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NEWS



**RAPE OF THE
GOPENG JUNGLES**

3



**THE MALAYSIAN
DILEMMA**

4





**THE BRAVE
LADS FROM
SMK SUNGAI
PARI**

12

REACHING OUT TO PATIENTS



A couple of years from now Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta (HBUK) will be a century old. When works began in 1910, Dr W.F Samuels, the hospital's first director, proposed that it be named the "Federal Lunatic Asylum." Not too fitting a name considering its significance. The centre is located 16 km east of Ipoh at Tanjung Rambutan or "TR". Thus the word "TR" is often referred to the mentally unsound.





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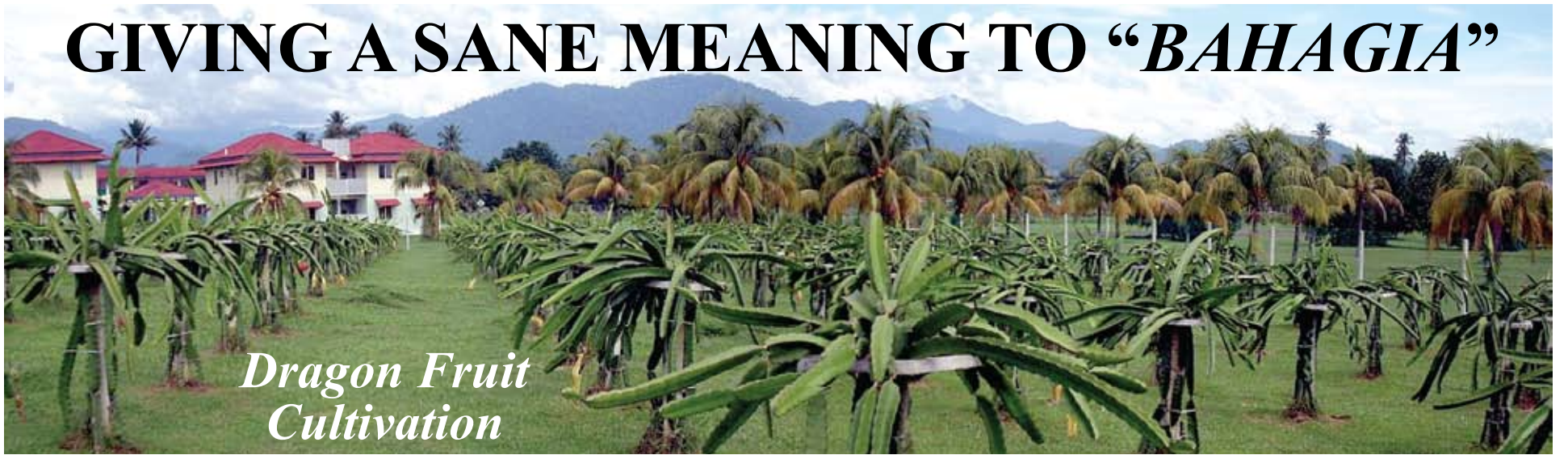
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GIVING A SANE MEANING TO "BAHAGIA"



Dragon Fruit Cultivation

However, in 1928 the name was changed to the Central Mental Hospital in view of the need to advance and expand the treatment of psychiatry. In the mid-1970s it was renamed Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta. "Bahagia" means "happiness" providing a less derogatory reference to the "asylum".

HBUK sits on 544 acres of land. Its built-up area covers 300 acres where its treatment facilities are concentrated. The remaining is used for rehabilitation activities such as farming and animal husbandry.

The original building, which was completed in 1911, consisted of three male wards and one female ward, separated by the kitchen. It has since expanded and currently houses fifty one male and twenty six female wards. The hospital can take 2,600 beds and is the largest of the four mental institutions in the country.

CAPACITY

An application to reduce its bedding capacity to 2,200 units was made to the Health Ministry recently. This is largely due to the encouraging results obtained from its community-based psychiatric programme.

The government dedicates four mental institutions and 26 hospitals for

the care of the mentally deranged. There are three practising model institutions, Hospital Kuala Lumpur in an urban setting, Hospital Alor Star, an urban-rural setting and Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta, which is an institutional setting.

Ipo Echo met with Dato' Dr Suarn Singh, the Director of HBUK and Head of Psychiatry, Ministry of Health, to get an update on the state of the facilities recently.

Suarn said that HBUK planned on downsizing its activities. Reason was the success of the on-going home-based community and home-care services. These services are integral to the community-based psychiatric programme, which the centre has initiated.

According to Dr Suarn, the home-care service has managed to reduce relapse and readmission rates among patients by as much as 25 per cent.

The public is unaware of this programme. Its success has contributed to the hospital's reduced patient intake. Hence, the downsizing exercise.

In the seventies HBUK established community psychiatric units. These facilities, manned by hospital staff, operated from churches, community halls and temples which were within striking distance of HBUK. The uniqueness of this pro-



Dato' Dr Suarn Singh

gramme was its proximity to patients' homes thus affording greater mobility and accessibility.

In the late nineties follow-up of stable psychiatric patients began at primary health care centres in Perak. The services included provision of medication, assessment and review of patients. Patients' compliance with medication regime was thus ensured.

OBJECTIVES

The home-care service, introduced in March 2001, entails the provision of continuous and comprehensive services at home. It caters to the needs of the patient as well as the carers. The objectives of the service are to:

- reduce relapse and re-admission.
- provide treatment and rehabilitation.
- enlist family members to manage patients at home.

Overall psychiatric

services in the country are improving. A total of 763 new health clinics, capable of providing mental health services to the community, are available. Of these 25 have facilities to provide psychological rehabilitation services for those with severe mental disorders. The staff of these clinics are trained by HBUK.

The singular benefit of these improvements is the accessibility of mental health services to patients far and wide. Patients and caregivers, today, need not travel great distances to get help. Help is around the corner. The availability of these services have encouraged those with problems to come out in the open.

Dato' Dr Suarn said that the family plays an important part in the rehabilitation of a patient. A patient averages 28 months before he realises his condition and seeks treatment. Once rehabilitated the patient is allowed to return home.

On returning home the family needs to empathise with the patient. Members must ensure that the patient takes his/her medications regularly. Understanding the needs of the patient contributes to the success of the programme.

The eligibility for the programme is not automatic. The family has to give its consent before the home-care services can be initiated. Family members need to overcome shame of seeing nurses coming to their houses. The stigma of being chastised by the public for having a mentally deranged member is the reason why some shy away from treatment. The problem is physiological in nature.

Fortunately, there are non-governmental organisations such as the Perak Society for the Promotion of Mental Health and KAMI (Kinta Action on Mental Health Issues Society Perak) which participate actively in the programme. Their objective is not only to care for the patients but caring for the care-givers themselves. These NGOs provide residential day care and psychological rehabilitation services to those in need of such services.

Home-care services by HBUK are extensive. They cover seven geographical zones stretching from Gopeng to Tanjung Tualang and northwards to Kuala Kangsar. Each zone

is staffed by a psychiatrist, four medical officers, two medical assistants, two staff nurses and two attendants. The Kinta District Zone serves a population of 800,000. "It has proven its effectiveness time and again," said Dr Suarn.

Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta has been successful in offering a comprehensive community-outreach service capable of serving the large population. It has initiated strategies, in collaboration with related agencies and NGOs, to further enhance its outreach service.

DRAGON FRUIT

Dato' Dr Suarn took this scribe on a tour of the facility. As we drove past the old wing we came upon a garden with neat rows of dragon fruit trees. This venture, which began a year ago, is already generating income for the growers. "This is part of the rehabilitation process to improve the patients' self esteem," said Suarn. "The fruits are sold at stalls within the complex."

Although Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta is synonymous with lunatics its many achievements are seldom known outside of its walls. A complete mindset change is, therefore, necessary to dispel lingering misconceptions among the public.

JAMES GOUGH



RAPE OF THE GOPENG JUNGLES

Those responsible for the now very obvious rape of the Gopeng jungles should hang their heads in utter shame. You had no right to inflict such damage on an otherwise pristine terrain.

Our pictures need no captions. They tell the story admirably.

In order for readers to better understand the alarming scope of the plunder that has taken place, let me give you some background of events as they transpired.

The plight of the Orang Asli in Gopeng jungles was initially highlighted in Issue 56 last August. It has been convenient in the past to overlook, side-step or otherwise ignore Orang Asli complaints given the form of politics that has endured. Hopefully, attitudes are changing.

The fact is that Orang Asli interests are important and their well-being, as members of our community, is vital to Perak's overall development programme.

DEGRADATION

As far as their problems in the Gopeng district are concerned, some 2000 indigenous people from the Semai tribe are domiciled in five settlements there. The largest settlement is Ulu Geruntom, which has nearly a thousand inhabitants. The jungles sustain their livelihood. Whatever the Orang Asli require is available in the forest. Should they be denied this privilege the end result is obvious – starvation, degradation and, ultimately, decimation.

Richness in the developing or developed world is equated to the amount of property one owns. The same yardstick cannot be applied to determine an Orang Asli's wealth. Wealth to the Orang Asli is a collective term.

The jungle, and whatever in it, belongs to the

tribe, not to one single person. Since the jungle provides them their daily necessities, keeping it free from outside interference is the best form of reward.

The trappings of modernity ring hollow to the Orang Asli. This is not to say that the lot of the Orang Asli can't be vastly improved. Of course it can. Education and progressive integration are keys to this problem. Sadly, very little has been done since inde-

gled that once witnessed the intrusion of humans sourcing water to mine tin in Gopeng now endures pillage of a very different



pendence to expand these horizons.

Meanwhile their very existence as a people is under threat.

To appreciate the extent of damage now inflicted on Gopeng jungles and concomitantly on local Orang Asli welfare, Ipoh Echo went on a walkabout in the region.

What confronted us was almost beyond belief. The destruction and its after-effects seem irreversible. A virgin jun-

gle that once witnessed the intrusion of humans sourcing water to mine tin in Gopeng now endures pillage of a very different kind.

The powerful local concern, Gopeng Berhad, was given a plot of land in the Gopeng jungles for oil palm cultivation. The 377-acre section lies on top of a hillock overlooking the Orang Asli settlements. The deal was done under the auspices of the former state government. Gopeng Berhad then engaged a contractor to clear the land

continued - page 11



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THINKING ALOUD By G. Sivapragasam**THE MALAYSIAN DILEMMA**

*Remarkable national success yet
dissatisfaction. Why?*

Well known Ipoh entrepreneur, Dato Yap Lim Sen, spoke recently on 'the Malaysian Dilemma' to an audience of about 400 of the "whose who" of Ipoh which included the Perak Mentri Besar, the Mayor and several State Ministers.

Author of the controversial book 'The Chinese Dilemma', Dato Yap provided, in essence, an examination of why Malaysians, in spite of having achieved remarkable prosperity, are still dissatisfied.

YLS, as he is popularly known, began his talk with a brief account of his personal life. Using this, he illustrated the nation's past 75 years of social history. It was the progress of Malaysia, as he put it, 'from a time when the great majority lived in rented rooms to now, when most own their own homes with a car in the porch'.

In relating his experiences he brought home to the audience some old truths; petty corruption being commonplace though never predatory and teasing each other's racial traits being ordinary with

no offence meant or taken and the silent truth that whilst in South East Asia the Chinese prominence in business is a rule, in Australia and other western countries, Chinese success in business is the exception.

The author/entrepreneur observed that while Malaysia was a picture of progress and prosperity, polarisation, corruption, inefficiencies, a poor education system and rising crime have led the people to become disillusioned and more disgruntled.

**ASKING
QUESTIONS**

The younger generation, with no knowledge of or patience with the past, and no appreciation of Malaysia's social contract, were asking questions.

Recent events like the Lingam case, the Istana in Kelang, APs, faulty construction on government projects, along with abandoned housing schemes, have caused even patient and understanding people to express unhappiness. All this, he felt climaxed



Dato Yap Lim Sen puts forward his ideas.

on March 8th against the Barisan government.

YLS observed that most of the problems were blamed on the NEP, sometimes quite irrationally and ludicrously. The NEP, introduced to eradicate poverty irrespective of race and eliminate identification of race with economic function, had by and large been successful.

He however noted that while the NEP had succeeded in creating Malay professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, etc.), and owners and CEOs in the corporate world, it had not been successful in creating Malay players in the retail industry and in the SME sector.

**REMARKABLE
PROGRESS**

Malaysia had, he went on, made remarkable progress in eradicating poverty across the 3 major races. The country had also scored high in all the other socio-economic indicators such as income, health, education and life expectancy.

But, he cautioned, the gap between rich and poor was widening.

YLS referred to author Dr Amy Chua who described Malaysia as the only exception among countries that emerged from de-colonization, sharing a common pattern of a rich immigrant minority with a politically-dominant indigenous majority. All others had failed to lift their masses from poverty resulting in cycles of turmoil often accompanied by ethnic violence.

However Dr Chua, he observed, had sounded a note of warning when she wrote: "... there is always the danger that government affirmative action policies will exacerbate rather than ameliorate ethnic conflict, by entrenching ethnic divisions."

Answering critics who presented Singapore as a success of meritocracy, YLS pointed out that the minority Malays in Singapore were faring much worse than the minorities in Malaysia and that Singapore was behind in progress compared with Hong Kong, Taipei or Shenzhen.

**NEP
IMPLEMENTATION
GONE AWRY**

There was nothing wrong, he asserted, with the NEP in structure. It had substantially delivered on its objectives. Where it had gone wrong was in its implementation, the side effects accompanying it and its general loss of effectiveness after 37 years.

Though the goals of the NEP were, in fact, totally non-communal, in its implementation, it had acquired a communal face brought about by the civil and public services going overboard in rectifying ethnic imbalances of the past. This had resulted in the civil service and universities becoming very Malay.

INSTANT TYCOONS

YLS then examined that aspect of the NEP employed to create instant Malay tycoons using the privatisation programme. Conceding that projects like the North-South Highway had proved an example of a good outcome linked to bumiputra privatisation, many privatisation projects, he said, like telcos and power generation, were on absurdly generous terms where the promoters assumed no risk and were often allowed to return the asset when things became unfavourable – as in the case of MAS, and Pemas Holdings. YLS then referred to APs given out to a group of bumiputras year after year allowing them to

make fortunes.

He illustrated the enormity of the largesse by telling the audience about Tun Dr Ismail. The Doctor who had sacrificed his medical practice to join the cabinet, retired, and when a proposal was made to pay him a retirement gratuity RM61,500 on the basis of 1.5 months' salary for every year of service Dr Tan Chee Khoo, objected. Dr Tan had claimed "it was a wanton waste of government funds". Compare this to the tens of millions given away year after year to some people simply because they are bumiputras.

YLS made the point that corrupted society values only encouraged others to follow suit. He further felt it was a breach of fiduciary duty to part with the nation's assets without receiving real value. There was, he said, a failure to realize that when a loss resulted from abuse of the system, that loss, whilst borne by all citizens, it is the Bumiputra who assumed the greatest loss by virtue of their population.

**NON-MALAYS
BENEFITED**

YLS emphasised that the NEP has benefited not only the Malays.

The Chinese business class, he believed, had been the bigger beneficiary. He argued that every expenditure passes through the hands of the Chinese in one way or another and the tremendous generation of economic activities brought about by the NEP has increased their benefits. Non-Malay civil servants, passed over for promotion, had been the only group to suffer economic loss under the NEP, he said.

MOVING FORWARD

To move forward, YLS declared, Malaysians

continued on page 12

EDITORIAL**LET SINGAPORE FLY TO IPOH**

Mayor Roshidi Hashim admitted that tourism was an important economic contributor to Ipoh. Hence the need for an operational airport close to the city. He re-affirmed the state's and city's commitment to revive the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport. "I am of the view that the airport should be used for short range travel such as flying to Phuket, if the runway could not be extended."

In mid-July FMM Chairman Gan Tack Kong had called on the State Government to make the airport functional again. Gan argued that without a functional airport it would be difficult to attract investments into the state.

There can be no argument that for Ipoh to prosper an airport to serve tourists and investors would be a primary requirement. Whilst we agree with Roshidi that it would serve Ipoh well if the airport could be revived to serve short range flights, we do not think it necessary to structure the facility into a hub to service destinations like

Phuket, at least at this point in time.

We believe that Singapore represents the biggest potential source of investment and tourists for Ipoh. As such, the revival of our airport should begin with the establishment of a direct air link with Singapore.

A survey conducted some years ago revealed that no less than 500 people travelled by coach from Ipoh to Singapore daily. And it would be reasonable to assume that there was corresponding traffic flow from Singapore to Ipoh. In addition, there are those who travel by train, taxis and private cars. And what about those who do not now make the journey but would be persuaded to do so if there was a direct air route between Singapore and Ipoh?

The opposition to the introduction of direct flights between Ipoh and Singapore would no doubt come from KLIA and MAS. Should the interests of two million Perakians be sacrificed in order to placate these two corporations? It is time that we get our priorities right.

TOURISM

BREATH TAKING LATA KIJANG

Tourism Perak should make every effort to improve facilities at tourist sites in the state

If you are travelling north along the Plus Expressway, you will be mesmerised by a breath-taking view on your right. Located about 10 kilometers after the Tapah exit the sight of a cascading waterfall is a welcome relief. I was asked several times how to get to

the site since there is no access road from the expressway.

Lata Kijang is only accessible from the old trunk road. From the Plus Expressway, the easiest way to the fall is via Tapah. From Ipoh use the old trunk road. If you chose the Plus Expressway

exit at either the Gopeng or Tapah interchange. It is better from Tapah than Gopeng to avoid the infamous Kampar crawl.

Signage along the road after Kampar and Tapah are ample and prominently displayed. To get to the waterfall, you have to pass the town of Chenderiang.

The jungles surrounding Chenderiang were once a Communist hotbed. Until the early 1980s, they were off-limits to civilians. Chenderiang is located at the foothills of the Main Range. It rains frequently towards the end of the year.

Lata Kijang, at 100 meters, is reputed to be the tallest fall in Malaysia. Its cool ambience, remoteness and the sound of crashing water would tempt the most discerning of visitors. From the base one could see the foamy water falling over the rocks and cascading into a series of pools along the way. The water eventually flows into the Kampar River.

The Perak Forestry Department manages the picnic spot. Wooden huts with intricately designed roofs are found at the base and a couple more up the hill slope. Cement steps with a rickety metal railing lead visitors to a suspension bridge which crosses the fall. The bridge, unfortunately, is closed as the wooden walkway is rotten due to the elements.

It costs motorists one ringgit to enter the site. A



Suspension bridge now no longer passable due to the elements

pittance considering the hours of frolicking one will enjoy. You are so close to Nature, you can virtually touch it. Occasionally, one gets to hear the sound of cicadas emanating from among the trees. Some of the native plants that thrive in the area are *sukun* (breadfruit), *bachang* (mango), *bayas* (palm), durian and creepers like the rattan. The thick dark-green foliage is a sight to behold. The virgin jungle is untouched and, hopefully, it will remain as such.

One major discomfort, however, is the absence of a proper toilet. This is something endemic with tourist spots in Malaysia. Should you want to change or relieve yourself you have to do

it behind a tree. Not too pleasant a choice if modesty is something you treasure. Insufficient rubbish bins is another problem. Empty bottles, cans and paper cartons are found hidden in bushes and under dead leaves. The rubbish, left by errant visitors, is an eyesore. The rickety metal railing is unsafe and should be replaced. Maintenance is a little lacking. The huts and signage need a fresh coat of paint.

Lata Kijang has the potential to become a huge tourist draw. What is required is foresight and diligence. Those in the tourist industry should appreciate the problems visitors face. Hopefully, newly formed Tourism Perak will be more responsive.

HALIDA



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IPOH BASED COMPANY SECURES IMT-GT "GATEWAY TO GLOBALISATION: BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY DIRECTORY" PROJECT

Spektra Kinta Resources Sdn Bhd, a company based in Bandar Ipoh Raya, Ipoh has secured a 5-year project with the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle or IMT-GT. The project is the IMT-GT Business Opportunity Directory using a "4 in 1" concept with the theme "Gateway to Globalization".

The IMT-GT was set up by the three gov-

ernments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in 1993 and was readily endorsed by its leaders as a plan of economic liberalization and integration for the region.

The triangle sub-region which covers the island of Sumatra, the west coast states of Peninsula Malaysia including Kelantan and the provinces of Southern Thailand has a huge land bank and a sizeable market of one hundred

million residents.

JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL

To mobilise the goals of the growth triangle the IMT-GT Joint Business Council (IMT-GT JBC) was inaugurated in 1995 and is the official vehicle to garner private sector participation and involvement in the growth triangle.

Since its inception the JBC has facilitated more

than US\$4 billion of new projects.

The JBC of the three countries have initiated a 4 in 1 Business Opportunity Directory to enable businesses to market their products and services. Other than a printed copy and CD, advertisers will be linked to the BOD portal and have the services of a call center.

Spektra's "4 in 1" concept is the first of its kind in Asean which will en-

sure a wider media exposure for all who advertise" said Peter Seelan, CEO of Spektra Kinta Resources Sdn. Bhd. "It only costs RM30 for a listing in the directory" he added.

The Gateway to Globalisation: BOD 2009 will be launched in December in Bangkok during the 4 Leaders Summit. One hundred thousand copies of the directories will be distributed to all Trade Associations, Embassies,

Exhibitions, Manufacturers and Exporters, Chambers of Commerce and Matrade Offices worldwide over the next five years.

GLOBAL MARKET

Due to the extensive distribution network, businesses in the IMT-GT will be exposed to global markets well beyond its borders. One investment is all it takes to access the Gateway to Globalisation.

FROM MY ALBUM BY QUICKSILVER

TWO CLASSIC STAMPS FROM ONE CLASSIC ERA

All it took was an overprint and a surcharge to make them unique

The reign of Britain's philatelist monarch, King George V, is a key period for modern day Commonwealth stamp collectors – particularly those, like myself, who concentrate heavily on Straits Settlements designs.

The period I'm talking about here ran from 1912 to 1935 and all manner of royal events came to be the source of ideas for stamps.

You may recall that I first introduced the subject of King George V stamps in my previous column last month.

Now I would like to examine, just two specific designs of this era. Looking back with an historical perspective, collectors soon grow to appreciate the extraordinary number of changes in design, colour, watermarks and types of paper associated with British Empire postage stamps over this time frame. The two stamp designs I want to share with you here are favourites of mine.

SURCHARGE WITH A DIFFERENCE

A particular curiosity stamp of the period is known as the RED CROSS ISSUE.

On May 1, 1917, Straits Settlements stamps of the 3 cents and 4 cents values were overprinted with a 2 cent Red Cross surcharge. The purchase of any of these two stamps resulted in 2 cents going to a Red Cross charity fund.

*The Red Cross overprint*

The stamps were on sale and for use in correspondence mail posted within the territories of Malaya, Singapore and the United Kingdom. There were the usual unique aspects associated with these particular designs and these claimed the attention of the collectors. One "peculiarity" was the fact that certain stamps in this category, either inadvertently or intentionally, failed to display a full-stop after the surcharge amount – 2c.

These quickly became collectors' items.

MALAYA-BORNEO EXHIBITION ISSUE

As it happened the colony was agog with excitement when it was announced that His Royal Highness, Edward Prince of Wales, the son of King George V, was planning a visit to Malaya and Singapore in the first half of 1922. Not surprisingly, a large number of special welcoming events became scheduled. One of these was The Malaya Borneo Exhibition to be held in Singapore during April that year. A special issue of stamps advertising this was lined-up and ultimately released. The Prince of Wales duly opened the exhibition which extolled the trade and economic possibilities of British Malaya and British Borneo.

*The exhibition stamps*

Ipoh Facts and Fancies

By Ho Tak Ming

IPOH'S RAILWAY STATION



PICTURE BY ROSLI MANSOR

How it is . . .

When the Ipoh-Batu Gajah section of the Kinta Valley Railway was opened in February 1894 by His Highness Sultan Idris Murshidul'adzam Shah, both towns had virtually identical railway stations. It was considered an honour for Ipoh because swanky Batu Gajah was the district headquarters and the most important town in Kinta at the time.

Ipoh, on the other hand, was generally regarded as little more than a riff-raff mining centre. Two years previously the biggest public building in Kinta, comprising the Land Office-High Court-Survey Office complex, was built at Changkat in Batu Gajah. All Ipoh had for a government building then was a makeshift wooden structure which also functioned as a church and a bank, of sorts.

BUSIEST STATION

However, over the years, the railway traffic from Ipoh grew so phenomenally that by the time the Ipoh-Tronoh line was completed in 1909, the Ipoh railway station was the busiest station in Malaya, exceeding even Kuala Lumpur's.

The Federal capital had been given a magnificent new station – the biggest in the "middle-eastern world" it was claimed. Poor Ipoh, though, had to make do with its old wooden structure, which was scarcely worthy of a wayside town. Except for the construction of an additional platform, Ipoh's rail station had remained unchanged over the years. The booking office was an abomination, and the refreshment room was a shack outside the station.

In 1909, the correspondent of the Times

of Malaya paid a visit to Kuala Lumpur and wrote an acerbic piece:

"As the train steams into the town the visitor is at once impressed with the imposing buildings it contains. The Government Office, situated opposite the padang, is a very imposing structure erected in the style of the Arabesque Renaissance. The Post Office and Railway Offices are also imposing buildings though the colour of the latter is rather apt to get

revenue."

The Manager of the FMS Railways said that to fully serve Ipoh's needs, a new railway station similar in size to Kuala Lumpur's was necessary. Still, the outgoing High Commissioner, Sir John Anderson, chose to veto the proposal in 1910.

The Ipoh newspaper, the Times of Malaya, urged easy-going Ipohites to hold a mass protest meeting to show their indignation.

Fortunately, the new

sun, as on the picturesque building in Kuala Lumpur.

"The new Ipoh station and hotel, which will be in brickwork and concrete, have been designed in the Renaissance style, and will harmonise, when both are complete, with the town hall and post office,

"The hotel part will comprise seventeen bedrooms, each with a separate bathroom and a room for the visitor's personal servant. Each bedroom opens to a separate ver-

How it was . . .

on one's nerves if gazed at too long.

"The Kuala Lumpur Railway Station is, as it stands, vastly superior to the Ipoh Station, but it is being further enlarged. "After seeing KL and the lavish way in which the FMS Government spends money there, Ipohites visiting the town cannot

High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Young, was kinder to Ipoh and allocated \$900,000 in the 1912 Estimates for a new railway station and hotel. The Government Architect, A. B. Hubback, designed the building, and gave a hint in the Malay Mail of how it was going to look like:

"The arrangements

randah. Three rooms out of the front verandah will probably be used for reading or drawing rooms, for which they are well suited.

"The railway station and hotel will fit into the scheme of things in the busiest part of Ipoh, by rearing its head in company with the other large building which will accommodate, under one ample roof, the new post office and town hall."

The new Ipoh Railway Station was opened on October 1, 1915. Ipoh then shared with Kuala Lumpur the distinction of having one of the most imposing stations in this part of the world. Between 1900 to 1910 it was the "Golden Age of Rail" – before travel by road superseded this form of travel a decade later. The trains were always full. Additional coaches were often requisitioned in Ipoh and first class accommodation had to be obtained.

*En route to the station . . . circa 1910*

help thinking of the Ipoh Railway Station with its "pigeon hole" booking office and feeling just a trifle bitter – particularly as when it is remembered that from Perak comes the larger portion of the FMS

of the station building are not unlike those at Kuala Lumpur, but the difference in architectural style will be very marked. There will be nothing Oriental in the design, and no minarets will glisten white in the

Singapore on line

SINGAPORE: THE CARNIVAL IS OVER

The island state badly needs new economic directions to cope with the global crisis

The carnival is over – at least for the time being. Just after the party finished for the Singapore's Formula One Grand Prize car race at the end of September came news that the island state had entered a recession for the first time in six years.

Figures released by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in early October showed that the economy had contracted by 6.3 per cent in the third quarter of 2008 after a 5.7 per cent contraction in the second quarter. GDP growth for 2008 was revised downwards to three percent from the earlier (and downward-

ly revised) 4-5 per cent projected in August.

In 2007, GDP was 7.7 per cent on top of annual average growth of seven percent since 2004. In 2001 the economy contracted by 2.4 per cent. The current slowdown, the government said, was "broad based" with "external shocks transmitted via financial and trade channels."

The bad news hit at the same time that the US financial crisis and its potentially dire consequences for the world – and this region – cast its gloomy shadow over the situation. The government, led by Prime Minister, Lee Hsien

Loong, and the country's Finance Minister, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, were quick to assure Singaporeans and international business that while growth was slowing, Singapore's financial system continued to be sound and the economy remained competitive.

Then, on October 16, to further shore up confidence among ordinary Singaporeans that their savings would be safe, the government said it would guarantee all deposits – a step that Malaysia, Hong Kong, Australia and several other governments have also taken.

UNCERTAINTY

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) says that the "heightened risk overseas and "deleveraging" in the financial sector have created uncertainty for the economy." The government says it does not expect to see a real recovery until the latter half of 2009 and this would depend on the im-

pact of the US financial crisis and, in turn, the effect this has on the wider world economy. US bank, Morgan Stanley, forecasts in its latest local economic report that, with external conditions deteriorating and a lack of domestic demand, Singapore's GDP 2009 growth is likely to come in at a meagre 0.2 per cent.

Singapore's economy is heavily dependent on trade in manufactured goods, especially computer/IT components and products, and would be particularly hurt if the US enters a long recession. Significantly, a Sydney based business research group regards Singapore as much more export reliant on the US and Europe than its neighbours.

During financially troubled periods, countries like Malaysia have the added protection of having broader export composition. As well a manufactured exports, Malaysia has strengths in commodities such as oil and gas, as well as palm oil and rubber.

Malaysia also has a large domestic market to help sustain domestic firms.

That declining trade conditions are already very much a reality and are biting in Singapore is underlined by the fact that manufacturing – which is heavily export oriented – contracted by 11.5 per cent year on year in the third quarter compared with 4.9 per cent in the previous quarter.

There can be no doubt that the sobering outlook now jars with the government's efforts to put Singapore in a higher league as a base for the world's international business elite as symbolised by the recent staging of the Singapore Tourism Board backed Formula One Grand Prix.

PURITANICAL IMAGE

As I wrote in an earlier column, in the belief that the event in the heart of the city and CBD, would raise Singapore's profile on a new international stage – in many ways Singapore still suffers in foreign minds from the puritanical image it had in the 1970s and early 80s. The government is paying up to 60 per cent of the US\$150 million cost of staging the event.

Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, S. Iswaran, said prior to the race: "Singapore is a leading business centre and our aim is to be a vibrant global city that is abuzz with high quality entertainment and events. A world class event like the F1 race with more than 500 million viewers worldwide, will take us closer to this objective."

What now? With difficult economic conditions ahead, the island's government is likely to down play this drive and endeavour to promote other aspects of

the economy more directed towards enabling lower income Singaporeans deal with harder times. Unemployment seems certain to rise. Already, high cost of living increases over the last two years have put many households under acute stress.

Always conscious of Singapore's economic vulnerability, the government, time and again, has shown its ability to react quickly and well to challenging circumstances. This time, one possible response by Singapore Inc may be to encourage Singapore companies to reduce dependency on US and European markets, and develop trade and investment links not with just China, but closer to home in the immediate region - especially Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. So for companies in Ipoh and Perak, it may in fact now be a very good time to see what new business might be done with existing and potential Singapore partners.

EXPANDING TIES

Another likely response by the Singapore government will be to strengthen efforts to build commercial ties with the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states have all been targets of high profile government and business delegations from Singapore over the last two years or so. The hopes that Singapore places on the Middle East is underlined by the fact that several of these expeditions have been led by Singapore's patriarch, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew. After all, in a world of high oil prices, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are some of the very few places in the world right now where there are billions of dollars available for new investments.

From Andrew Symon



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Musings



See Foon

There is a current fashion trend for women which is being sported by all the slim, lithe young things, which I find particularly galling. I'm referring to the style of small puffed sleeves, empire line, baby-doll mini dresses teamed with leggings. They're ubiquitous.

Any woman carrying more than 10 extra pounds on her frame will either look like a sack of potatoes or, for the more "mature" ladies, *mutton dressed as lamb*. Just a stroll into any shopping mall and see – flabby arms ooze out from little puffed sleeves, ample derrieres wiggle about under too-short tops, elephantine calves cut off mid way in skin-tight leggings, overblown torsos sashaying on impossibly high heels (blow the back problems that will inevitably follow in later years).

Why the more mature or rotund ladies will wear them is beyond fathom. Stick to the *baju kurung* I say! Or a loose fitting shirt and smart trousers. And how about a flowing Kaftan which is cool in this heat we live in and infinitely more elegant.

"But I have to keep up with the fashion trends or I'll be socially ostracised" I hear you lament. By all means if you are under 30 or, if older, you're gifted with a slim, taut body with nary a bulge here or there. Otherwise I'd recommend that you hide your flaws, show off your assets and throw fashion to the wind!

by See Foon Chan-Koppen

Fads and Fashion

Never allow the mirror to tell you untruthful tricks in your quest to keep up with the "fashionable" lot

Let the mirror be your arbiter of style instead and not your friends, the boutique salesgirl or fashion magazines.

As for fads, let's look at a few that have endured: Formerly, a preference for gang members, jailbirds and other rebels, tattoos are now so common that even celebrities have them. Just look at Angelina Jolie's shoulder and back!

—those that are lower at the top and hug the hips – and tattoos around the back pelvic girdle and you have a generation of youngsters walking around on the verge of exposing their privates. As a male friend remarked one day sitting at a posh bar in Kuala Lumpur: "I do enjoy seeing some décolletage in public but back cleavage is indecent exposure!"

age limitations, there are none. Anyone from 8-80 can wear "bling" with grace and confidence.

As for fads that have gone the way of the dinosaurs: remember lace fingerless gloves and pointed brassieres a la Madonna? Tie Dye T-shirts which defiantly heralded the psychedelic era of the Sixties, the craze of the hula hoop, the bouffant



You used to get a tattoo to stand out, now you get one to blend in.

The tattoos that adorn the bodies of the Japanese underworld known as Yakuza, formerly hidden from public scrutiny under long sleeved shirts and high collars, are now high fashion on every High Street market, emblazoned on T-shirts and other clothing. Some otherwise clean-living, upstanding members of society are now enduring the many hours of pain to copy these same tattoos on their bodies.

As for the Thong - it all started in the late 90's with a song by Sisqo titled "Thong Song". A few years later, the thong is the most popular underwear for young women. Couple these with low rise jeans



It may be titillating to see a lacy thong exposed above low slung hipsters on an 18-year old but grubby full underpants jostling for exposure with ample love-handles on a 40-year old don't yield a memorable vision.

EXCEPTION

One fashion trend I personally adore is Bling. Wear a simple black dress or outfit and bling earrings, necklace and/or bracelet and one is ready to wow them at the party. Or dress up an old outfit by sewing a few beads and baubles in the appropriate places. I have an insomniac friend who spends hours at night "blinging" all her clothes and accessories, time I consider well-spent. As for



hairdo (which is struggling to make a comeback), bell bottoms and Grunge fashion, are just some of the passing face of fads and fashion.

In my fashion quest, I'm still looking for the perfect high-waisted, most-comfortable pair of jeans; stylish, loose tops that end just below the hip-bone, preferably in the softest muslin or linen; long, flowing Kaftans and kaftan-like tops that end just above the knee, to go with loose comfortable leggings that end at the ankle and which do not require you to be a contortionist to put on.

Now that doesn't look like a formidable list does it? Yet all I've achieved are long flowing Kaftans! So capricious are fads and fashion trends.

STOP WHINGEING; DO SOMETHING!

Carol Cheng thinks defensive budgeting can make the lean times less trying



These days, everyone appears to be preoccupied with budgets. With good reason. But I find griping alone only dents the budget further.

Most health-conscious friends agree that it is best to have home-cooked meals. But what if you have to do it?

Time management skills could be the key here. These can be cultivated and nobody is too old to learn adopting them. Make life less strenuous.

Begin by instilling a sense of cooperation in the home. The rewards of this exercise are incalculable. Everyone must do his/her share. The teenager has yet to learn kitchen tricks? She can start by paring potatoes or pounding chillies. Ignore the initial pouts. Everyone gets sick of sulking. And Father (or Mother if *he* is doing the steaming and sautéing) can clean up.

"Inexpensive" catered food is largely unpalatable and unhealthy. "It is so convenient and the kitchen is so clean," used to chirp the old lady next door who has all the time to play mahjong.

But the old lady has also started complaining about price hikes.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Before you resume whingeing about how expensive things are now, think instead of how you can defend your budget. If we decide to be less lazy and exercise prudence, we can manage and acquit ourselves admirably. It adds to one's self-esteem.

I invite you to drop by the nearest wet market and play the game of finding fresh bargains to cook. A friend and I did just that the other day and found local catch in abundance. We also bought vegetables. The result? Nutritious meals and the family felt light and refreshed.

Stop saying you don't have time. Make time and if that is really difficult, enlist the assistance of those around you. The family who saves together eats together. In the long run, they get to appreciate each other's efforts.

The reality is, we cannot just go on talking and sighing. Do something to stretch our ringgit. Be more sensible.

It is always handy to plant herbs in your own backyard or the front area of your house. Think of little foam boxes in your balcony or kitchen windowsill. Herbs like basil, kaffir lime leaves and lemongrass add a lot to any common everyday dish.

Let us turn these adversarial days to our benefit. Re-discover our kitchens and get re-acquainted with those shiny pots and pans.

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PHASES & FACES



Colourful record of a happy day. Kampung Chang rang with comradeship and camaraderie the day YB Sivanesan made his announcement

THIS ANCESTRAL LAND IS YOURS . . .

Villagers, friends, supporters and politicians celebrate a second milestone declaration

October 5, 2008 was another landmark date for the Orang Asli of Perak. Inhabitants – together with their friends and supporters – from eleven villages in Perak and three villages from Pahang congregated at Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai to hear YB Sivanesan Achalingam, State Executive Councillor

for Health, Environment and Human Resources, declare that their *tanah adat* (ancestral lands) would be returned to them by the Perak State Government.

Prolonged clapping and joyful cheers followed YB Sivanesan's announcement.

This is the second time this year such a significant

milestone was achieved.

Ironically, more than a year earlier, at Kampung Chang itself, the previous state government had announced that a parcel within their ancestral lands would be converted into a botanical garden. Some clearance work had actually been done and a road built into the interior. The project had since run out of

funds. The present government then decided to scrap the project and return the *tanah adat* to the community.

In July this year the state government returned 377 acres of ancestral lands belonging to the Orang Asli from the Kampar-Gopeng Jungle Complex. (See Ipoh Echo, IE 56, August 16-31, 2008)

That land had earlier been allotted to a local company, Gopeng Berhad, for logging and oil palm cultivation.

Among the guests at the Kampung Chang event were: Tijah Yok Chopil (Secretary, JKOAP) on behalf of Kampung Chang community, Bah Azmi Ng Porgi (Chairperson, Jaringan Kampung Orang

Asli Perak (JKOAP), Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan (President, Malaysian Bar), Augustine Anthony (Chairperson, Orang Asli Affairs Working Group, Bar Council Human Rights Committee) and M. Kulasegaran (MP Ipoh Barat).

The villagers and their guests shared a meal to cap a happy day. **JAG**

CELEBRATING WOMANHOOD IN A QUEST TO STOP ABUSE

Violence towards women has been perpetrated by age-old beliefs that women should not be heard



The more women get to appreciate themselves, the more aware they'll get to be of their rights as human beings

'Hari Wanita', a women's day programme organised recently by the Catholic Women's League of St. Michael's Church, Ipoh, had for its theme: "Issues Women Face Today". The event was held at the church hall.

Perak Women for Women (PWW) President, Dr. Sharifah began her talk by reciting a poem written by a victim of physical violence. "Violence against women is about power and control", the doctor explained, "this could happen to any women, regardless of race, religion, economic status, etc." Dr Sharifah

said that from young girls were taught to be nice, passive, submissive, gentle. As a result, they grew up thinking that it was OK for a man to dominate them." She added: This is a stereotype practised in society."

Dr Shjarifah remarked that PWW was in need of volunteers and those interested could contact her or leave a message with Ms Yip Siew Kin at PWW office (05-546715)

After the talk, the day progressed with a Belly Dancing demonstration by Ms. Li Li Fong. As explained by the main chairperson of the day, Datin

Kanmani Christopher, belly dancing, which originated from Egypt, is a dance of thanksgiving and celebration of womanhood.

Mrs. Pauline Eu, a nursing sister at Hospital Fatimah and the person in charge of Rainbow Activity Center (RAC) at Kampung Simee Old Folks Home, later demonstrated Folk Art / One-Stroke Painting.

The women watched as Mrs. Eu showed how a simple hobby can be made into something beautiful.

The 'Hari Wanita' ended with a light reception, provided by the organisers.

FELICIA G ALEXIS

A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS A BETTER COMMUNITY

City councillor and residents get together to discuss gripes and solutions



Concerned citizens determined to improve their corner of Ipoh

The residents of Jalan Serindek Neighbourhood Watch Ipoh Gardens recently invited their newly appointed City Councillor, Encik Liu Then Tui for a dialogue to discuss their concerns. It probably was the first time such a gathering had been held. Those who attended agreed it was.

Held in the home of one of the residents. Each participant received a memo titled "Services to Basic Amenities that need to be improved" It listed all the usual complaints that Ipoh residents have been griping about for decades: irregular collection of garbage, choked drains, poorly-lit streets and related security worries like burglary and snatch theft.

Councillor Liu took

everything in his stride. He felt the dialogue was a positive step. "I would prefer to attend a dialogue where 200 complaints are summarised in one page than have 200 complainants calling me the whole day". The population of this neighbourhood watch covers approximately 300 households.



Friendly exchange of ideas

For an initial meeting the atmosphere was indeed positive. The attitude of the residents was to forget the past and to move forward.

Liu put forward some positive proposals like having a "walkabout" with MBI workers and contractors and monitoring the progress of such a step over a six-month period. "Call me and if you can't reach me send me an e-mail", he said.

The statement was reassuring as city councillors in the past used to be invisible. Now there's hope for more dialogues between leaders and residents to improve the community. As Liu chipped in "I would like to make this neighbourhood a model area."

Ipoh Echo wishes Councillor Liu and the Jalan Serindek Neighbourhood Watch Ipoh Gardens all the best in their worthwhile endeavours.

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:
ipohecho.pk@gmail.com

HUMAN VALUES AS CONSTANT FOCUS

A debate that is more than just a contest of neat phrases and witticisms



The winning debaters from Institut Perguruan Ipoh

Many regard the annual Sathya Sai Baba Human Values Debate "a debate with a difference". Based on Australasian debating format, the event has, over the years, attracted premier schools, colleges and universities in Perak. It is open to students between the ages of 17 and 25.

Firstly, all arguments put forth by debaters must be focused on and supported by sound statements on human values. Secondly, all participants, including their teacher advisors, are required to carry out community service work, prior to the debate.

This year, the participants and teacher advisors were assigned the Batu Gajah Handicapped Children's Home. They cleaned the home and the compound, washed cooking utensils and bathed the inmates. Publicity secretary S. Saminathan who oversees the project said remembering the less fortunate cultivates a more compassionate approach among the young and should result in a better society.

Saminathan said the topics for the debates, now in its ninth year, are always thought provoking and generate passionate discussion about situations affecting students' lives.

This year, seven debating teams from the following institutions participated in the debate: Olympia College, Ipoh, SMK St. Michael, Ipoh, Institut Perguruan Ipoh in Hulu Kinta and SMJK Shing Chung, Sungei Siput. The others were SMK Anderson, Ipoh,

SMK Methodist (ACS), Ipoh and SMK Sultan Yussuf, Batu Gajah.

THOUGHT PROVOKING ISSUES

The 1st preliminary rounds centred on the topic, "Juveniles should be charged as adults for violent crimes committed". For the 2nd preliminary rounds the debaters tackled, "It is morally wrong to place our parents in care centres".

The semi-finals focused on, "The poverty in the third world is the fault of the first world". For the final round, the motion debated was "Global Warming Is Avoidable".

The opposing team, Institut Perguruan Ipoh, Hulu Kinta was adjudged champions. They walked home with a RM600.00 cheque and the Dr. P. Palani Velu Challenge Shield.

The 1st Runners up, SMK Methodist, (ACS) Ipoh took home RM300.00 while the joint 2nd Runners up were SMK. St. Michael, Ipoh and SM Anderson, Ipoh, jointly.

The winning team, Institut Perguruan Ipoh, Hulu Kinta was represented by: Wee Vee Vien, Charlene Anak Charles Banyi, Shoba A/P Andiappan and Nik Khairina Balqis Bt Nik Mohd Asri (reserve). Balakavitha Balaravi, Dinesh Kumar, Kenneth Ng Yoong Sin and Beh Jien Yinn (reserve) represented SMK (ACS). The Best Speaker at the Grand Finals was Wee Vee Vien of the winning team, Institut Perguruan Ipoh, Hulu Kinta. She received a prize of RM100.00. **PK**

NEW PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON THE BLOCK

Keen and diligent students prove they, too, can be convincing on stage



Stressing a point – Amal Madihah (left) and Nurul Nabila

Amal Madihah Solahuddin and Nurul Nabila Mohd Nabil, Form One students of SMK Gunung Rapat, walked confidently to the stage and delivered their presentation on the dangers and prevention of dengue fever. To say they had undertaken a huge task would be an understatement. For in the audience were members of their school community – some 800 of their peers and 50 teachers – and top orators from the Ipoh Toastmasters Club (ITC).

The duo, who had spent a whole week preparing for the event, acquitted themselves successfully. The teachers and their schoolmates were most impressed with the girls' performance.

The guests from the ITC – an organisation that trains individuals in public speaking – were only too glad to give Amal Madihah and Nurul their stamp of approval.

The specially organised function at the school hall launched the Gavel Club, a public speaking society that caters mainly for



From left to right: Toastmasters Selvaraj, Chen, Bucher and Cheah

students who wish improve their public speaking skills. They get credit for participating in the Toastmasters' programme.

Amal and Nurul, who are members of the club, proved one thing to their audience – that non-native speakers can hone and polish communications and public speaking skills, if they apply themselves to the challenge.

"NICHE AREAS"

SMK Gunung Rapat principal Encik Mat Noh Supaat said English

Language programmes have been introduced and these incorporate debating, poetry recital and public speaking. He referred to them as "niche areas of the school". (The other "niche area" of SMK Gunung Rapat is bowling. The school is among the first 30 schools selected under the Education Ministry's cluster of excellent schools concept.)

CONSTANTLY ENCOURAGED

The principal added that students are constantly encouraged to practise their English with fellow students and teachers.

Toastmasters who attended the opening ceremony were YMCA Ipoh Toastmasters Club president Ann Cheah, Peter Bucher (Pak Peter), Cheah Tong Kim, Selvaraj s/o KS Maniam and Chen Kar Mun. Also present was Shaini Ngatni, chairman of the school's Parent-Teacher Association.

PETER KHIEW



Promising public speakers in the making

BROADENING THEIR HORIZONS

Three IIS students travel to KL to listen to an important man's version of history

Three students from Ipoh International School met Dato Seri Yuen Yuet Leng in his Kuala Lumpur home to hear his account of the turbulent Malayan Emergency years. The former anti-insurgency stalwart is among living witnesses who have in their possession priceless documents and photographs which are of great public interest. The interview, part of IIS' Living History project, brought to life part of the ethos and pathos of a bygone era that shaped the history of Malaysia.

Among many topics that even included the Cold War in Europe and the former USSR, Dato Seri talked about the Special Branch, the police force of the Fifties and Sixties, the officers and policemen, the New Villages and the



Kian Seng, Nikika, Dato Seri and Vyshnavi in the living room of Dato Seri's house

black areas, jungle warfare training, British colonial masters and fighting the communists in the jungle. He discussed at length the untimely death of his predecessor and the work that led to his assassins' arrest.

The murder of the Chief Police Officer of Perak, Koo Chong Kong, by communist insurgents

in 1975, shocked the entire nation. As Malaysia reeled from the impact of the CPO's death, Dato Seri Yuen Yuet Leng took over, determined to bring peace to Perak.

The interview with Dato Seri Yuen Yuet Leng is the first in a series of interviews planned for the last quarter of 2008.

PK

Living History makes audio-visual recordings of personal experiences of private citizens and creates a database of documents and pictures in private possession, that can be used by students and members of the public for academic and educational reasons.

The focus is on people from all walks of life, the state of Perak and the Emergency years, starting from 1948 to 1960 and the signing of the Peace Treaty in December, 1989.

The project also aims to develop and sharpen students' analytical skills and powers of discernment. It is predicated on an educational thesis that the more one reads or listens, and the wider the spectrum of witnesses are heard, mindsets are cleared of biases and society is improved.

IPOH DIARY (NOVEMBER 1 TO 16)

Unisense Slimming Boutique will partake in a beauty fair at the Giant Hypermarket, Sunway City from November 1 to 3, 2008. Promotions: Buy RM200 voucher and get 1 miniature set (facial product) worth RM138 + 1 innovative facial worth RM400 + slimming treatment worth RM230 and 1 voucher worth RM300 (redeemable upon signing up for a facial or slimming treatment).
Call **05-2554800** for details.

Heritage Day organised by Ipoh International School on Saturday, November 1, 2008. Activities: Model building, sketching and photography competitions, exhibition and documentary by Ipoh World and more. Venue: Ipoh International School, Jalan Watson, Ipoh. Admission: Free.
Call **05-253853** for details.

60s' Music and Blues Jam featuring musicians from FP Dream Studio and Blues House. They play music and songs by The Beatles, Shadows, BB King and more. Venue: Indulgence Restaurant, Jalan Raja DiHilir (Jalan Tambun). Date/Time: Friday, November 7, 2008 at 7.30 pm. (One night only) Admission: RM 135 per person (inclusive 3-course dinner).
Call **05-255 7051** for reservation.

Public Forum entitled "A Totalistic Approach To An Effective Public Transport" organised by Ipoh City Watch. Venue: YMCA Jalan Raja Muda Aziz, Ipoh. Date/Time: Sunday, November 9, 2008 at 9 am. Admission: Free Call Sree at **019-3647847** for details.

Public Forum entitled "Literasi Undang-Undang Syariah Keluarga Islam" organised by the Perak Women to Women Society. Venue: Syuen Hotel, Jalan Sultan Abdul Jalail Ipoh. Date/Time: Saturday, November 15, 2008 at 8.30 am. Admission: Free. Snacks and refreshments provided. Call Dr Sharifah **012-5050547** or Pn Halida **012-6733827** for details.

Perak Family Wellness Fair and Workshop 2008 organised by the Kinta Action on Mental Health Issues (KAMI). Venue: YMCA, Jalan Raja Muda Aziz, Ipoh. Date/Time: Sunday, November 16, 2008 at 9 am. Activities: Free health screening, glucose test, breast examination for female etc. Sale of farm products from Hospital Bahagia Tanjong Rambutan. Admission: Free.
Call Sue Meng **016-5468003** for details.

continued from page 3



RAPE OF THE GOPENG JUNGLES

for cultivation. The very first thing the contractor did was to remove the century-old Gopeng pipeline - a 14-kilometer structure that was synonymous with the growth of the tin industry in the Kinta Valley.

Land owners on whose lands the pipe traversed were given notices even while the act of removal was in progress.

One very frustrated owner sued the contractor for trespassing. But the issue was conveniently swept under the carpet. Within a span of five months the whole pipeline

was removed and sold as scrap. The booty is modestly estimated at over RM6 million. It could have been shared between the parties concerned.

Back to the destruction of the jungles. We followed the tracks left by the loggers. By logic the easiest way to the designated 377-acre plot was through Kg Ulu Geruntum or Kg Ulu Geroh. But the loggers decided on a different route; one that would take them past rich timber lands where trees such as *keruing*, *balau*, *meranti* and *nyatoh* are in abundance. As

they inched their way into the forest they took whatever their hearts desired.

CARNAGE

The accompanying pictures depict the carnage and destruction brought about by greed. Now that many of these giant trees are gone the impact will soon be felt.

CONSIDERING THE SICK DURING DEEPAVALI

Patients get their share of sweetness

As has been their practice for the past many years, members of Malaysia Hindu Sangam Ipoh distributed traditional Deepavali cookies patients of the Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital (Ipoh General Hospital).

More than 500 recipients were visited and greeted by Sangam members.

The guests of honour at



Delivering Deepavali greetings

the ceremony were Dr. Hj. Rahim, Timbalan Pengarah of the hospital and Dato' Dr. Balaravi, Head of

Department and Senior Consultant Ophthalmologist of the hospital.

The members of Sangam wished the patients for a speedy recovery.

The special attention lifted the mood in the otherwise isolated surroundings.

They also thanked the guests and hospital staff for their assistance in making the event a success.

A. JEYARAJ

OBITUARY

THE INDOMITABLE COLONEL

A happy go lucky man who harboured no grudge and ill feelings towards friends and foes alike

We were fledglings wanting very much to be accepted by the brood. Seven of us reported to a unit that was based in a far-flung corner of Malaysia. Second Rangers was the resident battalion of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and was one of the two stationed in this East Malaysian state. Our battalion was the guardian of Sabah's western sea board.

As subalterns we were considered second class. Our lives were being dictated by the whims of our seniors, although we were of the same rank. In the army seniority matters even if you are a day older in service.

One senior who stood out was Nathan. He was already a full-Lieutenant, a two-piper, while the rest were one-pipers. Nathan was from the Ranks and was a corporal in the Signal Corps before joining the military college. He was commissioned in 1967 and had joined Second Rangers as a platoon commander. His stint in the Signals got him the appointment as the Regimental Signal Officer, a coveted post sought after by young officers.

Nathan was friendly and helpful. He was the only senior we could relate to. The rest were aloof. When we joined the battalion in 1970, Nathan was already married. He lived in the married quarters while we stayed in the Officers' Mess. Our lives



Col V.P. Nathan (1940-2008)

revolved around the mess bar. Distance and loneliness were overcome with us banding together for comfort and strength.

Nathan remained in the unit for a number of years. I got promoted and so did he. We later became company commanders serving under a head-strong Commanding Officer, Colonel Zain Daud. Nathan was taken under Zain's wings and was given the unenviable job as the unit's Operations Officer. Towards the end of

1972, while operating in the jungles of Jalong in Sungei Siput, the battalion had its first operational success. We got one kill, a notch up on the score board. Nathan was the prime mover.

I called Nathan by his pet name, "Andy" while to the rest he was simply "Anay" (brother in Tamil). He was a big brother, nonetheless although not in stature. When the battalion was deployed at the Thai border in 1974, Nathan's consistency led us to recover many terror-

ist bases, arms caches and food dumps.

Our paths crossed again after we retired from service. It was in 1998 when I stumbled into him by chance. I dropped by Yayasan Sultan Idris Shah in Bercham for a visit and was pleasantly surprised by Nathan's appearance. He was the Chief Executive Officer of the rehabilitation centre. How could a former soldier be managing a place like the Yayasan? His penchant for helping the under privileged could be the reason. Nathan, in his twilight years, was taking care of the handicaps. He remained with the centre for over a decade before calling it quits in 2005.

An active sportsman in his younger days, Nathan played football, rugby and hockey for the battalion. Andy had always been fascinated by the rough and tumble lifestyle of a soldier. He volunteered to attend the rigorous parachute course in order to earn his "wings". And he did it in splendid fashion by topping the class. Nathan realised his dreams of leading an elite regiment when in 1982, upon his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, was given command of Eighth Rangers, a parachute regiment.

Nathan was diabetic and had been under medication since he was in the army. The debilitating disease impacted his body and soul. When doctors told that his gangrene-riddled right leg had to be amputated he agreed without batting an eyelid. He lost his loving wife, Grace, to cancer in 2005 but soldiered on, nonetheless. Years of medication, however, took its toll. He succumbed to the disease on October 9, 2008 at the age of 68. Nathan left behind three children and seven grandchildren.

FATHOL ZAMAN

is waiting to occur. Let's pray it will not happen so soon.

Ipoh Echo strongly urges state authorities to investigate thoroughly the rape of the Gopeng jungles.

Don't look the other way. Don't dither. Don't delay. Do something positive or be damned to political oblivion.

Both Sungei Kampar and Sungei Geruntom are no longer crystal clear as they were before. Sawn logs remain uncollected and are heaped indiscriminately upstream.

The Pos Dipang tragedy of August 1996 is still fresh in our minds. A recurrence is not impossible given the fragility of the eco-system. A tragedy

SPORTS

THE BRAVE LADS FROM SMK SUNGAI PARI

Keen involvement in hockey takes a group of boys away from anti-social behaviour

Peter Khiew reports

Every Thursday, in all sorts of weather, a group of boys practise hockey at the AstroTurf. There, they assiduously take instructions from the commanding figure of Coach T.C. Sharma.

For the past three years, these boys have courageously faced Anderson school hockey team in the Under-18 Perak Schools Kinta hockey match finals. It has been a cause of pride for the team. Without the luxury of new sponsored jerseys, expensive hockey sticks and the convenience of being transported to and from weekly practice in air-conditioned coaches, they have competed with players from a school famed for its hockey players.

Meet the boys from SMK Sungai Pari. Like most students in the Buntong area, they come from diverse family back-

grounds – most are children of contract workers, drivers, labourers and mechanics. Some come from broken homes, with single parents. A few are not academically inclined.

Sharma said the boys have to worry about how to get to the stadium for practice, how to secure field hockey equipment and how to replace worn-out shoes. While supportive of their children's desire to represent the school in the sport, the Buntong parents have little cash to spare. A pair of hockey shoes can cost up to RM100 each.

A PASSION

The 66-year-old Sharma, former coach of the Anderson team (1957 to 1962) has been the group's mentor, coach and father-figure for the past six years. He is not paid to train the boys. What drives



The promising team that, in the past year alone, trounced hockey players using more expensive sticks and wearing new shoes

him is his passion for the sport. He was the coach of Anderson School hockey team when they were national champions for five consecutive years.

TC Sharma trained Foo Keat Seong, who represented Malaysia at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and the World Cup Bombay in 1974. Sharma also sat in the panel of coaches tasked to

spot potential and oversee the development of hockey in the state. According to him, the Buntong boys' involvement in hockey is one way to ensure that they stay in school, develop self-worth and learn the joy of aspiration. He pointed out that anti-social behaviour among the lads is virtually nil as their minds are "always occupied with hockey".

"The boys have the potential to succeed," he told *Ipo Echo*. "They are energetic, passionate and dedicated. To see their untapped talents go to waste would be a pity."

ASSISTANCE

To help pay for the turf rental, Sharma and the boys encourage their schoolmates and neighbours to bring over recycled items like old newspapers and plastic items to sell. The money collected help cover expenses for transportation, fees, shorts, T-shirts and sometimes, even hockey sticks or new pairs of shoes for the players. The initiative has seen the participation of the school administration, the parent-teacher association and other well-wishers.

The efforts of TC Sharma and his assistant, K. Anbalagan, a retired lab

assistant at SMK Sungai Pari are bearing fruit. The boys have competed in the Perak School Kinta Hockey matches, defeating many schools in the Kinta district like Anglo Chinese School (ACS) 3-0 and, last year, St Michael's, 9-0.

They have also taken part in the Ipoh-NSC-Milo six-a-side hockey carnival, Ipoh City Hockey Association (ICHA)-organised matches. Three of its players have also been selected to represent the Medical Club. Vishnu Ruben, a Form Five student was picked for Perak selection.

Individuals who wish to support the school team can contact Mr Anbalagan at 012-4364068.

ipohecho.sports@gmail.com

continued from page 4



must accept the mistakes of the past as experiences we had to have and proceed to make changes that would lead us to a phase of prosperity and, this time, in real harmony.

As for the needed changes, YLS maintained that whilst tolerance, understanding and pragmatism had kept the peace

there had been a failure to engender the kind of social integration necessary for national unity.

To achieve real unity he suggested the following means:

Empathy: Non-Malays needed to appreciate the socio-economic situation of the vast majority of Malays, their ex-

pectations of a fair share of the country's wealth and accept their political dominance. Malays, on the other hand, must accept non-Malays as equal citizens with legitimate rights and aspirations.

Engagement: Though Malaysians have always engaged with each other, it was on a scale insufficient

for nation-building purposes. Critical mass was needed. The silent majority of decent Malaysians must engage each other to foster better understanding and empathy.

Amanah: Public trust must be upheld as the very foundation of good governance and should rule all aspects of government.

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