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PERAK TOURISM NEWS

Supplement

Raja Bilah Centenary Celebration

By James Gough

A buzz of activity enveloped the usually quiet town of Papan recently as more than 200 descendants of Raja Bilah of Papan, gathered in their ancestral house, Rumah Besar Raja Bilah, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of their illustrious ancestor. For many of the young descendants, this was the first time they had returned to their family estate.

Continued on page 2





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Large and Diverse Mandailing Family Tree



Rumah Besar Raja Bilah (left) and Papan Mosque on the right

The organizers of the gathering are cousins Hafizah Kamaruddin, 53, and Nadimah binti Mohd Jamil, both 4th generation Mandailings, who six months earlier, upon realizing that it would be the 100th anniversary of the death of Raja Bilah, decided to have a gathering at the ancestral home.

The message of the gathering was spread by word of mouth and as a result, over 200 family members turned up for the gathering. Hafizah, who was never alerted on the number attending, was delightfully surprised to find so many family members in one place and set about getting the various families from this large and complex family tree to register themselves before the mingling began.

There was an air of festivity and closeness as the elders began the process of reconnecting the diverse branches of this Mandailing family tree.

Raja Bilah's Background

Raja Bilah was a Mandailing from west Sumatra. He was the nephew of Raja Asal, also a Mandailing who came to Malaysia earlier in 1840.

Raja Asal was recruited by the British during the Perak War, under Swettenham, to help capture the Perak Malays thought to have been linked to the murder of JWW Birch. As a reward for his military services, Swettenham gave Raja Asal four tin mines located in Papan which belonged to ex-Sultan Ismail. The mines were described by British Resident Sir Hugh Low as "probably the richest tin mines in the Malay Peninsula."

The early Mandailing miners were involved in mining, smelting and trading in tin in the Kinta Valley. Raja Bilah who arrived in 1860 followed in Raja Asal's footsteps and became the leading Mandailing miner of his time at Papan.

Raja Bilah, during his time, was possibly the biggest Malay miner in the Kinta Valley and was reputed to own "Lombong Besar" (big mine) employing hundreds of coolies, all Malays. He was made the Penghulu (chieftain) of Papan from 1882 to 1909.

Raja Bilah Compound

Rumah Besar Raja Bilah is located about 200 metres just off the Papan main road, before 74 Papan Main Street, the home of heroine Sybil Karthigasu about whom books, articles and TV documentaries have been produced.

Its grounds consist of Rumah Besar and then Rumah Asal where Raja Bilah lived. Also within the grounds, a mosque was built in 1888 which served the Muslim community who came from all around for their daily and Friday prayers. At an adjacent hillock facing west, Raja Bilah allocated a piece of land for a Muslim burial ground. He was buried there. Interestingly, facing east on this same hillock, there is a Chinese cemetery.

Rumah Besar was actually a "council house" which was used for a conference of elders and other large events. It was a large double-storey building, had large halls upstairs and downstairs and its eight-sided columns on the ground floor symbolized that it was a community hall. It was completed in 1896 and the date is displayed over the gateway leading to the side of the house.

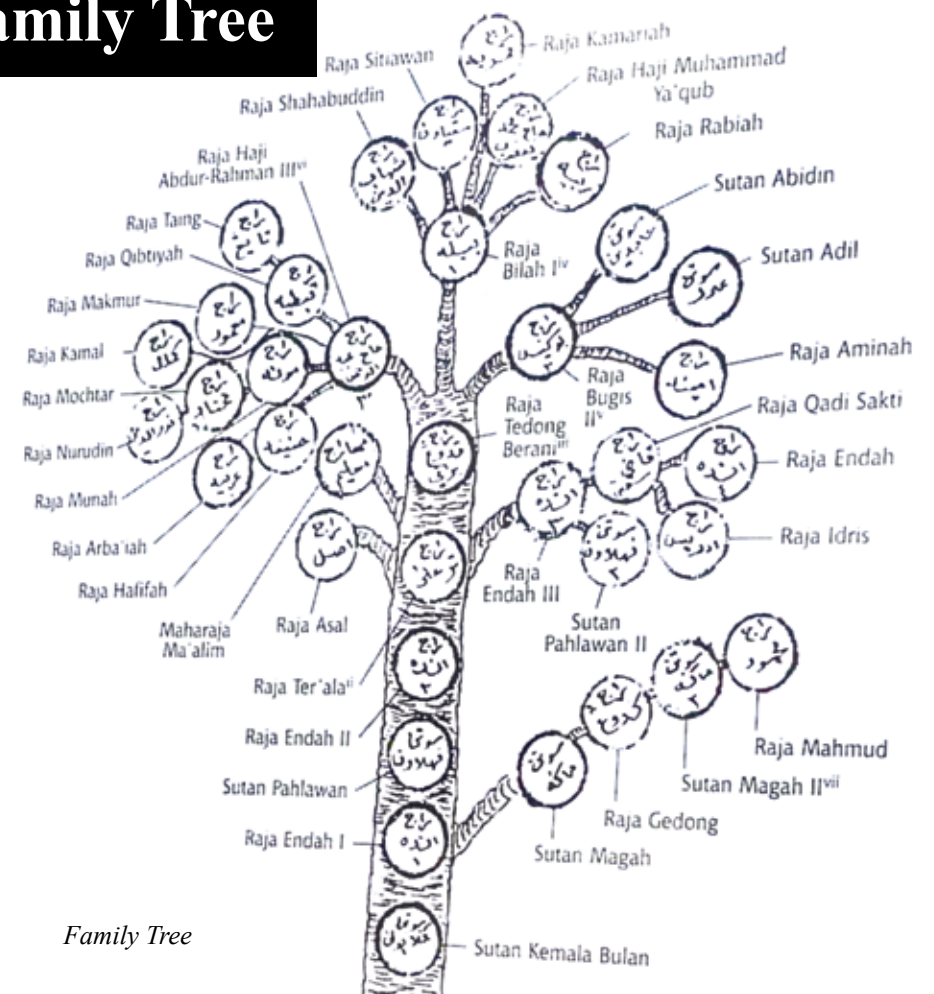
Passing of the Baton

When Raja Bilah died, his post as Penghulu was passed on to his sons, first Raja Yacob and later Raja Shahabuddin. Raja Yacob was a "renaissance man" with diverse interests and spoke and read in several languages. He wrote the book 'Tarikh Raja Asal & Keluarganya' in 1933 tracing the history of the Mandailings in Malaya.

According to Raja Bilah's will, Rumah Besar was to be "an ancestral home for the clan, serving to bring the children and descendants together during ceremonial occasions such as marriages and Muslim feasts."

Treasured Repository

In later years it was discovered that "it was a repository of family documents dating



Family Tree



Hafizah (left) with her mother, Saidah Bte Selleh, 70



back to the 1870s and included photographs, memorabilia and weapons of war of the 19th century." It was described as "a rare find of Malay manuscripts and documents covering 3 generations of *penghulus*". These documents are currently with the Department of Heritage and Antiquities.

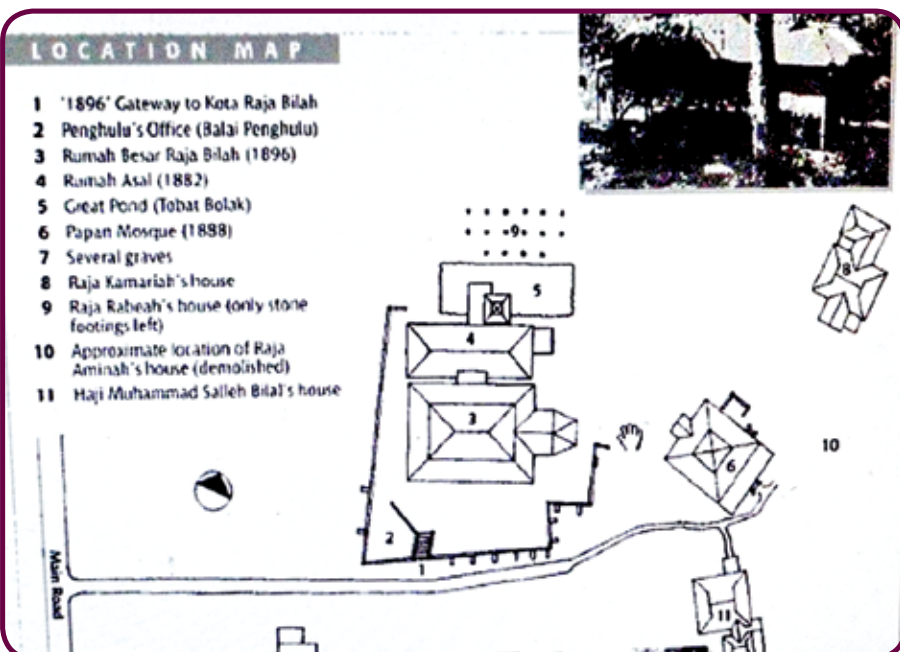
Annual Affair from Now

When Raja Yakob died during the Japanese Occupation, the Mandailings lost their spiritual leader and no longer gathered frequently in Papan. However, at the recent gathering organised by Hafizah and Nadirah the response was very positive with many family members expressing their support to make the gathering an annual affair.

That day the Zohor prayers were once again said in the mosque on the grounds after a lapse of more than 10 years. The women folk who had come earlier to do a cleanup were surprised that the interior of the mosque was clean and tidy and free from animal droppings.

Later in the day another Mandailing, Abdul Razak Lubis who co-wrote the book "Raja Bilah and the Mandailings in Perak, 1875-1911" (and from where most of the data here was gleaned), presented a slide show on the origins of the Mandailings to a rapt audience of ancestors spanning three generations.

According to Hafizah the plan next year is to have more data and photographs and grow the family tree. It appears that after so long, Raja Bilah's vision for Rumah Besar to be "the Ancestral Home" and to "bring children and descendants together" is beginning to be realised. This family tree is starting to bear fruit.



Family Estate map

IPOH **echo**

From the Editor's Desk

● by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

How Safe Is Safe?

The assuring words of the state police chief and the mayor that criminal activities in Ipoh have nose-dived sound a little far-fetched. At the last city council full-board meeting the mayor went on record to say that since the installation of closed-circuit television cameras at crime-prone areas in the city, the crime rate had dwindled by almost 50 per cent. The comparison was made over a period of a year since the cameras were installed in 2010.

The number of cameras is relatively small thus the area covered is limited. You can see the gadgets at the round-about near the MB's residence, the garden behind the MBI building and at the Polo Ground. Monitoring is done 24 hours a day by a team of council staff in a purpose-built room within the MBI complex.

The operator can zoom in and out of a target by a click of a mouse. Car thefts and bag snatchings are common, especially at Polo Ground. Catching those while in the act of committing a crime is possible with the use of these cameras. Recordings of their improprieties can also be obtained should criminal charges be preferred.

The council has also embarked on a project to enhance safety by building railings to separate pedestrians and motorcyclists. This is to prevent bag snatching from happening. One can see these railings at the Polo Ground, in Taman Cempaka and along the road fronting Stadium Perak. When the railings were first installed, motorists coming out of the stadium area onto the road complained that their view was blocked. So the council had some replaced with bollards. This short-sightedness is not only baffling but costly. Money for installing railings, mirrors, bollards and lighting incidentally comes from a RM1.5 million allocation from the Home Ministry.

On the issue of safety, the major grouse among Ipohites today is break-ins. No place seems to be safe now. My neighbourhood in Taman Tasek, Bercham is under siege, so to speak. The thieves are getting bolder by the day. One morning, I found a wooden ladder leaning snugly on my rear gate. I thought nothing of it until my wife came with a most unlikely story. She said that the palatial corner house was broken into during the night and some jewellery and cash were missing. The thief (or thieves) had scaled the wall and got into the house through the ceiling. The innocuous-looking ladder could be their tool. Soon the ladder became an object of conversation and many flocked to my backyard to have a look at it.

We like to assume that thieves are opportunists who will wait for the right moment to strike. If this is your assumption, think again...



We like to assume that thieves are opportunists who will wait for the right moment to strike. If this is your assumption, think again. My next-door neighbour's house was assailed by a lone crook who sneaked into the house while they were watching the 8.00 p.m. news. He bolted when the son went to the kitchen to get some drinking water. Another lost his wallet with RM1,000 cash in it and his handphone. The thief fished the items from his room when he was fast asleep. His bedroom windows were open.

Someone suggested forming a neighbourhood watch or Rukun Tetangga, like they did in the 70s. But when most are out eking a living, creating one is simply impossible. Engaging a security company to stand guard is desirable, but how many are prepared to contribute?

The responsibility, therefore, lies with the Police to safeguard the people. But how are they to perform when their resources are over-stretched? The Sungai Senam police station has only about 50 personnel and its area of responsibility covers Polo Ground, the stadiums, Fair Park and Canning Garden. Over 100,000 people reside in these areas alone. How is this motley band of officers going to keep crime in check?

So the next time the police chief and the mayor say that crime rates in Ipoh have gone down by a few notches, take it with a pinch of salt.

Why Why Tell Me Why?

● by Peter Lee

Whenever I take my shower nowadays I normally sing "why why tell me why", a song made famous by the late Cantopop diva, Anita Mui, because I am puzzled why so many people to whom I have spoken have not made a will and trust for their families. If you followed the legal tussle over Anita Mui's estate recently, you would have noticed how important this is. Before her death, she wrote a will that gave away the bulk of her estate, estimated at HK \$100 million, to "Karen Trust". In this trust, her mother receives HK\$70,000 monthly for her living expenses. In addition, she set aside HK\$400,000 for each of her brothers' four children's university expenses. Her properties were given to a retired designer. It was also stated that if her mother passed away, her estate would be donated to New Horizon Buddhist Association. The reason she did this was based on the fear that if she gave everything to her mother at one go, she would squander all of it with the help of her eldest brother. But her mother wanted full control of her daughter's estate by taking a lawsuit against the administrators of the Trust Fund claiming that Anita was of unsound mind when signing the will. However, the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal dismissed her lawsuit saying that Anita Mui was of sound mind when signing the will based on the testimony given by three witnesses. They were her principal doctor, Anita's godmother of 20 years and a private trust director. You may say that you don't need a will and trust because you don't have the type of wealth Anita Mui had. But you too can apply the same principles according to your family's needs. For example, you can will away your entire estate to your beneficiaries but if you have minor or spendthrift children or parents, then it's important that you specify how much they should be receiving for their monthly expenses which is termed as "Testamentary Trust". In addition, it is equally important to have a "Living Trust" just like Anita's example. However, in her case, the Trustee of her will must first obtain the Grant of Probate before her entire estate could be transferred to her "Living Trust" which in Malaysia, can take 1 to 1½ years. In most cases, families need immediate funding which you can do by assigning some of your assets to your "Living Trust" like an insurance policy because money from there will flow into your "Trust" immediately upon your demise or permanent disability. Anita's case also highlights the importance of having honest, reliable and credible witnesses. That's the reason why you have to appoint a credible and experienced Trustee Company like Rockwills Trustee Bhd. to set up the "Trust" and to be the Trustee for both your will and trust. Then, you can rest assured that your beneficiaries can sing "why why tell me why" everyday and still cannot challenge your decision on distribution.



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

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Thinking ALLOWED • by Mariam Mokhtar

They Deserve Our Compassion, Too

We live increasingly compartmentalized lives; we barely know the cultural traits of our neighbours who may belong to another faith. Some of us may take great pains to be aware of how others live, but despite our best efforts to appear to be multi-cultural, we often tend to neglect what happens in our own households.

Hari Raya Aidil-Fitri is a welcome celebration after 30 days of fasting during Ramadan and is an event that both the Muslims and non-Muslims look forward to. Apart from the religious significance, Muslims are the perfect hosts with plenty of treats on hand, gifts for the children and charitable acts to be fulfilled.

Time for Atonement

The usual greeting or salaam is “Selamat Hari Raya” and Muslims will also include the salutation of “*maaf zahir dan batin*”, asking each other for forgiveness as Hari Raya is also a time for atonement.

Hari Raya is when Muslims make the long trek home, “*balik kampung*” to be with one’s parents, in-laws and other elders, and to seek forgiveness from them.

The day starts with an early rise and after the ritual bath, everyone will be dressed in the best clothes and shoes, before the men go to the mosque for special prayers.

Children will ask to be pardoned by the oldest members of their family and kiss their hands whilst they seek their forgiveness. They also look forward to receiving “*duit raya*”.

A light breakfast with the family is followed by a trip to the cemetery to clean the graves of dead relatives and to offer prayers. Then it’s back home, to receive guests for “open house”.

Some are Neglected

Whilst friends and relatives are treated to the largesse and the hospitality of the hosts, there are some people who belong in our households and are treated like family by some of us, but neglected by many others.

They live with us and are in our presence 24 hours a day. They are probably closer to some members of our family than we would care to admit and yet, when it comes to having a joyous celebration like Hari Raya, few take the time to consider the feelings of these people.

Who are they? ‘They’ are the hundreds of thousands of women whom we term the ‘maid’ or as the children in our homes call “*kakak*”.

They are the ones whom we cannot do without and on whom we depend to feed, clothe and clean our children. They are the ones who take care of our elderly parents because we are unable to do so because of the hectic lives that we lead. They are the ones who help keep our businesses running by cleaning, cooking or serving our customers. And they are the ones who nurse us when we are ill.

Social Stigma as Maids

Some three decades ago, before Malaysia became the affluent nation that it is today, Malaysians from the rural areas comprised a large percentage of the household help in our urban towns and cities.

Improved and more widespread education for girls, better job opportunities, the proliferation of factory jobs, and the emancipation of women are some of the factors which contributed to a reduction in the percentage of women, from the rural areas, entering service in the home.

In addition, the social stigma of working as a maid for low wages, leaving home for long periods and having to forego normal family contact, coupled with the prospect of a non-existent social life, with long working hours in a menial job,

were not enticements to many women, especially the young.

Foreigners Fill Vacuum

The vacuum left by Malaysians, predominantly the women, has since been filled by foreign maids who are prepared to leave their homes, their families and transport themselves thousands of miles, so as to earn

an income to support their families and children back home, be it Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines or Thailand.

According to the online news portal ‘Free Malaysia Today’, Indonesia and Cambodia supply the majority of the 230,000 maids in Malaysian households. The embassies of these countries have also reported that 2,000 women complain of being abused each year.

Admittedly, the known cases of people abusing their maids are under 1%. But these are the publicised, reported cases. How many maids suffer in silence?

Time Off for Maids?

How many households give time off, to these maids, for Hari Raya? In Indonesia, Hari Raya means many businesses are shut and non-Muslims take advantage of special hotel deals, so that their workforce can enjoy their holidays. Does the same happen in non-Muslim Malaysian houses?

What happens in a Malaysian Muslim household? Their argument is probably that the maids are there to work. Will the maids get a day off in lieu? Employers will also say that the maid has nowhere to go to anyway.

Perhaps it is not a question of who is right and who is wrong. A maid is more than just a pair of hired hands. They are also human and belong to a faith. Many are devout Muslims, Christians or Hindus. After all, they cannot *balik kampung* to be with their families or clean the graves of their ancestors. In all probability, they are prevented from returning for Raya.

The least we can do is give them a huge bonus or *duit raya*, and time off. They, too, deserve our consideration and compassion. Isn’t that what Raya is also about?



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Raja Perempuan Ipoh Old Girls Homecoming in conjunction with its 60th anniversary celebration, Saturday **September 3**, 9.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. at the school hall. Contact the event secretary, Pn. Abidah bt Ahmad Fuad, at **05-2494830**.

Children Art Competition (4 to 12 years) organised by the Perak Malayalee Association on Sunday, **September 4**, 9.30 a.m. at PMA building, 14 Medan Istana, Bandar Ipoh Raya. Registration fee: RM5 (lunch provided). Call Mr. Gopalan Nair **05-549 7704/012-450 2620**.

Spread the Seeds of Love Cultural Exchange Tour 2011 – A performance by the Malawian African orphans, Tuesday **September 6**, 8.00 p.m. at Syuen Hotel. Amitofo Care Charity Association (ACC), Africa is here to raise funds for food, education and medical care in their orphanage. Call: **05-2538889 ext 8405/2559334**.

Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) Ipoh Reunion Dinner, Saturday, **September 10** at the Tower Regency Hotel Ipoh, followed by an optional three-day trip to Pangkor Island. For details, contact Foo at hongfoo5@gmail.com (**012-5887397**).

The 1st Pangkor International Mountain Bike Challenge and Jamboree and XC Race 2011 (PIMBC 2011), **September 16-18**. The event to be held on Pangkor Island will include events for four categories. For information on the event, contact Cheah: **019-2297999** or go to www.pangkormtb.blogspot.com.

Old Michaelians Association 73rd Annual Banquet, Saturday, **September 24** at St Michael’s Institution, Ipoh at 7.30 p.m. Over 800 old boys from all over the world are expected to attend. Call Terry Yip at **019-5567913** or Adrian Tan at **012-5089191**.

Malaysia Day and Onam Celebrations by Perak Malayalee Association scheduled for September 16 have been postponed to Sunday, **October 9**, at Ipoh Town Hall. For details call Mr. Gopalan Nair **05-5497704/012-4502620**.

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Seri Manjung

Lumut



Musings on Food

seefoon@ipohecho.com.my

By See Foon Chan-Koppen

Photos by VWSL

SeeFoon discovers authentic 'Mah Lat' taste in Ipoh

Most readers will have discovered by now that my taste in food is somewhat eclectic, and while not as adventurous as *Very Serious Foodie* Andrew Zimmern in his programme called Bizarre Foods, where he will pop live worms and insects into his mouth and apparently enjoy them, I have eaten my way around the world and am now left with lingering taste sensations that will occasionally nudge at my taste buds and a hankering to repeat some of those ephemeral taste memories.

One of these is *huājiāo*, the Szechuan pepper that dominates many a dish in the Szechuan province of China. Many people are surprised to learn that Szechuan peppercorn is not a pepper at all – the distinctive reddish-brown berries hail from the prickly ash tree. Its main claim to fame is the powerful numbing sensation it causes around the mouth. When married with chilli peppers (the other key ingredient in Szechuan cuisine), chefs believe this numbing effect reduces the chilli's heat, leaving diners free to appreciate the capsicum's intense, fruity flavour. Hence, the term 'Mah Lat' (numbing hot) for the dishes which are produced out of this marriage.

Northern Dumplings Taste Test

When someone asked me if I had been to Chuan Kwong for their Shao Long Pau (a dumpling peculiar to northern China) I made a note to check it out as it is very close to the Ipoh Echo office. Chuan Kwong has only been opened for about eight months and has already garnered many fans. It is essentially a Dim Sum place, serving tea,

soft drinks, desserts, noodles and snacks (as in Dim Sum).

I asked for their recommendations and was immediately told to try their **Shao Long Pau**, which is listed as **Shanghai**



Minced Meat Dumpling. What sets one restaurant's Shao Long Pau against another is easily summed up by the chopstick pick-up test. Shao Long Pau must be picked up with chopsticks and popped whole into one's mouth. The critical test is whether the pastry stays intact on the journey to the mouth or if it breaks, leaving all the delicious juices and half the skin in the steam basket. A good Shao Long Pau stays intact, the meat juices oozing out in the mouth on the first bite, the skin still 'al dente' with a slight elasticity and the meat filling succulent and flavourful. Chuan Kwong's easily stood up to the test and I promptly ordered another basket; a rare taste treat in Ipoh. RM3.00 for 3 pieces.

Cantonese and SzeChuan Dim Sum

The menu is divided into sections for Cantonese Dim Sum and Szechuan Dim Sum. The Cantonese section had the usual coterie of dumplings like **Shao Mai**, **Har Kau**, **Carrot Cake**, **Char Siew Pao**, etc. The few that I sampled were all good quality including the **Mini Egg Custard Bun** filled with egg custard made with the addition of salted egg yolk oozing out on the first bite. Slightly sweet and salty at the same time; utterly delectable. RM3.90 for 3 pieces. They also have daily specials on Dim Sum which are not on the

menu, so ask for those.

The SzeChuan Dim Sum as well as their SzeChuan Noodles menu contained many treasured items long buried in my taste memories as well as hitherto new taste treats all created and homemade by Chef Alex Leong.

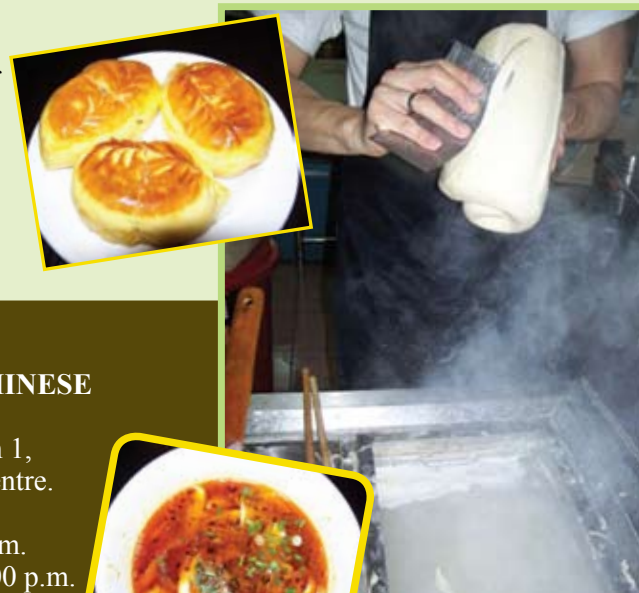
Must *try-s* include their **Glutinous Rice Balls** wrapped in banana leaf, **Deep Fried Pancake** with crispy floss, RM3.90 for 3 pieces; the **Chives Dumpling** with chilli oil, RM3.50 for 4 pieces; **Pan Fried Chives Dumpling**, RM3.50 for 3 pieces; and the **Steamed Meat Dumpling** in chilli oil, RM4.00 for 6 pieces.

Knife-Shredded Noodles

Their *pièce de résistance* though has to be their **Szechuan Knife-Shredded Noodles with Chilli Oil**, a bowl of thick hand-cut noodles, smooth and chewy in the mouth served in a fiery meat cum 'Mah Lat' broth that almost brings tears to your eyes and yet is irresistible to those (like myself) who are addicted to that searing sensation of hot chillies.

Intrigued by the noodles, our group went to the kitchen to watch Chef Alex perform his magic as he took out a round longish slab of dough about half the size of a rolling pin and began chipping away at one end in a circular motion, creating thick tendrils of dough which he then blanched and put into the broth. These knife-cut noodles come in a variety of broths, some spicy and others bland like in chicken stock. RM5.50 per bowl. Highly recommended.

All in all, the Dim Sum and noodles in Chuan Kwong are well worth a visit as they are all home-made by Chef Alex who learnt his trade in Singapore working in some of the best Szechuan restaurants that I have personally dined in. Do expect to queue up for tables on Saturdays and Sundays as they don't take reservations.



HAWKER FOOD

Hong Kong Chee Cheong Fun



Quite like the ever-popular Chee Cheong Fun, the Hong Kong version is made from rice noodles. A thin flat piece is rolled up with a filling of prawns, barbecued pork (*char siew*) or chicken, and vegetables, or other ingredients. It is served with sweet soy sauce and is sometimes more sweet than savoury. What makes a good Hong Kong Chee Cheong Fun is when the noodle is smooth or wat, and not grainy. Most important of all is the accompanying sambal or chilli paste cooked in oil, which can make or break a dish. Because it is part of the dim sum range, it is almost always found in dim sum shops. We have included the more popular of these shops, and others, in our tasting.

Try these:

Kafe Sentosa (Ria)

33 Tingkat Taman Ipoh, Ipoh Garden South.

Small – RM2.60 and big – RM3.30 for both prawn and *char siew*.
Rice noodle is very smooth and sauce not too sweet.

Ming Court Hong Kong Tim Sum (05-2557134)

32-36 Jalan Leong Sin Nam (New Town), 6.00 a.m.-12.00 p.m.,
Thursdays closed.

Two varieties – prawn and *char siew* – RM2.80
Rice noodle is smooth.

Restoran Yoke Fook Moon (05-2416589)
67-69, Jalan Leong Sin Nam (New Town),
6.00 a.m.-1.30 p.m. & 6.30-10.30 p.m.
RM3.60 for *char siew*

Restoran Foh San (05-2540308)
51 Jalan Leong Sin Nam (New Town).
RM3.50+ for *char siew* and prawn.

New Hollywood Restaurant (Pork Free)
38, Jalan Lee Kwee Foh, Canning Garden.
Chicken or prawn – RM3.20

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Closed Wednesdays.

RECIPE

By Margarita Lee

Stir Fried Beef with
Spring Onion and
Ginger

Ingredients:

250g lean beef, sliced into strips
3 stalks spring onion (cut into 2" long pieces)
10 -15 thin slices of ginger
2 tbsp cooking oil

Marinade:

1 tbsp Chinese cooking wine (optional)
½ tbsp light soy sauce
½ tbsp oyster sauce
2 teaspoons corn flour
Dash of pepper

Seasoning:

1tbsp Chinese cooking wine (optional)
½ tbsp oyster sauce
½ tbsp corn flour
1 tbsp light soy sauce
½ tbsp sesame oil
3 tbsp water

Method:

1. Marinate beef for one hour.
2. Mix ingredients for seasoning and set aside.
3. Heat oil in wok, sauté ginger until aromatic.
4. Add in beef and stir fry till half cooked.
5. Add in seasoning and stir fry on high heat until sauce thickens and beef is just cooked.
6. Add in spring onion, mix well.
7. Dish out and serve hot with rice or noodles.



News Roundup

OK TAK OK for Perak Schools

Soroptimist International Ipoh (SII) and Perak Women for Women (PWW) have teamed up to facilitate an educational programme called *OK TAK OK* with the approval of the Perak State Education Department and the various District Education Departments.

The workshops, targeted to educate primary 5 and 6 school children on sexual abuse and what is acceptable and unacceptable touch/behaviour from dangerous adults and what and where to get help, have been conducted recently at two school districts of S. Kinta (69 schools) and Kuala Kangsar (89 schools).

A total of 158 schools sent their school counselling teachers to attend the two workshops, held concurrently over two days in July, which was conducted by trained counsellors of Penang Women's Centre for Change (WCC). These counsellors are then encouraged to conduct the workshops to their students on their return to their respective schools.

The very comprehensive programme, which is conducted using interactive VCDs and role plays, won the International Huright Award in Osaka in 2005 and may assist in alleviating and reducing the heinous crime of child sexual abuse which has risen to alarming proportions.

A conservative estimate puts the number of children having been made aware of potential sexual abuse at an impressive 20,000 just from the two workshops that were conducted. SII's follow-up with the schools revealed that



more than 50% of the schools whose counsellors attended the training, conducted the programme; giving SII the encouragement to continue with the current training structure with its cascading effect that is far-reaching and effective given the limited resources the committee has to work with. It is hoped that corporations and banks will come forward as sponsors which will enable SII to do more intensive follow-up sessions with some of the schools who have requested direct supervision of the programme.

For more information contact: SII President Kuan Khoo **012-5019250** email: khoosbb@yahoo.com.

SFCK



Training for VOLUNTEERS

Some 1,636 personnel have registered themselves as volunteers with Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan (YBU). This was revealed by Jodh Singh, Manager of the International Relations and Volunteer Unit of YBU. The foundation is taking steps to train the volunteers in order to make them more effective and also relevant.

"We'll pick a hundred, ten from each of the districts, to be trained by professionals. From this number, 30 will be shortlisted, based on their performance and aptitude, to form Skwad Amal (Charity Squad)," said Jodh to Ipoh Echo.

The formation of this team, consisting of highly-trained individuals, is to complement rescue efforts should a disaster (natural or otherwise) occur. The team, according to Dato' Zainal Abidin Omar, YBU's Chief Executive Officer, will be the foundation's contribution in the event of a calamity.

Training will be conducted either at Gua Tempurong or Sungai Siput this month. "They will undergo a rigorous physical regime, as the selection process is tedious," Jodh added. "Once the team is formed it will be sent for further specialist training to hone members' skills in first aid and rescue works."

The squad will be placed in a building of its own. The foundation is looking for a suitable building with some help from the state government. "The squad can be better managed if it's placed under one roof," said Jodh, echoing the sentiments of the volunteers who are eager to contribute their service to society.

On the issue of international relationships, the unit chief spoke of an exchange programme with Yayasan Sultanah Brunei. "We wish to share the experiences of our Brunei counterpart on some of the best practices available for us," added Jodh Singh.

RM



Gifts for the Sick

The Welfare Council of Malaysia, Manjung chapter, handed out food parcels and cash to 35 in-patients at the Seri Manjung district hospital recently. The Council's deputy chairman Toh Sakna Menteri Haji Zakaria bin Haji Osman said that the council provides cash and gifts to the infirm, orphans, single mothers and the underprivileged during various festivities in the year.

About 100 Muslim orphans broke fast with council members at the residence of the Council Chairman, Toh Muda Dato' Abdul Wahab, who is also the Manjung Territorial Chief. The council plans another grand event on September 8 for the benefit of orphanages in Manjung.

Besides the sick and the underprivileged, the council also renders assistance by way of cash and foodstuffs to fire, flood and storm victims whenever a need arises.

SN

Perak Tourism Bhd Appoints

CEO

Encik Ahmad Fathil Abdul Ghani has been appointed CEO of Perak Tourism Berhad. Fathil comes to Perak with a wealth of tourism experience having served with the Terengganu State Tourism Board since 1990.

Fathil initially began his career as a hotel executive in 1988 before joining the Terengganu State Secretariat in 1990 as its Tourism and Culture Officer. In 2003, he was appointed the planning and development manager for the State Tourism Action Council and in 2008 was promoted to general manager, a post he held till 2009.

In 2010, he was appointed the Director, Ministry of Tourism, Terengganu, till July 31 this year before taking up his new post with Tourism Perak Berhad.

When interviewed, Fathil had already sized up what Perak had to offer and what needed to be done.

"Perak has the products to be a top destination," stated Fathil and described the products as, "Kuala Kangsar is a Royal Town", Royal Belum "you don't need to fly to a million-year-old rainforest, you can drive there" and described Pangkor as "a niche location". Regarding Ipoh "it's got heritage trail maps" while Perak also has "an added advantage, easy access to Cameron Highlands."

"In the tourism industry the government only gets the taxes. If the *rakyat* participates and grabs the opportunities available in the industry, one can reap its benefits."

However, the most important aspect is that everyone, whether stakeholders, players, NGOs, must co-operate and work together. "We can plan a lot of programmes but it is the stakeholders who will implement the programmes to make Perak a premier destination."

On Visit Perak Year 2012, he said the state needed



the co-operation from all parties, i.e. state government, district councils, local authorities as well as the stakeholders and the whole community to act for tourism to work.

Regarding promotions he said, "There are two types of events, the spectator event and the participation event, an example being the Ipoh International Run. We will need a few good events that are well promoted and branded as an event unique and specific to Perak."

Regarding the appointment of the Ipoh Echo to be the medium of distribution for the Perak Tourism newsletter, Fathil said "as Perak's own community newspaper and with the widest English readership and distribution in Perak both in print and online, it is a logical choice as the newsletter will be a platform to communicate and promote destinations and packages and benefits both players and visitors."

JAG

News Roundup

Canning Gets 700 New Voters



The state constituency of Canning registered over 700 new postal voters in the 2nd quarter of this year.

Its assemblyman Wong Kah Woh said he obtained the data following a survey done for the Parliamentary constituency of Ipoh Timor conducted by him recently. The Parliamentary constituency comprises Pasir Puteh, Tebing Tinggi and Canning, all of which registered more voters.

However, for Canning the increase was close to 700 new registered postal voters who had changed their addresses to Canning from April to June this year. These new postal voters reflected an over 70% increase. Wong is questioning this data saying that the process of a voter changing his address is tedious and is questioning the accuracy of the data.

Responding to Wong's query, Director of Perak Election Office Hj Ahmad Adli bin Abdullah (pic right) said the procedure for transfer of address is "standard, which is to fill the relevant document and hand it over to the appointed registration officer for due process.

The only difference is that armed forces personnel fill up a different form. He said if Wong has any inquiries he could submit an objection request whereby the department will do a check."

JAG

MBI Acts on IE Reader Alert



Before



After

On August 3, Ipoh Echo received a call from a reader that a "dangerous looking building renovation" was ongoing at the junction Jalan Tahwil Azhar and Jalan Mustapha Al-Bakri.

A drive to the location revealed that the building had its inner sections removed but left the "original walls" intact. The walls were tied with cables and secured to the inside of the buildings.

A "Temporary Work Permit" issued by MBI was displayed onsite. However, there was no scaffolding or netting erected alongside the perimeter of the worksite. Additionally the notice board indicating the project details was not yet on display.

Ipoh Echo took photos of the worksite and presented them to officials of MBI's Building department to get their views on August 5. No comments were forthcoming other than saying they would "look into it."

On Monday August 8, workmen at the worksite were seen erecting the fencing, scaffolding and netting. A call to MBI's Building office revealed that a stop-work order had been issued until all safety measures were in place.

Another drive-by on Thursday 11 August revealed that all safety features were in place while the project notice board too was on display.

Ipoh Echo would like to thank 'Anonymous' for highlighting her concern. And MBI for their prompt action

JAG

Announcement

A DAY IN...

wants to showcase your hometown on film!!

The concept is simple; we'll send you a film camera to take 3 shots of your day in your hometown.

The results will be compiled online and composed into an exhibition.

For more details of the project, go to: www.materialpoetry.com

"projects" section, or on facebook at: www.facebook.com/materialpoetry.

Wellness

Cataract

Ipoh Echo's Eye Health Series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr. S.S. Gill talking to us about **Cataract**.



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

The lens in our eyes plays a crucial role in vision. This lens is transparent, crystalline and focuses light on the back of the eye (retina). When this crystalline lens becomes **cloudy**, it is called a **cataract** which is most commonly seen in the elderly.

When the lens becomes a cataract, it affects vision in some way or the other, either in the loss of **clarity** or **quality** of vision. This is because cataracts **block and distort the light** that has to pass through the lens, causing visual symptoms.

In **Malaysia**, cataract is the **leading cause of poor vision** in patients above the age of 55 years. Cataracts usually occur very gradually although there are instances it may occur rapidly.

Quite often, people may be unaware that they have cataracts because the changes in their vision have been gradual. Cataracts commonly affect both eyes, but it is not uncommon for cataracts to advance more rapidly in one eye.

What are some common causes of cataract?

Contrary to popular belief, cataract is not caused by reading or eye strain. It can be described in terms of the cause as follows:

- **Aging:** This is the commonest cause for cataracts developing. Almost every person will develop a cataract at some stage of life because everyone is constantly aging. Most individuals will have cataracts by the time they reach their seventies.
- **Secondary cataracts.** These occur due to medical conditions, like diabetes, or to exposure to toxic substance and certain drugs like corticosteroids or diuretics, radiation and ultraviolet exposure. Other factors that can increase a person's risk of developing such cataracts include air pollution, and heavy alcohol consumption.
- **Traumatic cataracts.** These form as a result of an eye injury. At times the injury may have occurred much earlier and you may have even forgotten about it. If you do remember any history of trauma, it should be highlighted to your eye doctor.
- **Congenital cataracts.** Babies are sometimes born with cataracts as a result of an infection, injury, or poor development. They may also develop during childhood.

Most cataracts develop slowly and don't disturb your eyesight early on. But with time, these cataracts will eventually interfere with your vision. Congenital cataracts have to be treated early to avoid permanent loss of vision that cannot be reversed later on.

In the initial treatment of cataracts in adults, stronger lighting and stronger powered spectacles may be able to help you deal with cataracts. But if the impaired vision interferes with your usual activities, you may need cataract surgery. The good news is that cataract surgery is generally a safe and effective procedure.



Normal vision



Blur vision due to Cataract

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

Surviving Breast and Lung Cancer



Two hospitals in China offer Sonodynamic and Photodynamic Therapy (SPDT) which is a new anti-tumour technology to treat breast and lung cancer, the most common types of cancers. SPDT uses a combination of treatment cycles: ingesting a natural photosensitiser which will be selectively absorbed by cancer cells; photodynamic therapy using high intensity infrared light to penetrate and destroy the cancer cells surrounded by the photosensitiser, ultrasound therapy to penetrate into deep cancerous tumours. This natural therapy treats the entire body from head to toe and is particularly effective with tumours that are resistant to other treatments. It

can be used safely and effectively many times. It can also be used in combination with very low doses of traditional radiation and chemotherapy.

Xiaohuai Wang, Oncologist at Guangzhou Military Hospital, China, explained the new technology during his talk organised by Perak Academy at Syuen Hotel. Dr. Wang said that he has been offering this treatment since 2004 and presented case studies of the patients he had treated. He added that patients who come to him are those who have reached the last stage of treatment and their doctors had given up hope and were informed that they had no chance of survival. All patients who came to him have been cured and are still alive. Since this is a new technology, the longest surviving patient is about five years.

Further information can be obtained from Lucy Li who speaks good English and can be contacted on lucy_li@hotmail.com or telephone +8613822120373.

Community

Mother Teresa's Kindercare Programme



Mother Teresa's Reading Shelter in Buntong is running a free preschool programme, "Mother Teresa's Kindercare" for underprivileged children who are six years old and soon to begin formal education in 2012. The programme provides education for children from poor families, parents who are terminally ill and from orphanages. The children are provided free books, bags, stationery, uniform, shoes and resource materials. Healthy refreshments are given during break time and free transport is provided.

The programme focuses on reading and writing essentials with hands-on learning. It provides wholesome and integrated education to enable underprivileged children to reach their holistic potential. Holiday classes are held for the children mainly to interact with other children.

There are seven students and one full-time teacher and three more students will be joining soon. The programme is fully funded by donations received from well-wishers. Those wishing to sponsor can call Jacquelene at **05-2410751**.

AJ

SMI Centennial Launch



Calling all "Sons of St Michael's, Valiant and True, Hearken you all for the trumpet is sounding. Render with joy to your Mater her due". So chorus the words of SMI's school anthem in preparation for the school's 100-year anniversary next year.

St Michael's Institution first opened its doors on December 4, 1912 in a Malayan bungalow with just 37 students and today has over 2,100 students from Form One till Pre-University.

Passing through its doors were leaders from a multitude of professions, such as, current IGP Tan Sri Ismail Omar, Class of '70, badminton greats like Thomas Cup champs Ng Boon Bee and Tan Yee Khan and recently Koo Kien Keat (2009/2010 Doubles World Champion), Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian, Chairman of KL Kepong, as well as Ralph Marshall, Group CEO of Astro. Then too it groomed Michaelians with attitude such as Patrick Teoh (DJ, Stage and TV personality) and Mariam Mokhtar (petroleum chemist and columnist).

The culmination of the celebration will be a Grand Dinner to be held in the school grounds on the 4th week of September next year when Old Michaelians from around the world are expected to attend.

Present for the announcement was Dato' Brother Vincent Corkery, Mr Adrian Tsen Chairman of OMA (Old Michaelians Association), Joseph Michael Lee, Chairman of PIBG (Persatuan Ibu Bapa dan Guru) and SMI Principal Mr Phoon Chong Chee.

JAG

VACANCIES

Principal, teachers and office staff for English Centre, (new branch) Gopeng Road, Ipoh. Materials and training provided.

Call **05-242 7127 / 016-559 7127**

Email : cpelanguageschool@hotmail.com

Orphans Hosted by Soroptimist International Ipoh

Over 90 children including all of the Salvation Army Orphanages in Ipoh and 17 from the Home of Peace in Canning Garden, were treated to the Nationwide Charity Premiere of Cars 2 hosted by Soroptimist International Ipoh (SII) recently. The event was part of Soroptimist International Region of Malaysia (SIROM)'s inaugural nationwide charity premiere which saw 2,800 tickets sold around the country for its first-ever nationwide endeavour with the children coming from more than 30 homes across the peninsula.

In Ipoh, Tanjong Golden Village (TGV) cinema helped to make the charity event a big success. "The management from the cinema involved were very helpful in providing us with their hall for the screening. However, this whole thing would not have been possible if we did not have the full support of Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures right from the get-go. Their involvement allowed us to kick-off this programme confidently and provide the children with the rare opportunity to watch a movie premiere," added Kuan Khoo, President of SII.

Tickets for the premiere were sponsored both by individuals and corporate sectors who shared in the organisation's vision of enabling children from the



homes to watch a movie. Proceeds from the ticket sales of RM6,000 in Ipoh will be channelled to SII's educational programme, *OK TAK OK*, a full-day workshop on personal safety, targeted to educate Primary 5 and 6 school children on child sexual abuse and what is acceptable and unacceptable touch/behaviour from adults.

Soroptimist International is a worldwide service organisation for women. It is a global voice for women working through Awareness, Advocacy and Action and committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide. Soroptimist International Region of Malaysia has been established in the country for the past 20 years and Soroptimist Ipoh in the past 3 years.

SFCK

Hari Raya GLOOM



Two families' hopes of a cheery Hari Raya Adil Fitri went up in flames when their rented wooden houses in Sungai Rokam were gutted by fire on Thursday, August 18, barely two weeks before the big day.

Halifah Md Som, 35, escaped with her 6-day old infant child, Dewa Armadan Ismail. She was resting in her bedroom when she saw smoke bellowing from the living room. She called out to her younger sister and her other child, a 4-year old toddler, and they escaped the inferno through the backdoor.

"My only thought at that moment was the safety of my family, not of my own," she told reporters when met. Halifah had just been discharged from the hospital after delivering her baby boy. "All of my Hari Raya preparations including clothing, shoes and cookies are gone. It happened so fast," said the distraught mother who works as a cleaner.

Idang Alvarez, 36, ran all the way from her place of work at the Megoplex shopping mall, a distance of two

kilometres, upon receiving news about her burning house. She and her husband, Amir Sharipuddin, 54, and their eight children have been renting the house since 1998.

"My husband and I were at work while three of my kids were at home when the incident happened," she recalled. "On receiving the information on my mobile, I ran straight for home. The fate of my children was the only thing on my mind. Fortunately, all three were safe."

Idang could do little to salvage her family's belongings, including her Hari Raya goodies. "They're all gone. It's hardly 15 minutes," she exclaimed.

Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan's Chief Executive Officer, Dato' Zainal Abidin Omar was at the relief centre the following morning. He donated RM1,000 each to the two families. "This is YBU's contribution to the unfortunate victims," he told reporters. The foundation's cash aid is part of its on-going programme to help the poor and the needy in the state, irrespective of their ethnicity and beliefs.



RM

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4. Show room maintenance

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Female, min Form 5
2. Outgoing, mature & pleasant personality
3. Conversant in English

PURCHASE & STOCK ASSISTANT (BASED IN GOPENG INDUSTRIAL PARK)

JOB FUNCTIONS:

1. Assists in sourcing and purchasing
2. Costing and pricing functions
3. Regular branch visits for stock check

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Experience in logistic preferred
2. Mature and able to work independently
3. Min Diploma/Degree in any field

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Contact or email Ms Esther Lim
Tel: 05-3576070

E-mail: secretary@mitavite-asia.com
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HEARTIEST APPRECIATION TO

YAB Dato Seri DiRaja Dr. Zambry Bin Abdul Kadir
Menteri Besar Perak Darul Ridzuan

for witnessing the



Signing Ceremony of MOU between

Setia Awan Holdings Sdn Bhd & Persatuan Peniaga Nilai 3

held on 5th August 2011



&

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS



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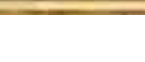
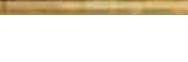
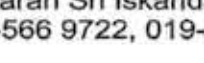
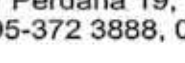
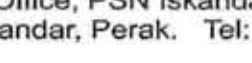
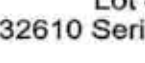
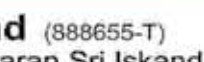
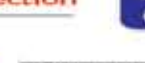
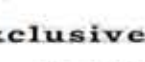
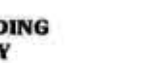
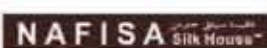


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Persatuan Peniaga Nilai 3, N.S.



Another Project by:

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32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak. Tel: 05-372 3888, 010-566 9722, 019-578 7722

LETTERS

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

Proposed Columbarium

The news reported in the Chinese & Star papers are hearsay, speculation, and very biased. The proposed Columbarium project is located in Ipoh Garden East, Taman Kemuncak.

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Tan Kean Choon, a graduate from International Cemetery Cremation Funeral Association (ICCFA University), certified Crematory Administrator. I am director of Haluan Ikhlas Sdn. Bhd. and the developer for the above project.

During the planning and design stage the company had taken due consideration and sensitivity of the residents. We are a caring company.

On July 29, we had been instructed to give a briefing of our project to the One Stop Centre, Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh. Prior to this we had been through various departments and approved by our State Government with guidelines and conditions.

For your information, the Chinese and Star papers presented the facts wrongly. Allow me to address the main concerns of the residents regarding the Proposed Columbarium in Ipoh Garden East, Taman Kemuncak.

1. Pollution – we foresee 2 types: Air Pollution and Noise Pollution.

- *Air Pollution*, we do not have a crematorium, so there will be no Air Pollution.
- *Noise Pollution*, we do not have crematorium and land burial, so there will be no funeral procession and services in the Columbarium. They will come only



a few days after their ceremonies and cremation, bringing only the ashes. There will be no drums and band processions, the funeral will already be over.

2. The Access (The road to the Columbarium)

- We have alternative access from Jalan Tambun. We do not use the Taman road. In future, residents will use this alternative road because it's convenient and no traffic jams. So it is a benefit.

3. Buffer Zone

- The Company allocated about 70:30 ratio, 70% for the Buffer Zone. The nearest residential house is about ±200m away from our building.

4. Traffic Jam / Car Park

- We have alternative access from Jalan Tambun so it will ease the problem. The Columbarium has 500 car-parking bays.

5. Eerie and Frightening Environment

- For information, this columbarium will be a new

landmark in ipoh, well landscaped and with recreational facilities. The surrounding land and area will be maintained; even the IWK sewerage system plant in Taman Kemuncak will be landscaped. We had written to IWK for permission. After completion, residents can seek permission to go in for morning walks because of the beautiful, serene and tranquil environment. Most important of all, safety is assured as we have 24-hour security.

6. Property Depreciation

- With all the above work done, we are positive that it will add value to the property so the above concerns will not happen.
- Finally, for general information, there are two other cemeteries: Indian and Muslim, in this area which were here long before us. Due to development, we are encroaching on this area's cemetery land. At the main entrance to the Columbarium, left and right, the houses had been bought by the Company. Also those buildings appearing in the newspapers belong to the Company. The nearest resident to our property is about 200m away.

All the above issues had been foreseen and had been taken into consideration along with the sensitivity of the surrounding people during the planning stage. We are a caring and responsible company.

The late Tan Kean Choon
16 August 2011

Editor's note: Unfortunately, Mr. Tan passed away just before publication of this letter. Our heartfelt condolences to his family.

Young Perak

Photography Exhibition



Kolej Poly-tech Mara held a photography exhibition recently in which 20 photographers from all over Perak participated. The objective of the programme was to expose the finer points of the subject to its students.

College director Norizan Noordin said that photography was a popular subject among her students. However, most of them need exposure to enable them to develop their skills. The programme was organised with this aim mind. It was a boon to the students, as it provided them with an opportunity to rub shoulders and share experiences with the professionals.

The one-day exhibition attracted over 500 visitors to the college grounds. A competition on creative graphic design was also held.

SH

IIS's Outstanding A-Level Results

Ipoh International School (IIS), the first in Ipoh to offer both sciences and humanities A-Levels has recorded outstanding results from its pioneering batch of students.

"Ipoh today, the world tomorrow," declared Sabrina Kaur Dhaliwal who won top honours in the Cambridge International A-Level Examinations 2011. Sabrina who hopes to become a doctor scored straight As in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. Sabrina also scored the prestigious A* for Physics. She attributed her success to the encouragement of her parents and to the excellent teaching standards at the school.

"The academic approach was challenging, inspiring and exciting," offered Sabrina who was the champion lady athlete and a Shakespearean drama enthusiast. She was also named "Best All-Round Scholar 2011" at the school.

Among other students who won academic laurels for IIS were: Lee Sue Ern (3As, 1B), Yul-Rahim Zaman (3As, 1B), Estee Lau Pui Mun (2As, 1B) and Yoghnan Logenthiran (2As, 1B).

In the AS Examination (Stage 1) 2011, two home-grown students of IIS hit the Cambridge International Examinations headlines by achieving perfect scores in several subjects. Evelyn Chua Yi-Lynn and Ashwin Narayan put IIS in the ranks of top-scoring schools with their outstanding individual scores. Evelyn Chua scored straight As in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Thinking Skills. She also attained a perfect score of 100 marks in Physics. Ashwin Narayan who achieved the "Top in the World" ranking in his O-Level Examinations (2010) continued his winning style with straight As and perfect scores for all three subjects in the AS examinations. Ashwin's perfect scores were in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics.

IIS currently has 68 students in its Cambridge A-Level



Programme. It offers both the sciences and the humanities subjects. It also offers a co-curricular programme that includes community service and Shakespearean drama.

The next intake for A-Levels will be in January 2012.

For more information, contact: Ipoh International School – ipoh@tenby.edu.my.

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Instilling the Merdeka Spirit



It has been 54 years since Malaysia achieved its independence. Unfortunately, most of our youngsters do not understand the real meaning of independence. With this in mind, SMK Tasek Damai organised several activities for its students.

Principal Hj Abu Hanipah Isa, in his speech during the launching of the programme, said that the organised activities were aimed at instilling patriotism in the students.

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My Say

By Jerry Francis



The suggestion that the state government sponsors elected representatives who want to pursue higher education “while in office” is ridiculous. There are already complaints that our elected representatives are not serving their constituencies responsibly and efficiently. How can we ever consider using taxpayers’ money to sponsor them for higher studies?

If the state assemblymen are to take up the offer to study, will they have time to fulfil their responsibilities to their electorates? I have my doubts. And, when they are bogged down by their studies and fail to serve the *rakyat*, who is to be blamed? Certainly the blame will fall back on us. It would be our own doing for encouraging them to take up higher studies through a sponsorship scheme paid through the state’s coffers.

Therefore, I find it hard to comprehend that anyone can come up with such a preposterous proposal, except perhaps from the state assemblymen themselves, who want to enjoy more perks.

In my view, those who are interested in pursuing higher education should complete their studies before offering themselves as candidates for the elections. Otherwise, they would be torn between their goal to achieve higher education and serving their electorates.

I was amazed when I read a report quoting Menteri Besar Dato’ Seri DiRaja Dr. Zambry Abdul Kadir stating in the Perak State Assembly recently, that this proposal had been received by the state government amongst many others. He then went on to elaborate that a special committee has been formed with the task to review and to increase the allowances received by the 59 elected assemblymen in the state. The last review, which saw a rise of 10 per cent in allowances, was in January, 2004.

He said the special committee would, apart from reviewing the incentives, look at “how to help ease the burden of state assemblymen, which will make them more efficient when carrying out their duties.”

In his own words, the Menteri Besar is admitting that the state assemblymen are currently not efficiently carrying out their duties and need help to overcome their burden.

If this is the case, how will allowing them to pursue

Should State Assemblymen Pursue Higher Education at Rakyat’s Expense?

higher education help them to be more efficient?

While it may be fine to increase their allowances as state assemblymen (now RM5,912 which is lower than those allowances given by most states) or provide book allowances, but the opportunity to pursue higher education would only divert their attention from serving

the people as they are being elected to do.

Why not help the state assemblymen after they had served their terms. Such an incentive to pursue higher education could be given as “an appreciation” to deserving state assemblymen who had dedicatedly and efficiently carried out their duties.

It would be like the “civic street” (or resettlement) scheme, which allows members of the armed forces take up an on-job training of their choice before they are being discharged. The state assemblymen could pay back part of the cost of the expenses for their higher education through a small deduction of their monthly pension.

Partial payback of the expenses is essential to ensure only those genuinely interested in higher education are given such assistance, otherwise it could be abused.

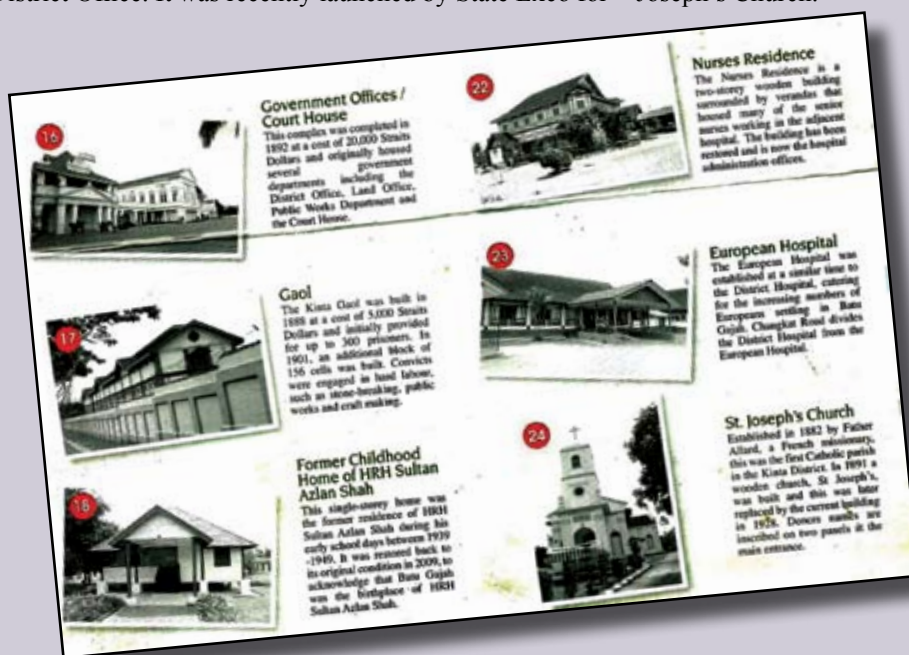
Heritage

Batu Gajah Heritage Trail

Batu Gajah (BG) now also has a Heritage Map. It is called “Batu Gajah Heritage Driving Trail”.

The map was produced by the Kinta Heritage Group in collaboration with Perak Tourism and Batu Gajah District Office. It was recently launched by State Exco for

Tourism Dato’ Hamidah Osman. The map starts from the Sri Subramaniyar Temple on Jalan Pusing and onwards to Kuan Tay Temple on Jalan Besar before heading up to Changkat Road government offices and terminating at St Joseph’s Church.



The entire trail stretches approximately 10km, just nice for a Sunday morning outing on a bicycle. Just strap your bike to the back of your boot and check out the fresh air at BG.

The maps are free and available at the Batu Gajah District Office. Tel. No.: 05-3661963.

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