to diagnose joint problems often show changes that could be due to normal wear and tear in the joint. This means that sometimes changes seen on x-rays are not causing the current symptoms. In addition, older adults may have more than one condition in which the joints are affected, such as osteoarthritis and tendonitis. Older adults may also have medical or surgical complications that make treatment more difficult. However, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and receiving proper medical care can greatly reduce the disability that joint problems often cause in older adults.

Lower your risk of falling:

- * Help keep your bones strong by taking calcium and vitamin-D every day. Older adults absorb calcium citrate better than calcium carbonate. Ask your healthcare provider how much calcium and vitamin-D you should take.
- * If you don't exercise regularly, start. Just be sure to talk with your healthcare provider first, which will help you come up with an exercise plan that's right for you. Walking is an ideal aerobic ("heart healthy") exercise; gradually increase the amount of time you spend walking, aiming for at least 20-30 minutes a day. In addition to walking, do free and assisted exercises like aerobics, cycling, etc. which help strengthen your muscles and protect your bones.
- * If you've already had a fall, be sure to ask your healthcare provider about exercise programs in your community that include not only strength training and balance exercises but also flexibility and stretching exercises. These can also help lower your risk of falls.

For more Information on Physical Health Contact your right health partner: PHYSIO BEYOND – The Physical Rehabilitation Specialist at **05-5478786**.

news roundup

Fundraising Odissi Dance



Buntong Community Rehabilitation Centre organised a charity dance, Odissi Stirred by Ramli Ibrahim and Sutra Dance Theatre at the State Banquet Hall to raise funds for their building project. The group performed three dances.

Chairman of the Centre, S. Jayagopi said that the centre has been in operation since 1999 from a place provided by the Tamil Methodist Church, Buntong. It currently provides free rehabilitation service for more than 600 people with disabilities regardless of race or religion. The aim is to bring disabled people into the mainstream to live in dignity and confidence. A building of their own is required to provide better services and facilities. The centre is open from Monday to Friday from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Those who wish to donate for a good cause can call Saras at **05-2415779**.

AJ

Dry Eyes

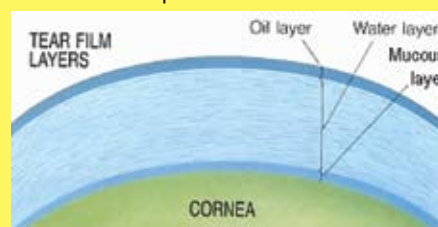
In our continuing series on Eye Health, Consultant Ophthalmologist Dr. S.S. Gill talks to us about dry eyes.

Dry eyes is a condition due to the reduction in the quantity or altered quality of the tears. Tears are necessary for the lubrication of our eyes and to wash away particles which can cause infection. You can imagine the eyes to be like "a fish without water" when they lack tears!

If you have dry eyes, you may feel a burning, stinging sensation. You may also experience tired eyes after reading, even for short periods of time. If you wear contact lenses, they may feel uncomfortable or scratchy to the eyes. It is estimated that up to 15% of adults suffer from Dry Eye Syndrome and that this figure continues to rise.

What Causes Dry Eye?

Dry Eye Syndrome is most common in adults aged 40 and older. As you age, your eye's tear glands produce less of this fluid, making your tear film break. This causes most dry eye sufferers to feel painful eye irritation and experience vision loss.



Causes of Dry Eye include:

- * Aging or menopause.
- * Constant exposure to air-conditioners, wind and sun.
- * Smoking or second-hand smoke exposure.
- * Previous eye surgery such as Lasik.
- * Eye injury, facial paralysis, poor lid closure.
- * Certain medications like antihistamines.

Why are Tears Important?

- * Tears have 3 basic functions. Firstly, they bathe and protect our eyes. Secondly, they also contain proteins and nutrients which provide nourishment to the eye. Thirdly, tears help refract light to keep vision nice and sharp.
- * Tears are not just simple watery fluid but are actually comprised of 3 layers – the FATTY (lipid) layer, WATERY (aqueous) layer, and the MUCIN layer.
- * The outer FATTY layer works by keeping our tears from evaporating or drying-up too soon. This layer is produced by our eyelid glands, so if you have unhealthy eyelids, a defective fatty layer would result. In this condition, tears could dry up very fast.
- * The middle AQUEOUS layer is the main WATERY part of your tears, while the inner MUCIN layer is the "glue" layer needed to keep the whole tear film well spread on the eye surface.
- * A defect in any one of these 3 layers of the tear film will cause inadequate or poor quality tears.

If you have Dry Eyes, you may try the following:

- * Use preservative-free artificial tears, available as either drops or ointment.
- * Don't smoke. Avoid second-hand smoke, direct wind, and air conditioning.
- * Use a humidifier, especially if you are constantly in an air-conditioned room.
- * Purposefully blink more often and rest your eyes when you feel strained.

Severe dry eyes may result in eye redness and pain. Some may even experience flaking, discharge, or a lesion on the eye. If after trying the above self-care steps and your dry eyes do not improve within a few days, see your eye-care practitioner.

For more information on Eye Health, contact Gill Eye Specialist Centre at **05-5455582**, email: gilleycentre@dr.com or visit www.fatimah.com.my.

A Cadet Corps in Every School



The Education Ministry plans to establish a police cadet corps in every school in the country. This was told to Ipoh Echo by the Police Cadet Coordinator of SM (V) Seri Manjung, ASP Zainal Hisham Zainal Abidin. Zainal said this after a parade to commemorate the 41st Anniversary of the Police Cadet Corps. The combined parade, consisting of 872 police cadets from various schools in Perak, was held at the police transport department parade ground in Ipoh. Perak Deputy Police Chief, SAC 1 Dato' Zakaria Yusof took the salute.

The benefits of joining the corps are enormous, said Zainal. "It helps improve one's discipline and turnout. They can also act as eyes and ears for the Police," he added.

Students who are keen on serving in the corps after leaving school can do so when they enrol in colleges or universities. The Kor Sukarelawan Polis Siswa Siswi (Suksis) in public colleges and universities is the medium for them. "Response from students at these institutions of higher learning has been encouraging," said Zainal.

RM

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news roundup

Sultan's Birthday Chess Tournament



A large number of students took part in the chess tournament organised by Sri Murugan Centre (SMC) in conjunction with the birthday of the Sultan of Perak recently. It was held at the centre in Gurdwara Road and opened to students in four categories: girls and boys below 12 years and below 15 years.

Perak Co-ordinator of SMC, K. Nachemuthu, said that this was the first time the centre had organised a chess tournament and the aim was to encourage Indian students to take part in chess competitions held by other organisations. Winners were awarded trophies. **AJ**

No flowers for MUM in 2011 for Mother's Day instead give your MUMMY a unique & memorable gift idea with elegant and genuine Handmade Swarovski Crystal Watch Bracelet. Take a look at the photo collections at Eversachi Designers on Facebook for orders and info.



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Email: **eversachi@gmail.com**

Workshop for Single Mothers



Over a hundred participants, mainly single mothers from outlying areas of Ipoh, attended a seminar cum workshop on HIV and Domestic Violence at Tower Regency Hotel recently. The one-day forum, jointly organised by BN Services and Complaints Bureau and Women Institute of Management (WIM), was graced by Perak Information Chief, Dato' Hamidi Abu Bakar.

In her welcoming speech, WIM co-founder and CEO, Dato' Nellie Tan-Wong highlighted the plight of battered women and HIV sufferers. "Women from rural backgrounds are at a greater risk of being violated, given their ignorance and naivety," she told the audience. The number of HIV-stricken women has increased many folds over the years, "This is a cause for concern," she added.

Dato' Hamidi called on single mothers to overcome this shortcoming by being better informed. "Financial independence is one way out," he said. "Seek assistance from agencies such as Yayasan Bina Upaya, as they are equipped to help the needy and the marginalised." The foundation provides micro-financing to enterprising single mothers.

Nazrina Yoram, 31, was full of praise for the organisers. "I hope more of this will be held in the future. I stand to benefit from the exposure."

Ed

Restocking Sg Galah



If efforts at restocking Sungai Galah, a tributary of Sungai Kinta, bears fruit, inshore fishermen in and around Kampung Gajah will reap the harvest. On Friday, April 15 officials from the Department of Fisheries Malaysia led by the Head of Marine Resource Management Division Haji Ahmad Saktian Langgang and the Director of Perak Fisheries Office Haji Sani Mohd Isa released a total of 103,000 *Lampam Jawa* (a species of carp) and 10,000 *Temoleh* (a native species) fry into Sungai Galah. The ceremony was attended by members of Persatuan Nelayan Ikan Air Tawar Kg Makmur Sungai Galah, a local inshore fishermen's association. The fish fry were sourced from the department's hatcheries in Enggor, Tapah and Perlok. "Barring any eventualities, the fish will be ready for harvesting in two years' time," said Ahmad Saktian to Ipoh Echo. **Ed**

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news roundup

Gender Equality



Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir spoke at Perak Academy's dinner lecture recently. She spoke on "No Democracy without Gender Equality: The Case for Women's Rights in Malaysia," which was held in Meru Valley Golf and Country Club. Marina, a columnist in the English daily, The Star, is no stranger to the local women's rights movement.

While Malaysian women possess equal rights as men in education, it is not an accurate indicator of the

true status of women in Malaysia. Marina held that despite the large ratio of female to male graduates, 40 per cent of female graduates do not enter the workforce, while 60 per cent work till the peak age of 25. Discrimination in the form of sexual harassment and gender preference in employee selection is rampant.

She said that one of the underlying reasons is the small number of females in Parliament. As such, women's issues are considered a minority issue or 'subfield'. Therefore, female-friendly laws are difficult to be enacted. One example is the Domestic Violence Act 1994. It took six years to pass and another two years to implement. The rights of Muslim women, on the other hand, are being constantly eroded. In 2009, the National Fatwa Council decided that female circumcision is obligatory to keep female sexuality under wraps. "It's absurd," she exclaimed.

If the number of women in Parliament is equal to that of men, Marina pointed out, laws could then be enacted to ensure men do not harm women, gain rights to paternity leave and to play their rightful roles as fathers.

"Malaysia cannot be completely democratic if its women are denied their rights," she reasoned. **LYW**

ACS Bids Farewell to Principal



Just a week after sending off long-serving physics teacher, Leong Kok Chen, Anglo-Chinese School bade farewell to its principal, Cheng Sai Lak. Cheng, who obtained his secondary education in SMK Anderson, was the principal of ACS for 6 years. However, few know that he was once the school's chemistry teacher. During his tenure as principal, the school witnessed two mega projects which got the school into the Malaysian Book of Records and helped raised funds.

Teachers and students were entertained to *wushu* and a *dhol* and tabla performances by students. Retired physics teacher, Leong even dedicated a song to him. Cheng noted that ACS is the epitome of 1Malaysia.

Present were representatives from the Perak Education Department, Chairman of the Board of Governors, Lai Thian Seong and the Parent-Teacher Association Chairman, Dato' Dr. Balaravi Pillai.

In his farewell speech, Cheng urged students to strive hard and persevere, regardless of their background. Incidentally, ACS is one of the top schools in Perak in the 2010 STPM examination.

LYW

Scholarships for Students



One hundred and two Form 6 students from schools throughout Perak were given scholarships worth RM51,000 during a ceremony at the Menteri Besar's residence recently. Datin Seri Saripah Zulkifli, wife of Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir and President of Baiduri gave away the awards. The number of recipients had increased from 79 last year. "I hope the financial assistance will motivate the students to do better in the STPM Examination later this year," Saripah told reporters. "We'll continue to provide scholarships to needy students without recourse to one's identity or affiliation." The assistance, she asserted, was in line with the 1Malaysia concept. **RM**

Treat For the Elders



Syuen Hotel, Ipoh found an ingenious way to honour the elders. It did so in style by treating them to a sumptuous 7-course Chinese dinner at its gigantic ballroom recently. Over 600 patrons, ranging in age from 50 to 70 filled the well-decorated hall. At RM500 a table, it was a sell-out. The menu consisted of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes prepared by the hotel's leading chefs. While the oldies dined they were entertained to music and songs courtesy of the department of youth and culture and some generous organisations and individuals. The merriment lasted till almost midnight. The seniors had a great time. **RM**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements must be sent by fax: **05-2552181**; or email: announcements@ipohecho.com, 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.

St. Sebastian Chapel 65th Annual Celebration, from May 1-8, at Jalan Sungai Pari, culminating with the Feast of Sebastian on the last day. Contact Anthonysamy at **019-5600393**.

Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2011 (International Hockey Tournament), May 5-15 at Sultan Azlan Shah Stadium, Ipoh. Opening ceremony: Thursday, May 5 at 8 p.m. followed by Malaysia vs England match. Admission: Free. For details on programme visit website: www.azlanshahcup.com.

Perak Heritage Society (PHS) 8th Annual General Meeting on Friday, May 6, 6.00 p.m., at PHS's office: 85C, Jalan Sultan Abdul Jalil, Ipoh (opposite Syuen Hotel). All members are welcome.

Ipoh Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Perak (ISPCA) Annual Charity Dinner, on Saturday, May 7 at 7.30 p.m. at New Shi Lai Ton Restaurant, 274 Jalan Sultan Iskandar, Ipoh. For info, contact: Doreen **016-5608905** or Mai **012-4002313**.

Mother's Day by Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Ipoh, on Sunday, May 8 at 6.00-10.00 p.m., at Sri Maha Mariamman Temple Hall, Jalan Sungai Pari, Buntong, Ipoh. The programme includes singing of bhajans (hymns), Human Values sketches by children, presentation of uniforms, shoes and spectacles to needy school children, and a wheelchair to a special person, honouring of a Senior Member and a 'Mother of the Year'. There will also be a Blood Donation cum Pledging of Organs drive. All are welcome. Contact: **013-5201920** (B. Prithivi Raj) or **012-4579568** (K. Asogan).

Y's Men's Club of Ipoh 45th Anniversary Dinner, on Sunday, May 15 at 8.00 p.m. at the YMCA Main Hall, Ipoh. For details, call: **016-5538443/012-5381939**.

Rotary Ekiden Run for Charity 2011. Jointly organised by Ipoh Rotary Clubs and Ipoh City Council on Sunday, May 15 beginning at 9.00 a.m. Start Point: Ipoh Padang. Open to all Rotary Club members in Perak (and Fukuoka, Japan). Non-members must be sponsored by a Rotary Club or a Rotarian. For details and registration call Peter Ng at **012-524 7878** or Pek Kuon at **012-5089753**.

Perak Malayalee Association 47th AGM, on Sunday, May 22, at: No. 14 Medan Istana, Bandar Ipoh Raya, Ipoh, at 3.00 p.m. For details, call: **012-5381939/012-5798062/012-4502620**.

National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) Charity Food & Fun Fair. Sunday, May 29, 9.00 a.m.-2.00 p.m., at 9 Lorong Pinji, Off Jalan Pasir Puteh, 31650 Ipoh. For details, contact: **05-3211089** or email: nasamperak@nasam.org.

Malaysia Nature Society (MNS) Perak Branch – Children Nature Camp for ages between 10 and 12, from May 31 to June 1 (during school holidays) at Tapak Herba, Papan, Perak. Application forms and details are available at: Persatuan Pencinta Alam, Perak, c/o 27, Pesara Pasir Putih, Taman Boon Bak, 31650 Ipoh. Contact Miss Lee Yuat Wah – **05-3210641**(H) or **017-5775641**, Mr. Lee Ping Kong – **016-5655682** or Pn. Lee Sook Heng – **013-605583**. Closing date: May 17. Applications are accepted on first come first serve basis.

Sultan Yussuf School Old Pupils Association (Batu Gajah) Royal Dinner in conjunction with the 83rd birthday of DYMM Paduka Seri Sultan Azlan Shah at the Royal Perak Golf Club Ipoh, on May 16. All Yussufians are invited. Contact: Zawawi **012-3453012** / Nurul **03-89252237** (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) for details or make payment to: Sultan Yussuf School (G.E.S.) Old Pupils A/C No: 008113313990 (Maybank) and fax/email the bank-in slip to: **03-89252230** or email: alumni.sys@gmail.com latest by May 5 (include name and address).

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book review

By James Gough

Ipoh Mali...Again



There is something about growing up in Ipoh that makes former residents of this town reminisce about their growing up years here so much so that they actually write books about their good old days, be it written or in cartoon format.

World renowned cartoonist Dato' Lat is a classic example. His Town Boy book depicting his growing up years in Ipoh has etched an image of Ipoh Town which will enable future generations of Malaysians to know what the Ipoh of yesteryear was like.

Now another ex-Ipohite, Kumar Nagalingam, has jumped onto the bandwagon and has come out with his cartoon book "Ipoh Mali" of his growing-up years.

Kumar lived in Lim Garden and studied at Cator Avenue and Anderson schools. His father worked at the General Post Office when it was located at the back of the Town Hall while his grandmother lived in Buntong.

His drawings are during the 80s and feature his neighbourhood hawkers like the *laddu*, *laksa* and the bread man. He describes Buntong then as 'the wild west of Ipoh' and the Buntong Market as a joy where he would cycle with his dad for breakfast.

An interesting book that takes one back to the time during the 80s and the activities of the youth at that time.

Kumar, like so many Ipohites, now lives and works in KL and describes Lim Garden as "lacking young people except during the school holidays".

The book came about by accident when he was doodling about his first trip to the barber after which he started compiling his experiences. He created the book solely for the purpose of keeping some of these memories alive.

Undoubtedly, Ipoh residents living in the area of Silibin in the 80s will easily relate to the drawings in this book.

The 117-page book is available at Mubarak bookstore in Ipoh, MPH and Popular bookstores nationwide and priced at RM15.

Lifestyle and Leisure

Banyan Spa Opens Its Doors

A new beauty spa, catering to the needs of discerning Ipohites, has opened its doors to the public recently. Conspicuously located opposite Heritage Hotel along Jalan Raja DiHilir (formerly Jalan Tambun) it is considered an ideal one-stop centre for the beauty conscious.

Bayan Beauty Sdn Bhd was formally introduced to customers after a brief ceremony recently. Present to officiate at the event was Dato' Hamidah Osman, executive councillor for women's affairs and tourism. She had for company, Miss Malaysia 2008/2009, Soo Wincci and popular Malay singer and actress, Abby Abadi.

Gary Soh of Bayan Spa Sdn Bhd welcomed the VIPs and guests by extolling on the virtues of spas, dismissing the notion that they were only for the rich and famous. "A massage is a good way to relax and to rejuvenate. It's a



necessity rather than a luxury," he said.

Dato' Hamidah, in her opening remarks, praised Bayan Spa Sdn Bhd for opening an outlet in Ipoh. She hoped more would invest in wellness and beauty salons and spas in the city, as there was a demand for them. "After a tiring trip, visitors would want to pamper themselves," she said. "The state government is willing to promote these centres."

Managing Director, Penny Lai said that Bayan Spa's uniqueness was its ambiance. "The kampong-like atmosphere provides customers maximum relaxation while their beauty needs are being attended to."

As part of the promotion, the spa is offering VVIP membership to the first 30 successful applicants. They stand to enjoy VVIP treatment at a discounted price. For details on this and other promotions on offer readers can call Banyan Spa Sdn Bhd at **05-2426866**.

Stephanie

news roundup

Motivating the Volunteers



One hundred and thirty members of Skuad Ikon Bina Upaya attended a two-day motivational course at Hotel Seri Malaysia recently. The course was conducted by Yayasan Bina Upaya's International Relations and Volunteer Unit. Its objective was to motivate the participants so they would be in the "right frame of mind"

when performing their voluntary works in the field.

Khairul Azwan Harun, CEO of YBU, was optimistic of the course outcome. "The volunteers will be mentally prepared for their arduous job ahead," he told Ipoh Echo, mindful of the perception many have regarding volunteerism. "Prejudices and anti-social behaviour should be set aside if they want to serve the community in general," he added.

Khairul announced the appointment by the Menteri Besar of the State Assemblyman of Malim Nawar, Keshvinder Singh, as YBU's Volunteer Ambassador. Keshvinder expressed his surprise over the appointment. "I thanked the MB for his confidence. I'll do whatever that's required to further the cause of volunteerism in Perak," he said when contacted.

RM

Jeyaratnam Campus Building Fundraising Dinner

Yayasan Sultan Idris Shah (YSIS) held its first fundraising dinner at the Syuen Hotel to raise RM4.2m to build the state-of-the-art Jeyaratnam Campus Building. Its chairman, Tan Sri Dato' Seri V. Jeyaratnam, in his welcome address said that it would be an iconic building that is one of its kind – designed in the shape of the international disability logo of a man in a wheelchair.

The building will include facilities for Paralympic sports training, international conferences, seminars and vocational training. The campus would focus on a diploma course in dealing with disability management, elderly care, autism, orphanages and care for the terminally ill.

He said that since the centre was opened in 1982 it has 6,750 clients and has the expertise to provide a holistic and multi disciplinary rehabilitation for the disabled. This is the only centre in the country with such a model of practice – being a one-stop centre for all the services that the clients need. All assistance is given to help the disabled to integrate into society after rehabilitation. The centre provides practical attachment for student trainees pursuing tertiary studies in various clinical professions.

He thanked all the donors for their contribution including Perak's Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir for a donation of RM100,000 from the state. The building is planned to be completed by July 2013.

The Guest of Honour was DYMM Paduka Seri Sultan Azlan Shah, who is also the patron of the foundation and DYMM Permaisuri Tuanku Bainun.

AJ



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My Say

● By **Jerry Francis**



Hidden Danger Lurks in Scenic Beauty

One of Ipoh's tourism assets is its serene and scenic cave temples, especially the Chinese temples. Most of them were built in the characteristic style of temples one can see in some of the old Chinese Kung-Fu movies from China.

Their facades are colourful with glazed tiles roof and symbols of dragons on the rooftops, and on the ground and inside the caves large statues of Buddha or other deities, such as Kwan Yin (Goddess of Mercy) abound.

However, amidst their splendour and attraction, the estimated 30 cave temples in and around Ipoh can be a worrying factor. These temples are increasingly popular among local and foreign devotees and sightseers, and as such the safety aspect needs to be given more attention as there is a danger of rockfalls which can occur at any time.

Some of these temples, having been established about a century ago, have attained international recognition. Among them are Sam Poh Tong and Perak Tong. Started as small shrines, many have developed over the years without interruption from the authorities. Some were built precariously on cliff-faces, as though clinging on them and others underneath huge cliffs.

Their massive renovation plans have transformed them into magnificent and colourful structures, which are attracting both devotees and visitors by the bus-loads daily.

Over the years, there have been a number of rockfalls in the state, some of which were disastrous. Among the incidents was at Gunung Cheroh in 1973 which killed 42 squatters living at the foot of a limestone cliff behind a Hindu temple.

The most recent one occurred inside Perak Tong on January 11, 2009, when a big chunk of rock fell in the main cavern of the temple killing a security guard and injuring two tourists; while 16 other tourists were rescued in a three-hour operation. As a result, the temple was closed for about six months.

According to a study carried out, the primary causes of rockfalls are attributed to the rainwater along the many joints and fissures present in the limestone and it is inevitable that the rock slabs will break from the cliff where such action has sufficiently reduced their stability.

Rockfalls could have also been hastened by a number of secondary causes, such

as vibrations like low intensity earthquakes, quarry blastings and passing vehicles nearby and oscillation related to wind blowing through vegetation growing on cliff faces and loss in cohesion due to prolonged periods of wet weather. Rock slabs and blocks will therefore fall off occasionally although the time and period of successive rockfalls are unpredictable.



Therefore, the cave temples have often been described as “time-bombs” in view of the dangerous situation in which most of them were located and built, and the relevant authorities had not checked on the development of the temples to ensure they are safe despite the existing safety directives.

Though the state government may be aware and concerned about the situation, it has continued to find great difficulty to evict the occupants or demolish the structures. Any action taken against the temples can create some sensitive problems. So, it places the authorities in a dilemma.

Although such rockfalls are rare and unpredictable, the authorities must continuously monitor the situation in the cave temples and their surroundings to ensure necessary precautionary measures are observed for the safety of the visitors.

Perhaps the respective temple's management committees need to carry out regular safety checks of the surroundings, such as tell-tale signs like rock-fall debris strewn about the cave floor or near the entrance or outside the caves. If rock debris is seen, then the cave should be closed and not reopened till the stability of the rocks have been ascertained by the Geological Sciences Department.

However, these should be done without scaring away worshippers and visitors from frequenting the cave temples.

Safety guidelines have been in existence for years, but have not been strictly enforced. Among them are conditions for construction and the safe distance buildings need to be from the foot of limestone hills.

Do we have to wait for another rockfall to take safety measures at the cave temples seriously? Safety cannot be compromised, but should be a priority at all times. Therefore, what is needed is less talk and more action from all relevant agencies and departments, and as well as those responsible for safety.

Sexagenarian Wins Climbathon

A part of the First Ipoh Boys' Brigade Company year-long 20th Anniversary celebrations, the Perak State Boys' Brigade held a state-level Climbathon recently. Despite the early morning rain, more than a hundred participants gathered at the foot of Kledang Hill. The event also attracted many walk-in participants who were regulars at the hill. The climb was flagged off by Wesley Methodist Church pastor, Rev. Dr. Timothy Ong. There were four categories, namely, men's open, women's open, under-19 boys and fun run. Sixty-two-year-old Chan Kian Teck, an experienced marathon runner from Kampar, reached the top of the hill in an astounding 20 minutes. The event is one of the many organised by the brigade leading to its anniversary dinner in July.

LYW



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