

SEPTEMBER 1- 15, 2008

PP 14252/10/2008(007226)

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THUGS ATTEMPT HIJACKING OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE

Vengeance raid aimed at silencing community's voice

Photographs
by Rosli Mansor

Unprecedented in Malaysian newspaper publishing history, organized crime has resorted to violent burglary in an effort to silence the *Ipo Echo* – Perak's, indeed the nation's, only independent community newspaper.

Never before has any Malaysian newspaper had to face criminally directed, stand-over tactics of vengeance and retribution. State political leaders, both government and opposition, have been appalled by what is seen as tantamount to an underworld declaration of war against this paper.

Perak Menteri Besar, Dato'Seri Mohammad Nizar, expressed shock at the news. "I'm appalled by this despicable act. It is a direct and quite unacceptable violation of some of our most valued principles – the right of free speech, freedom of the press and the ready exchange of ideas," he said.

DETAILS

We can now reveal details of the attack launched against us hours before our last issue (Issue 56) was due to go to press.

There can be no question about the two fold aim of the onslaught that targeted our Jalan Lasam offices between midnight on Monday, August 11 and 6 am the following morning.

First was the intention of halting the paper's printing process. Second, and equally important, was a plan directly geared to threatening and intimidating our staff.

The thugs involved had been well briefed. They zeroed in on the one piece of technical equipment retained at the office – our central graphics computer – critical to the paper's final production process.

READY FOR TRANSMISSION

This computer contained the August 16 issue's complete graphics that were to have been transmitted to the Penang printers on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 12.

Employing cutting implements brought with them expressly for the purpose, the commissioned burglars, believed to number no more than two or three, cut through numerous connecting cables and removed the entire

computer with its 19-inch screen.

But before doing so, they systematically ransacked our offices room by room.

Their first attempt at breaking into the premises was via a rear entrance. This entailed initially

of expensive, easily removable computers in each of these rooms the intruders pointedly left this equipment totally untouched.

In the main ground floor foyer where our office manager normally works, the attacking gang headed

act was to instill fear into the *Echo's* staff.

Climbing the stairs to the upper floor, the intruding gang once more ignored expensive computer equipment at a reporter's desk. It was as if they were completely disinterested in making away with anything substantial but the precise target of their raid.

Almost certainly using the fire extinguisher as a battering ram as before, they disintegrated a glass door leading from the upstairs foyer area and entered the office of our editor, Fathol Zaman Bukhari. Once again they wrenched open drawers, seemingly indifferent to contents. There was no computer equipment available in the room. The editor always takes his portable one home with him each night.

TWO ITEMS

But there were two items in the editor's desk that at least caught the thugs attention. One was a digital camera; the other a tape recorder. Both would have been easily fenced on the city's stolen goods market.

Instead of stealing these, the intruders chose to leave them behind – but abandoned in prominent positions. The tape recorder was left at the centre of the editor's desk top; the camera, on top of the office fax machine – another untouched but easily removable piece of equipment had theft been the gangsters' primary intention.

It was in our graphic artist's room on the upper



After smashing their way into the editor's office they took nothing there.

dislodging a steel gate which they accomplished. However, their attempt here was thwarted by a heavily locked wooden door.

Undeterred, the thugs moved to the front of the two-storey building and set to work on the main protective sliding steel grill. After wrenching this free, probably employing crowbars, they forced the glass front door and entered the ground floor section. Grabbing a wall-

for two separate desk positions. They broke open all drawers and emptied the contents, scattering them widely across the floor. They stole nothing from the desks. Significantly, they even chose to ignore a prominently placed petty cash folder with its currency notes and a number of uncashed cheques made out in favour of the newspaper's advertising section.

At this point, a particularly disturbing aspect



Nor was the finance manager's office spared, although the attack here appeared more methodical.

mounted fire extinguisher, they smashed their way through glass and wooden doors in order to gain entrance to the three main ground floor offices.

Despite the presence

of the raid occurred. The intruding gang pocketed a collection of staff calling cards. Such cards are valueless to anyone but the person identified on them. The clear intention of this

floor that the gang finally spotted what it had come for – the *Echo's* main computer. Smashing through yet another glass door, they snipped the cables, lifted out the only prize they



The edition the thugs tried to block



Battering down the door of a ground floor office, the raiders showed no interest in valuable computer equipment in this room.

had been ordered to seize and departed, presumably confident they had fully achieved their objectives.

They were to be proved wrong.

In their blundering, bull-headed stupidity, the thugs had overlooked a key piece of equipment – our back-up system.

Much creative effort, of course, was lost in the attack. But staff members and stringers rallied magnificently.

Working with the back-up system and long into two following nights, they were able to re-design Issue 56.

Also coming to our assistance were our printers with a specially rushed production effort. The result: *Ipo Echo's* Issue 56 met its exact publication schedule.

Police were quickly on the scene following our report to their headquarters. Investigators brought in fingerprint experts who

went about their exhaustive tasks meticulously.

Officers, like ourselves, are convinced the Jalan Lasam attack has been an attempt to cripple the *Echo* and, at the same time, to intimidate staff.

As such they feel certain it has been a deliberate act of vengeance by an organised group that has hired thugs to do their dirty work.

The group, it is felt, is angered by our reporting efforts to date and apprehensive about future prospects should we continue independent publishing fully adhering to the principles of freedom of the press.

In this context, police investigators have been paying close attention to stories we have covered over the months and those on which we are currently working.

Additionally, they have sought our assessments as to who, we consider, might be behind this quite extraordinary and sinister break-in.

IPOH ECHO AND THE STATE'S POLICE

Following organised crime's attack on our offices, Ipoh Echo's editor, Fathol Zaman Bukhari, together with reporter, James Gough, met with Perak's Chief Police Officer (CPO), Dato' Zulkifli bin Abdullah, for an exclusive interview.

The aim: to explore the vital and inter-related issues of current crime, public safety and how the state's community newspaper might assist police in crime prevention measures

Ipoh Echo: Dato', as you are aware *Ipoh Echo* is the only community-based newspaper in the country and we have been around since 2005. Do you think we can be of use to the Police?

CPO: I have been reading your paper regularly. If I remember correctly, in one of your editorials, you mentioned about the police not wanting to divulge information about a police personnel who was allegedly involved in snatch theft.

Yes, I believe *Ipoh Echo* has a role in the community and can be of use to the Police. It can also be a good platform for the people to voice their grievances.

Ipoh Echo: I received a call from ACP Zulkapli about the editorial piece and had explained our position. We were in the dark on actions taken in respect of the officer and this in spite of our enquiries with the station.

CPO: I appreciate the power of the media. You have a role to play in society and so do the Police. However, I feel it's better that we cross check with one another before making any assumptions. My staff and I are always prepared to help. I have my monthly press conference for the benefit of the media. You can get the latest at this meeting. Other than that you can get information first hand from heads of departments. Crime related news from the CID chief, drug-related crimes from the narcotic chief and so forth. ACP Zulkapli is the head of management and the PR department comes under him. If necessary, you can meet me too. My doors are open.

Ipoh Echo: Thank you. We will liaise with ACP Zulkapli for all matters relating to Police business in future. Is that okay with you?

CPO: Yes, do get in touch with him. He should be able to provide the information that you need. We must avoid miscommunication.

Ipoh Echo: I am offering the State Police a column in *Ipoh Echo* to make announcements from time to time.

CPO: Thanks so much.



CPO Dato' Zulkifli (centre) and ACP Zulkapli speak with Ipoh Echo Editor, Fathol Zaman Bukhari

I'll take up the offer but it will be on a need basis when there is information that I need to pass on to the public. You can check with ACP Zulkapli.

Ipoh Echo: Dato' our office was burgled recently. The thieves took away our graphics computer, CPU and a printer. We suspect it was premeditated as other items of value were spared. The Police were quick to respond as three patrol cars appeared at our place. Someone doesn't like what we are doing.

CPO: Whom do you suspect?

Ipoh Echo: It could be anyone based on the reporting that we have done recently. Anyway the theft has been reported to the Police and they are investigating. I hope it will be over soon. What are some of the plans and policies undertaken by you to ensure public safety currently?

CPO: Besides Rakan Cop there is the Community Policing initiated nationwide last month.

This is a more proactive approach and a good platform for members of the public to be involved in crime prevention.

Community policing involves the Police, the public and NGOs within a police district. Assisting them will be the Jabatan Perpaduan which caters for the Rukun Tetangga scheme. The Sungei Senam community policing is one fine example.

Get on to the OCS

Sungei Senam Police Station for a brief. I hope *Ipoh Echo* will do a coverage on this.

We have just acquired 168 patrol cars and they are being distributed all over the state. I have instructed all the district police chiefs to react quickly to distress calls from the public.

Physical presence is important. Patrol cars make their rounds in crime-prone areas with their lights flashing, especially at night, to make their presence felt. It is a form of deterrent.

Ipoh Echo: Dato', with the recent petrol and diesel price hike do you see a corresponding increase in crime, especially petty thefts since people are really hard-pressed now?

CPO: Not really. In fact the rate in Perak is on a downward trend. There has been no significant increase in criminal activities - petty or serious.

Ipoh Echo: Have you been able to keep criminal activities in check and what are the steps taken to ensure public safety and protection?

CPO: Base on statistics we have been successful. Compared to the same period last year the rate between January 1 to August 14, 2008 saw a 3.5 percentage reduction overall. The national figure is 5 per cent. I hope to achieve this by year's end.

Policing involves these three tiers. Upfront is our MPVs or mobile

police vehicles. Next come enforcement agencies like the Rela and, finally, the public in the form of Rakan Cop and community policing. This is an effective method of ensuring public safety and protection. Like I have said our physical presence is essential.

Ipoh Echo: What sort of crime is high on your list?

CPO: Motor cycle theft.

It's over 40 per cent of the overall crime rates in Perak. And it's being committed by youngsters out for a fast buck or to cannibalize parts for illegal road racing - the *Mat Rempit*. That's why we need to educate the young. The community policing provides us an opportunity to interact with

the youth and students in the district or an area.

Ipoh Echo: How bad is the *Mat Rempit* menace? It's quite rampant at Polo Ground.

CPO: The problem is under control. My men are keeping areas such as Polo

continued on page 11

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Directory Service
103

Rakan Cop
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Perak Women for
Women Society
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012-505 0547

EDITORIAL

WE WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED

It never occurred to us that there might be people harbouring deep seated ill-will towards a newspaper that only seeks to serve the community.

Of course, an independent newspaper, like *Ipoh Echo*, wherever it publishes, will have supporters and detractors. That remains a fact of life and a most healthy one at that. Foremost on the plus side for us, we are not subservient to anyone. Therefore, we are able to report things as we see them rather than as we are directed.

Regrettably, much of our nation's media functions under strict directions and control. We, fortunately, are at liberty to publish news deemed beneficial for Ipohites no matter how this might aggravate certain quarters. Indeed, we have been doing just this for over three years. Despite all sorts of pressures, attempts to ignore us and efforts to put us in what is considered our rightful place, we have survived. It is a strong point in our favour.

All this may not go down well with some. Perceptions differ with individuals and groups. Basic to our publishing philosophy, though, is the recognition of differing views and the right that these be heard. Having said that, a resort to violence and intimidation in order to exhibit one's dissatisfaction is clearly unacceptable.

And this is exactly how we view the recent after-dark

intrusion of thugs into our Jalan Lasam premises.

As reported in our news coverage this issue, the thieves carted away our graphic computer, cpu and a printer – the very technical nerve centre of our publishing work. They obviously knew their target.

To provide a break-in camouflage for their actions, they destroyed office doors and rummaged through our drawers – but without taking anything of value. It was a clever ruse but not quite clever enough to conceal true motives.

Organised crime has hit *Ipoh Echo* and the intentions are obvious - to shut us up by way of intimidation and fear. Someone, or some group, is obviously not happy with what has been reported – or is being investigated. Their intentions are quite clear.

But let it be known that intimidation will not work with us. Let it also be known that we will work tirelessly with the authorities to bring those responsible for this unprecedented outrage to justice.

Ipoh Echo will not succumb to threats and will continue to do what it does best – serve as the community's fair and unbiased mouthpiece. No act of criminal bullying will deter us. We know peace-loving Ipohites are behind us. They are our strength and our inspiration.

*We are Ipoh's
most effective
voice.*

Ipoh Echo is an independent community newspaper published by Perakians for Perakians. It is distributed free of charge. Our costs are defrayed by advertisements placed by businesses and private individuals within the state. They see the big advantage in dealing with us – our fortnightly publication gives their ads **more mileage at less cost**. So, next time you want to buy or sell a house, a car, a dog or a cat, please call our Classifieds at: **(05) 549 5936 or 016 553 1092** **Ramesh Kumar**

THINKING ALOUD

By G. Sivapragasam

MINERS URGE GOVERNMENT
TO REVIVE TIN MINING

In Ipoh Echo's July 16 issue, we ran a feature from our Singapore correspondent, Andrew Symon, exploring the possibility of a tin revival in the Kinta Valley. His story prompted widespread public interest. Here G. Sivapragasam, our regular Thinking ALOUD columnist, discusses the intriguing prospect with tin industry authority, Dato' Chin Lean Choong. The first of Siva's two-part interview follows

Siva: We understand that the Perak Chinese Mining Association recently petitioned the Perak State Government to revive the mining industry in Perak. What response are you expecting?

Dato Chin: On May 15, 2008, the Association submitted a memorandum urging the State Government to revive this industry in Perak. In the memorandum we have detailed out how tin mining could be revived. We have also addressed the various concerns that have often been advanced for not doing so. We believe that we have made a very persuasive case for revival and are confident that the response from the State Government will be positive.

Siva: Perak was a dominant player in this industry and the Nation still possesses the second largest deposit of this mineral in the world. What caused us to falter necessitating revival?

Dato Chin: For a century Perak was a major producer of tin and indeed the metal was the prime mover of the State's economic development. However commencing about 20 years ago the industry experienced a worldwide slump causing a decline of the industry in this State. As it was left un-arrested it has become almost extinct. **Siva:** You would agree that the downturn in tin prices

was an experience shared by all producing countries. Whilst many countries continued this activity or revived it soon after what is the reason for the industry to continue in slumber in Perak?

Dato Chin: Whilst the tin price caused the initial collapse other factors emerged to prevent revival namely the perception that it was environmentally unfriendly and a State policy that discouraged mining activities.

Siva: Could you elaborate?

Dato Chin: The protracted slump in tin price from 1986 to 2003 during which the price of tin averaged about RM 15/- per kg forced many mines to close. During this time there emerged the perception that mining was an environment hazard that caused water and air pollution and damaged the natural landscape. This led to a government policy which has prevented large tracts of mining land to be exploited for tin.

Siva: Does the Association harbour any hope for the revival of this Industry in Perak?

Dato Chin: Certainly, hence the memorandum to the government. The Chamber is very confident that this industry can not only be revived but it could once again play an important role in Perak's economic growth.

Siva: What reasons have you for this optimism?

Dato Chin: First, the price of tin has risen substantially, second, we can show that mining activities are not environmentally damaging and, lastly as the government policy was based on the first two factors, we are hopeful it will be changed.

Siva: Whilst the price levels are attractive today what is the guarantee that it will not go down and there is the repeat of the 1986 scenario?

Dato Chin: Commodity prices that are determined by international market forces are subject to price fluctuation. It is brought about by changes in demand and supply of the commodity over a business cycle. The price of tin was stabilized under the International Tin Agreement (ITA) between 1956 and 1990. Before 1983, ITA members controlled over 75% of the world tin production.

However, after 1984, producing countries under the ITA controlled less than 60% of world tin production due to the emergence of Brazil as new major tin producer which unfortunately coincided with the slowdown of industrial activities in the developed countries. The Buffer Stock operation administered under the ITA ran out of money to defend the floor price of tin at RM29.15 per

kg; triggering the collapse of the tin market.

At the time of the collapse, the surplus stock, accumulated by the Buffer Stock was 70,000 tonnes excluding the surplus stock at mines and USA's strategic stockpile of 180,000 tonnes.

Hence the protracted depressed tin price from 1986 to 2003 at RM 15/- per kg. The situation, however, has changed.

The annual consumption of tin has steadily increased, rising from 209,000 tonnes in 1993 to 339,000 tonnes in 2004, tin metal stock has been completely liquidated and the US strategic stockpile has been reduced to about 3,500 tonnes as at January 2008 and is expected to be completely exhausted by year end.

Further there has not been any discovery of new deposits or any significant new investment in any of the tin producing countries. Brazil's production, for example, has been decreasing steadily from the high of 50,200 tonnes in 1989 to 9,600 tonnes in 2007.

As it takes 5 to 10 years to commission a new mine from exploration to production in the short to medium term, we can safely assume that the yearly world tin consumption would remain at about 320,000 tonnes with the tin price averaging between

RM50/- and RM35/- per kg.

Almost the entire consumption of tin is by industries that use it as an ingredient that constitutes a very small fraction of their product resulting in the price of tin relatively insignificant in the overall final output cost.

Siva: What is the viability of this activity at RM 35/- per kg in Perak?

Dato Chin: Presently, in Perak, the cost of production at an open cast/gravel pump tin mine is about RM 35/- per kg working on an average grade of 0.4 kpcy (0.309 kg/m3).

This factor together with our comparative edge in infrastructure over other producing countries and the availability of sufficient private sector risk capital to undertake exploration and prospecting activities delivers Perak the ability to sustain the industry once revived.

Siva: What makes you confident the consumption will remain at this level?

Dato Chin: Two factors. Tin, already a vital ingredient to the manufacturing of many industrial products, being a non-toxic metal it is increasingly being substituted for other toxic metals such as lead.

Then, there's the emergence of China and India as major consumers of tin.

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ISSUES TO WATCH

A NEW MAYOR ADDRESSES A FRESH TEAM OF COUNCILLORS

MBI convenes its full board meeting

In his first official meeting as Ipoh's new mayor, Roshidi Hashim, pledged to give his utmost to serve the residents and endeavour to resolve their problems.

He outlined the roles of councillors, saying they should establish close rapport with residents and listen to their woes.



Mayor Roshidi Hashim

The mayor announced that two officers from the council would be assigned to each councillor to assist them with administrative tasks.

YOUR COUNCILLORS AND HOW YOU CAN REACH THEM

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B. ABDUL AZIZ
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A C H U T H A R A M A N
(013-5211840)

ZONE 3

(Tawas, Tasek, Ipoh Grove)
D A T U K F R A N C I S L E E
Y E W H E A N
(clr_francis@mbi.gov.my)

ZONE 4

(Kinding, Tg. Rambutan, Putra)
C H E A H P O H T I N G
(016-5558766)

ZONE 5

(Bercham, Tasek, Dermawan)
C H E A H P O U H I A N
(016-5558766)

ZONE 6

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K R I S H N A N
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ZONE 7

(Gugusan Manjoi)
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A N I (017-5894485)

ZONE 8

(Tembok, Taman Cherry, Taman Lim)
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N. R A J A H (012-4580841)

ZONE 9

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(MP) (012-5034346)

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ZONE 18

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New scenario at MBI?

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FROM MY ALBUM

By Quicksilver

The Grand Labuan Shuffle

When stamps point the way to history

The Grand Labuan Shuffle Tracing history through stamps can be the source of endless intrigue. No matter how small the territory, if there are stamps connected to its past, then there are stories to be told. The island of Labuan is a classic example.

Let me start with a little background. Labuan began its administrative identity as part of the Brunei Sultanate.

SEPARATE COLONY

In 1846, the Island was ceded to Great Britain by the Sultan of Brunei and began life as a separate Crown Colony. Indicative Postal stamps were issued for the Colony and were in use from 1879 till 1890.

Eventually, administration of the Colony was transferred to the British North Borneo Company. This formally took place

on January 1, 1890.

Stamps of British North Borneo became available from 1891. These were conveniently overprinted in black with the word Labuan.

In 1902, Waterlow and Sons printed a new series of postage stamps known as the Labuan Crown type.

These beautiful designs were from a line engraved Key Plate depicting a Crown and the words Labuan Colony surrounding it.

By the time the 1906 Athens Summer Olympic Games had concluded, the seeds of administrative change were yet again being planted.

Thus, on October 30 that year those calling the colonial shots in London decreed London the transfer of the Crown Colony of Labuan to the Straits Settlements.

To prepare for this change, stocks of the

Crown type Labuan stamps were earmarked to be overprinted in Singapore.

OVERPRINTED

The Labuan stamps were all overprinted with the words "Straits Settlements" in two lines.

There was but one exception. The 10 cent value had the overprint on one line and in lower case.

As it happened, there were no 4 cent stamps in the original 1902 Labuan stock.

So, as the values of 12, 16 and 18 cents designs were not required, these values were duly overprinted and thus transferred to 4 cent values.

This proved a difficult process as each sheet of fifty stamps had to be put to press on four separate occasions.

Not surprisingly, noticeable variations in the end product qual-

ity occurred which has, of course, creating a further fascination for us mad stamp collectors.

Interestingly enough, these particular stamps were sold at the Labuan post office only but were still available for use if posted at any post office within the Straits Settlements.

OCCUPATION AND LIBERATION

Labuan was occupied by the Japanese and governed as an integral part of North Borneo. Renamed Maida Island or Pulau Maida by the Japanese, the territory was liberated by Australian Forces in June 1945. Labuan assumed its former name and came under the BMA or British Military Administration; it was then joined to British North Borneo in 1946 which in turn became part of Malaysia in 1963.

Now that you've read my account above, see if you can relate the various stamps I am reproducing here to the text. The 11 designs represent the entire range of Labuan postage stamps issued during the period I am talking about.



Ipoh Facts and Fancies

By Ho Tak Ming

New Town: Staid By Day, Another Story By Nightfall

The backdrop of Ipoh's limestone hills helped achieve a sedate picture

If Leech Street in Old Town before the First World War was more Chinatown than anything else, then New Town when it was completed in 1909 was a true cosmopolis. Here all the local races gathered at night to have a good time.

In the daytime it had a staid and respectable appearance, being in reality a modern town. It had no hidden ramshackle squalid sections. Moreover, the green limestone hills encircling Ipoh tended always to soften whatever was garish or bizarre.

TRAIN AFTER TRAIN

During the day, New Town appeared to be only sparsely populated, but with nightfall it assumed a different aspect altogether. Train after train unloaded its crowds of mining coo-

lies from the surrounding countryside to spend the evening amid the gaieties of the place. One visitor to Ipoh in 1912 described the scene:

"It is in the nighttime, when all the streets are aflame with lights stretching away into long vistas, when each several doorway and window frame sends out its splash of incandescent glow, when the thoroughfares are thronged with gaily-clad figures sporting the costume of every nation in the Orient - it is then that one seems to grasp the true inwardness of the life of the New Town. One of the most notable features in the growth of the New Town is the number of restaurants, hotels and gaily-furnished lodging houses that have sprung into existence for the accommodation of this floating population. Everyone appears to be

flush of money. The eating houses are scenes of jollity and junketting. From the hotels issue the rasping sharps of the Chinese fiddle, the piercing note of the flute or the raucous shrieking of the Chinese singing-



Sadly, New Town today pales before its history.

girl as interpreted by the gramophone.

"In the gambling houses all is crush and excitement and one can see all types represented among the gamblers - from the towkay risking his

hundreds upon a throw to the humble coolie whose stake is represented by a pile of five copper cents.

"Apart from the restaurants proper, one of the most interesting sights of the fair is to be found in a

survey of the street stalls, where every kind of edible under the sun seems to be procurable. To see the number of Orientals who frequent these al fresco food stalls makes one cogitate as to how many there

must be of them who never have a meal under a roof at all. Surely their name is legion.

"The two cinema theatres in New Town - the Ipoh Cinema occupying Yau Tet Shin's theatre and Harima Hall, which became the Oriental Cinema in 1915, had crowded houses nightly.

"The spots outside the cinemas were truly the heart of Ipoh's nightlife. One observer wrote, "In the roadway outside the Cinema a kaleidoscope of wondrously-clad Malays, Chinese and Indians eddies around the wheeled traffic. Bicycles make their way through the press with much ringing of bells and shouting. A motor car splits the press of humanity in twain like the waters of the Red Sea dividing for the passage of the Israelites. Little groups muster round the street

stalls buying sweetmeats, and cigarettes, and exchanging gossips."

In the intervals between one show and the next, there was even more confusion as the whirlpool of mixed nationality entertainment-seekers pushed their way to their respective destinations, the police pushing them along in their efforts to keep this surge of humanity clear of the entrances, and rickshaws and cars dashed up and down the street.

Only when the patrons of the late show were inside the theatre, did the tumult die down as the crowds began to disperse, the vehicles sped away and the stalls closed.

At midnight a few stragglers could be seen having supper in the coffee shops, with an occasional rickshaw still plying the somewhat deserted streets searching for fares.

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From Andrew Symon

MELAKA, PENANG SCORE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE COUP: IPOH NEXT?

Architectural heritage in the old town is impressive, fortunately situated in an area largely unmolested by intrusive modern development

A huge boost for the protection and preservation of Malaysia's historic buildings and urban landscapes has come with the UNESCO listing of Melaka's old areas and Penang's Georgetown as World Heritage sites.

It took seven years of campaigning by the cities before the Paris-based United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation finally gave its approval. As World Heritage sites the demarcated Malaysian sites become recognised along with such famous places in Southeast Asia as the ancient ruins of Angkor in Cambodia and the 9th century Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Indonesia.

The battle to have them listed has been hard fought with local conservationists often at odds with local government officials and property developers.

Their success is certainly newsworthy as they are the first pieces of Malaysian architectural/cultural heritage to be listed in this way. They join Malaysia's two natural heritage sites – the Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak and the Mount Kinabalu National Park in Sabah.

MORE THAN A MATTER OF TOURISM STARS

So, following their example, should Ipoh also seek UNESCO World Heritage listing for the historical old town – the area around the Padang and Railway Station and all its late 19th and early 20th century government and commercial buildings, schools, mosque, Chinatown and shop houses?

There is much to be gained for a city or region economically from a UNESCO Heritage listing as it raises its profile on the international tourism map. But listing is far more than just a matter of gaining

tourist destination stars.

With it comes quite demanding obligations on local, state and national governments to protect and preserve those buildings and areas that have been approved by UNESCO.

get frozen in time. But you don't go bulldozing down large slabs of old property to put up skyscrapers.

To gain UNESCO heritage listing, it's not a matter of having to match Egypt's Pyramids or

influences in trade and politics with the original Malay culture and the intertwining of all this with the immigrant Chinese and Indian cultures.

Ipoh could argue for listing of its old town on a similar basis. Certainly there are some very impressive early twentieth century colonial structures such as the Town Hall (1916), Court House (1928), Railway Station and Hotel (1917). And as the 1909 Birch Memorial Clock Tower recalls, protection of British interests in Perak, despite the resistance of local rulers, saw the gradual strengthening of colonial rule in the latter 19th century throughout all of Malaya.

But again, the story is not just about a few grand buildings but rather the overall precinct with its variety of architectures. Just glance around Ipoh's Padang.

WHERE ELSE

Where else would you find alongside each other such a fine example of Catholic neo gothic – St Michael's Institution (1923) – and the Mughal-inspired towers and arches of the graceful Indian Muslim Sheikh Adam Mosque (1908).

Then there is – or was, as its present closed condition places a question mark over its current status – the Chinese baroque FMS bar and restaurant (1906). These and other buildings in the area all come together to express Ipoh's story and its multi-cultural society.

Here is the town that was brought into being and fashioned by the tin mining boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. And it was the economic, social and political forces unleashed by the tin boom which also helped shape modern Malaysia – a fact which surely would reinforce Ipoh's claims for a UNESCO listing.



Ipoh's Railway Station... grand structure with a rich history

Just to reach the point where cultural/architectural or natural environment sites can be considered by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, governments must have already demonstrated their commitment to conserving those areas and clear plans in place for their future preservation.

The applications to UNESCO for listings of a local areas are carried out by national governments. Malaysia's right to seek listing (and the obligations that may flow from that) follows from its ratification of the 1972 Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The obvious question now posed is this: Does Ipoh and Perak wish to apply for listings? If so, Kuala Lumpur has to be on side.

There is no doubt that Ipoh's architectural heritage in the old town is impressive. What is more, it is fairly well concentrated in an area without too much intrusive modern development.

Already it presents as a good heritage precinct – and this could be enhanced further with appropriate restoration of the old China town, landscaping and strengthening of regulations to prevent inappropriate new development. This does not mean things

Sphinx, Athen's Acropolis, or China's Great Wall. Rather, the significance of a site is judged against quite wide ranging criteria by UNESCO experts. Broadly, the goal is to encourage protection of many diverse examples of the world's cultural (and natural) heritage. Buildings and sites need not be ancient and spectacular.

The aim is not a restrictive list of only world's wonders but rather an ever expanding array of the variety of civilisation's architectural (and also engineering and technological) achievements and expressions of different cultures and their historical interactions over the centuries.

There are now 878 sites under the World Heritage list – 678 cultural, 174 natural and 26 mixed.

In the case of Georgetown and Malacca, their historic centres would not be listed simply because they contained important and sometimes grand buildings. What finally determines a listing is whether old streets and buildings represent distinctive and important periods of local and indeed international history. Thus the arrival of the West into Southeast Asia through the Portuguese, Dutch and British become important ingredients. So, too, does the mix of their roles and

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PHASES & FACES

ROYAL SMILES...THE DAY THE PRINCESS ARRIVED EARLY

It is not often that one gets to shake hands with a princess. Recently, 45 students of Polyteknik Ungku Omar had that opportunity. The Patron of Kelab Wanita Perak, Raja Dato' Seri Azureen bte Sultan Azlan Shah presented them the contributions recommended by the Polytechnics Students Affairs Department.

ahead of the busload of other Kelab Wanita Perak members coming in from Kuala Lumpur.

On hand to greet her on her arrival was the Chairman of Puspanita Polyteknik, Ungku Omar Puan Hajjah Hafizah.

The Princess called her club members to get their anticipated time of arrival. In the meantime, Puan Hajjah Hafizah attended to



Princess Azureen (second from right) presents the derma to one of the 45 students

Members of the Perak Royal Family are well known for their punctuality and, as it happened, Princess Azureen arrived ten minutes before the scheduled time, well

the princess in her office. Princess Azureen showed no signs of being disturbed by all the background flurry. She was her regal smiling self throughout the programme. **JAG**

CHARITY CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON HEALTHY BREAKFASTS

Some two hundred inmates from five charity organisations in the northern region now look forward to a breakfast of sardines, mackerel, tuna and baked beans every morning. This will go on for the next three months. Courtesy of Ayam brand, recipients - children, disabled and old folks - from 21 Homes nationwide are benefiting from the campaign, touted to be the first charity initiative

of various Homes with a nutritious breakfasts while simultaneously educating them about good dietary habits. Spokesman Nariman Jonid said the campaign started in stages with five Homes in the northern region: Yayasan Latihan Insan Istimewa (YLII) Ipoh, Pusat Harian Kanak-kanak Spastik Ipoh, Pertubuhan Kebajikan Darul Aitam in Alor Setar, Rumah Kanak-kanak Bakti in Kepala Batas and St Joseph Home in Penang.



Apart from meals, the Homes will also receive RM1,000 each towards operating expenses

of its kind in Malaysia.

The 116,000 Healthy Breakfasts for Charity Campaign aims to provide the residents

Similar campaigns by the company will be held in Johor, Terengganu and Kuching.

PK



See Foon

Recently, I heard a meditation master debunk the famous premise upon which western philosophers have waxed lyrical for centuries: "I think, therefore I am".

He went on to propose that it is our "thinking" that actually hides our true nature which is essentially pure and unobstructed.

I pondered long and hard on this and had an epiphany of sorts when I asked myself the question, "How often have you had an original thought?"

I realised that most of the time, I am parroting and repeating what I have been taught, or "caught" from parents, peers, and the world around us.

What we tend to overlook, however, is how many of these same lessons, thoughts, mental images and emotions we entertain daily. We play them repetitiously, until they become the habitual thoughts that colour and shape our world, motivating and directing every other thought, word and act.

Once a habit is impressed upon conscious-

Musings

by See Foon Chan-Koppen

THINNING OUT THE CLOUDS OF DISCONTENT

The modified premise should be: "I think positively, therefore I am happier."

ness, whether it be positive or negative, it takes over, and both body and mind react accordingly. They say it takes 28 days to make or break a habit. As everyone who's ever quit smoking has told you, the unconscious urge to put something between the index and middle finger lingers way after the craving for nicotine wears off.

Or take someone who's prone to anger. How easy it is to lash out from unconscious habit at the smallest provocation, when we could instead develop the new habit of "take a deep breath and count to ten".



When you stop and consider how much of your thinking is repeated, however, you realise we humans are not the thinkers we believe ourselves to be. As I said in my last column, we are "remember-

ers." We remember every lesson we've ever learnt and live our lives accordingly. Albeit unconsciously.

If we could erase all our early conditioning memories I wonder how different our lives would be?

I do believe we need to consciously develop selective memory, making certain that those thoughts we choose to play repeatedly are the kind of positive, empowering thoughts that will help to create and maintain a happy life.

YOUR CHOICE

We can choose to think of our mother-in-law as the witch or we can remember that she loves her son very much and in her eyes, no woman is ever going to care for him the way she does.

We can then praise her mothering qualities and avert her possessiveness for her son.

We can think of ourselves as fat or we can choose to think of ourselves as curvaceous or well-rounded.

You can remember your ex-wife as being overbearing and domineering or choose to remember that you were simply temperamentally incompatible.

We can think that our parents neglected us or didn't give us the love and attention we needed.

Or we can choose to remember that they did the best they could at the time with the knowledge they had.

BETTER OPTION

"I think, therefore I am" is certainly true in the context of creating a positive successful life.

If we're going to cloud our pure unobstructed nature, it is certainly a better choice than the habitual whinge-ing and victimising thoughts that are so prevalent these days.

As long as we're repeating thoughts of lack, resentment, inadequacy and powerlessness, we'll continue to shape a world that mirrors those circumstances.

Let's create a better world for ourselves by monitoring our thoughts.

The Great Durian Festival 2008



Durians galore ... different varieties ... eat all you can ... and free!

An August Saturday at Bukit Gantang: the annual Great Durian Festival was on. Baskets of 20,000 durian fruit were available, free of charge. The public included ME!

Bukit Gantang is a short drive from Ipoh. Take the highway north, turn at Kuala Kangsar then take the old trunk road towards Taiping. A slow drive should get you there in 40 minutes.

The heavy aroma of durian hung heavy in the air. Your nose led you to reach your destination. Mine did.

At the site, there were lovely cultural dancers all made up, colourful bunga

manggar, the silat boys in their black costumes and two young girls with a batik veil each holding a tray with a large durian on top. All that on a Saturday morning.

continued on page 9

RE-ELECTED AND ONLY TOO HAPPY TO BE OF SERVICE

YB Puan Hamidah is still the face for Sungai Rapat/ Gopeng



YB Puan Hamidah bte Osman

Perak State Assemblyman for Sungai Rapat / Gopeng
Party: Barisan Nasional
Age: 47

Service centre:

57612 Kg Tasek Permai
31000 Batu Gajah Perak.

Working Hours:

9am – 5pm. Monday till Friday.

Service Centre Tel No:

05-3655 882

H/p: 019-5731 739

Education:

Primary and Secondary education at Sekolah Anglo Chinese Kampar. She majored in accountancy at UiTM Shah Alam.

Marital Status: Married with 4 children.

Life in politics:

Upon leaving UiTM, she returned to Ipoh and worked for the Malaysian Mining Corporation (MMC) as an

Assistant Accountant. She was with the same company until 1995. She was, by then, Assistant Area Accountant.

Other than the years when she was at UiTM, Hamidah has lived in Ipoh and the Kinta Valley all her life. Her father worked for the mining company Tronoh Mines and they lived in the company's 'mining kongsi quarters'. She remembers it fondly as a place where one's front door was always open and people were neighbourly. She even played football and learned a bit of Chinese. She is disheartened by the present day intense polarisation among the different communities. She does miss those 'good times'.

When she started working, she joined the UMNO branch called Kampung Sri Indah at Batu Gajah and was appointed the Branch Wanita Chief. She has held that position now for 26 years. Hamidah found it satisfying to help the poor and less fortunate in her community.

Back then, political activity had its emphasis on educational improvement. She would organise

talks and courses at the Dewan Orang ramai and the like.

Hamidah is currently the State Assembly person for Sungai Rapat. Her win in the recent 12GE is her second term in this post. Sungai Rapat is part of Gopeng Constituency and is the only Barisan representative in Gopeng.

Issues in her constituency

The usual SLR issue (rubbish, clogged drains and uncut grass) was the main thing. The other main complaint is damaged roads.

She is quick to add that MBI's services are indeed not up to standard. She summarises the problems - "there are insufficient funds; the rates had not been adjusted for the last 15 years and there is always a shortfall in collection." She is fully aware of these issues as she had served as a councillor for the Pengkalan Pegoh for three years.

Her service centre is located in Batu Gajah, near her house. She literally is on call the whole day and keeps her handphone on all

hours, every day. She sees on average 20-30 residents daily.

Their issues range from land matters, seeking her signature for scholarship applications and lobbying for financial assistance to build a house. She has her share of squatter issues but she claims that they are not insurmountable - "just takes a little longer to resolve".

She makes it a point to be in the office on Tuesdays and Friday (10am to 2pm) to meet her constituents.

Her views

On foreign investments:

Geographically, Ipoh is not an ideal location to attract foreign investments. From experience, foreign investors prefer to invest in either Penang or Kuala Lumpur due to the better logistics connections. She gives the example of land being offered to investors for RM10 per acre and yet there have been no takers. She doubts that the new government can do better.

Ipoh Airport

She thinks this should not be an issue because of

logistics. In two hours a traveller could already be in KL, 2.5 hours to KLIA and 1.5 hours to Penang. Air Asia did service Ipoh, she points out but they pulled out - didn't make money.

The tourism industry in Ipoh.

"Eco-tourism probably but it has to be done very well to ensure continued growth of the industry."

Activity in Ipoh Town.

Nothing much can be done. The area is defined. We have a Gerbang Malam but residents still prefer to go to their nearby *pasar malams*. It would be more practical to focus on the new townships on the outskirts.

Her ideal industry for Perak.

The education industry. Our cheap land, good environment for studying and low cost of living are all the ideal elements required to promote the education industry. If it is packaged and promoted

well it can be very successful.

On the new government.

"Four months on and they are still harping on old issues. They are weak. Three parties without a common manifesto will be difficult to work together. You can sense the friction amongst themselves during our dialogues. And they are slow."

On the negative "proverb" remark she made recently.

"It was a mistake. I have apologised for it. In fact Uncle Krishnan (MIC Chairman, Gopeng branch) called me immediately then and I explained to him what had transpired. I did *tarik balik* my statement but it was still highlighted by the Pakatan team."

(Ipoh Echo visited "Uncle" M. Krishnan subsequently and he informed me Puan Hamidah's character does not match those remarks made as "she helps all communities.")

He has been working closely with Puan Hamidah since 2004.

JAG

continued from page 8 . . . durian



One of the gracious young women carrying tempting trays of lovely durian on offer

A festival mood reigned.

I walked around the stalls. It was before 10am so the crowd wasn't thick yet. I tried several types of durian. Before the guest of honour, Federal Tourism Minister Dato' Sri Azalina arrived, I had already consumed almost two whole

pieces of different varieties. My favourite were the D24 fruit with small seeds and plentiful flesh.

Later, speeches were delivered by the chairman of MTPN Dato' Mat Isa and Dato Azalina Othman.



Apart from partaking of the fleshy fruit, one is treated to cultural dances and musical numbers

Dato' Mat Isa introduced a new scheme, "Cuti di Dusun" or "Holiday in the Orchard". Tourists would spend a night in a *pondok* or hut in the fruit orchard and, among other things, listen to or watch the durian fruit drop from

the trees to hanging nets.

Dato' Azalina highlighted the success of the Homestay product and the government's intention to expand it by allocating more grants from her ministry to both the state and parliamentary constituencies.

Presently, there are 28 registered Homestay participants in Bukit Gantang.

At the end, there was lunch which was another cultural lesson for me. Together with the varieties of durian I had *pulut* rice and *roti jala*, beef 'ren-

dang tok', *inti* or 'coconut filling', *santan* and *bubur kacang*.

There were many other dishes but I picked these as I had never seen them all on the same table before.

Bagus!

JAG

YOUNG PERAK

Students from participating schools are invited to write about or photograph things/events outside their respective institutions of learning. E-mail articles to:
editorial@ipohecho.com.my
 attn: Peter Khiew

MORE THAN A MILESTONE

A Chinese primary school will create history of sorts when it starts the new school term in January 2009 near Simpang Pulai, some 90 kilometres from its present location in Trong
 Peter Khiew reports

SJK (C) Padang Gajah has been in Trong, approximately 30 kilometres from Taiping for the past 55 years. The single block structure, of wood, is in an isolated village near Changkat Jering. The population comprises small holders, farmers and plantation workers. Over the years, it has groomed pupils – a number are now successful in various fields of endeavour.

ready for the newly constructed RM4.6 million building named after their alma mater. All their lives they had associated their Padang Gajah school with a modest wooden single-storey structure.

Woo Siew Ngo, 57, who went to the Chinese village school for her primary education, recalled the days when pupils of all standards had to study in one classroom, sharing a long table. She remem-



School principal Ooi (right) tells Year Six student Siva how the latter can improve his badminton

The Padang Gajah school will cease operating from its present location at the end of the year. Over the past decades it has experienced drastic drops in student enrolment. The reason: the migration of families who seek better socio-economic situations in the nearby towns.

The student population has thinned over the years and as there are no new listings in the school register, the Trong school has to close. Presently, it is being run for one student – Year Six pupil Sivasanthiran, son of an oil palm estate labourer.

A CONSOLATION - OF SORTS

But the name SJK (C) Padang Gajah will live on, albeit some 90 kilometres from its original site. Last July, an entourage of villagers, many of whom were former pupils of the school, wept openly when they arrived at the new site in Bandar Seri Botani, near Simpang Pulai.

They were not quite

visitors to the new site. The 84-year-old volunteered that she had sent all her children and grandchildren to the school for their

Twenty seven students and 40 teachers from SM Sains Raja Tun Azlan Shah in Taiping rolled up their sleeves and got their hands dirty for a noble cause – planting mangrove tree seedlings at the Mangrove Forest Reserve, Matang, near Taiping.



Students packing polybags with mud to plant the seedlings

The visit to the swampy area was part of the "Climate Cool School Project", an activity organised by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Tanjung Malim and the British Council for students and teachers to research and participate in the global effort to con-

serve the environment.

The "green" initiative started off with a briefing by personnel at the Forest Reserve. Teachers and students were then divided into groups. Assisted by forest rangers, the enthusiastic participants planted *Rhizophora mucronata*, the source for a variety of

in order to leave the local ecology largely undisturbed.

The sustained development and proper management of the Mangrove Forest Reserve at Matang by the Forestry Department has gained worldwide approval.

Baapu Shrreraj s/o

richness of the earth and did not associate mud with dirt."

Pursuing, a gratified Baapu claimed wading around to plant the seedlings helped dispel the negative mental misconceptions that people normally have about mud and swamps. "In fact,"



Transplanting mangrove seedlings into the swamp from the polybags

Selva Rajoo said the visit was an invaluable learning lesson to all. He referred to the experience of planting seedlings and handling mud with bare hands "enriching" for him, his fellow students and their teachers as well.

"For once," the Fourth Former added, "we felt the

he remarked, "we found it fun to be in the muddy mangrove swamp. I hope more schools will be allowed to take part in this project and more people will be inspired to participate in activities addressed to the issues of global climate change."

PK

early training.

BRAND NEW PLUSES

From January, 2009, the "new" – or "re-located" – Padang Gajah school will be housed in two three-storey blocks. The 3.54 acre-grounds will be home to 37 spacious classrooms, an administration centre, an



Top photo: The relocated SJK (C) Padang Gajah School. Lower photo: The new school premises get the approval of the visiting villagers from Trong.

assembly hall, a computer laboratory and a canteen. Additionally, there will be a resource centre and other facilities to meet the

requirements of existing educational curricula.

Speaking to reporters, the chairman of the school's Board of Governors (BOG), Tang Chun Thong, said the BOG and the Parents – Teachers' Association submitted an application to the Education Ministry to relocate the school to Ipoh on August 6, 2004. The approval was granted a year later.

The building plans were approved by the Ipoh City Council and construction work started in August 2007.

In April this year, according to Tang, the school submitted an application to the state education department for the allocation of students and teachers, paving the way for SJK (C) Padang Gajah to begin its new term in January 2009.

Tang further said that the school also offers an option for parents residing in Bandar Seri Botani and its vicinity to send their children over to study at SJK (C) Padang Gajah.

During the July visit, Tang declared that the relocation was made possible by the strong support of the Bandar Seri Botani developers, Pinji Botanics Sdn Bhd, a part of the property division in the Taiko Group, one of the

largest established property owners in Perak.

Tang said donation so far for the school project stands at RM 1.51 million. The developers currently fund the balance.

BACK IN TRONG

Meanwhile, it is business as usual in the unobtrusive surroundings of Padang Gajah in Trong. Lone student Sivasanthiran – arguably the most privileged Year Six pupil in the country – arrives promptly for the school assembly at 7:45 am.

After school hours, on Wednesdays, he has a dose of extra-curricular activities – the principal engages him in one-on-one badminton and table tennis; he wears the Red Crescent uniform and learns basic First Aid. Siva also brushes up on his Mandarin.

He is a conscientious student. The *Echo* was informed that, so far, Sivasanthiran has a 100% attendance record.

Padang Gajah headmaster, Mr Ooi Eh Bee quipped: "The lad gets all the attention he gets."

The 55 year-old headmaster himself who was assigned to Trong in 2007 tutors young Siva. Mr Ooi is assisted by Miss Lim Shu Miin.

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Young Perak

PLATFORM FOR UNITY EXERCISES

Students interacting with one another can result in a truly harmonious environment



Early celebration of National Day came to SMK Pinji

Some 913 students and teachers of SMK Pinji celebrated the country's 51st National Day earlier when they received 250 flags from Batu Gajah Kelab Anak Malaysia. Scouts, cadets and members of the Red Crescent Society came in full uniform. All eagerly anticipated to hang Malaysia's official colours everywhere in their school.

Batu Gajah Kelab Anak Malaysia patron, Dato' Chang Ko Youn, who is also state Gerakan

chief, said unity and living in harmony can only be achieved if members of the various communities understand one another's culture better.

MORE JOINT UNDERTAKINGS

One way to bring this about is by having more and more activities where communities can interact with one another. More joint activities where people can come and work together should therefore be

planned.

Acting principal, Zahidi Abdul Ghani declared that SMK Pinji school's student composition is ideal: 402 Malays, 345 Chinese and 162 Indians.

"The school can be an excellent platform to forge and instil unity and friendship," Zahidi added.

Also present at the event were chairman of Batu Gajah Kelab Anak Malaysia, Sit Wai Yin and SMK senior assistant Kong Sin Yew. **PK**

continued from page 3 . . . police



The police responding to a public call. The CPO is for quick and fast reaction.

Ground under surveillance, especially on weekends and at night time.

Ipoh Echo: Public places are most susceptible to petty crime like bag snatching and pick pocketing. What policing actions are in place?

CPO: I need not go into details but we have people watching these places - police in plain clothes and in uniform on beat duties. Reaction time is important. I have insisted on my men to react in the fastest possible time. We can't be everywhere all the time but if we can react fast that's good enough.

Ipoh Echo: How successful is your Rakan Cop programme?

CPO: Well, we are Number 2 in the country after Kuala Lumpur. Presently we have over 27,000 members state-wide. My target is 60,000 members by the end of the year. Recently, we had a gathering at Universiti Teknologi Petronas-Tronoh for students from institutions of higher learning in Perak. Over 2,000 students attended the function. In Ipoh Politeknik Ungku Omar has the largest number of Rakan Cop

members. You may want to run a story on them.

The Chinese community, however, is still adverse to Rakan Cop. Membership among the community is still small.

We want to make reporting of crime fast and simple. We have even introduced text messaging in Chinese but it's slow to catch on. Maybe people are still unaware of the service. You can SMS us in English and Bahasa. My emphasis, however, is on the response time. Our standard operating procedure upon receipt of a text message involves dispatching a patrol car to the crime scene to secure the place and then comes the investigation team. I have received several letters from the public commending the Police for their quick reaction. This is most encouraging.

Ipoh Echo: *Ipoh Echo* ran a cover story on metal theft that is so prevalent at the moment. What preventive measures are you taking to overcome the problem.

CPO: The biggest culprits are the scrap metal dealers. They buy these stolen goods without asking for the sources. It's a supply

and demand thing. Since there is demand there is supply. But we can nip the problem in the bud by targeting these second hand dealers. They need to be warned that buying stolen goods is an offence. I'll be meeting them soon and will make an announcement to the media soon after. We met the Perak bankers yesterday and advised them to keep their surveillance system in working order.

Ipoh Echo: I believe you go undercover to have a good grasp of the situation in the city and the state and to check on your men. Your comments, Dato'.

CPO: Yes, I do that and I have instructed my department heads and OCPDs to do the same. Going incognito will provide me a first-hand feedback of things happening on the ground.

Ipoh Echo: We have covered most of the subjects. Thanks so much for your time and effort in making this interview a reality, Dato'.

CPO: You are most welcome and nice of you to come. We can now work together for a common interest. We'll keep in touch. Thank you.

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AN ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE

Unless addressed intelligently and proactively, festering perceptions may lead ultimately to the rakyat's loss

It could be a deliberate attempt to shut out the five Pakatan Rakyat-led state governments from mainstream sports funding. What is more, this feeling is shared by all five executive councillors from the Opposition-led states.

How did these unfortunate concerns materialise?

The Minister of Youth and Sports, Datuk Ismail Sabri Yaakob, chaired a Sukan Malaysia (Sukma Games) supreme committee meeting in early August but representatives from the five opposition states were not invited.

It is widely recognised that the biennial Sukma Games are a source for young sporting talent. It's been so since their inception in 1986. The next Sukma Games will be in Malacca in 2010. Scouting for raw talent should rightly be a collective effort and since sport transcends pol-

itics, excluding states with differing political views is understandably regarded as foolhardy.

"I wonder why the Sports Minister wants



Seah Leong Peng, Perak State Executive Councillor for Youth and Sports

to target us," said Seah Leong Peng, the Perak State Executive Councillor for Youth and Sports, in an exclusive interview with *Ipo Echo* recently. "No invitation was ever extended and no reasons were given for the exclusion. I only came to know of the meeting from the newspa-

pers. How unfortunate."

The exclusion extends beyond the Games. "I cannot touch the State Youth and Sports Department which comes under the Federal Government," lamented Seah. "The Director has to seek the permission of his bosses in Putrajaya if he wants to see me or if I want to meet him. This is puzzling indeed."

APPARENT

Although the Federal Government has repeatedly denied that such an exclusion rule ever existed, what happens on the ground is something else. It is now apparent that the directive to exclude the five PK-led state governments has encroached on other disciplines as well.

Tourism and education appear to be two other areas where the exclusion order predominates. Government schools are told not to hang the Menteri Besar's portrait

and not to invite local politicians to school-organised functions.

At the annual Perak Durian Fest 2008 held at Bukit Gantang last August, no Pakatan Rakyat leaders were invited to the grand opening by Datuk Azlina Othman, the Federal Tourism Minister. Yet the event was held in a state where PR is in power.

The majority of sportsmen representing the country presently come from Penang, Perak and Selangor. Excluding decision-makers from these states at ministerial-level meetings is tantamount to sabotaging efforts at improving sports in the country. And if this is allowed to fester, sports and the rakyat will stand to lose in the end.

"We are contemplating organising our own Sukma Games and inviting foreigners to participate," said a dejected Seah. "It may happen if they continue to alienate us." **FZB**

Sport

ETHICS AND THE COACH

Steve Darby on the two major concerns that plague the football game. This fortnight, he discusses the widening use of performance-enhancing drugs

As more and more money floods into the game of football, it is a sad reality that the dangers of unethical behaviour will impinge on the game.

To define unethical behaviour is very difficult, as what is accepted as "part of the football culture" to one person will not be acceptable to others. As more money comes into the game people will also be tempted to do things to progress in the game that they would not normally do. And people who may not love football at all will enter the game or be on its fringes, to use it as a vehicle for gaining money for themselves.

It is all too easy to say that this happens in "other countries" what makes Malaysia so special that we are aloof from ethical dangers.

NO EASY ANSWERS

These problems are already entering the domain of the Coach/Manager. There are no easy answers. The only way to get the answers is debate and to examine the problems and accept that not everything is black and white.

Two areas immedi-

ately stand out as potential areas of concern. I am discussing the first one in this issue. It is drug taking. Not the use of recreational but performance-enhancing drugs. It is far too simplistic to say to footballers "just say No." If, as a young boy of 16, one was told, *take these pills and you would end up playing for Liverpool*, I deep down know what the answer would have been. Yes, not for the money but for the pursuit of life's long dream. I think many people in the game would also have been tempted. Education in these areas did not exist in the 70s.

Is it naïve to believe that parents or unscrupulous others would not encourage a young player to take performance-enhancing drugs so that they can attach themselves to a potential money making machine called a premiership footballer. This is not fantasy; there are recorded evidence of young players in USA

and Australia being given drugs to pursue the goal of professional football (of varying codes).

On a personal level, I have entered dressing rooms in Australia after National Youth teams have played or trained and seen syringes and other drug-taking evidence.

Also, whilst working as a coach in Asia, my team doctor (who was a top class professional) was giving the players daily supplements. In this case the supplements were legal i.e. Ginseng, but the Coach in this situation had no control over the issue as it was "not my area of concern". In fact, I was given the supplements to try!

However, speaking to other Coaches of differing sports (from the old eastern bloc), I've heard them lament about having no chance of winning medals as they couldn't give their athletes the correct drugs. They have accepted totally that success at the elite level in their sport was drug related!

We would be totally naïve to believe that the millions of dollars at stake to football teams have not tempted people to utilise the services of pharmacists as well as Coaches.

If a club paid millions of pounds for a player plus wages and that player was injured, what is the quickest path to returning to playing?

The evidence in Italy over the last few years points to this.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Also, if you were a player with three children and a mortgage and are injured, what is the quickest way back to get the next contract?

The answer for the Coach is education and regular drug testing with appropriate sanctions.

The Coach has the influence to manipulate the views of a young player; hence, it is essential that the same consistent message is relayed to the player and the realities of testing.

The FAM does conduct regular testing of players. This vigilant undertaking can only be a benefit to the players and, ultimately, to the game.

