

Tourist Information Split in Two Creates Confusion for Tourists

Our reporter paid a visit to the Tourist Information Centre, Ipoh, near the Ipoh Padang recently "I am not a jet-setter but have done a fair bit of travelling and my share of backpacking. The best part of call of any country is its tourist information centre where practical advice is provided freely."

The staff in the tourist centre in Ipoh are friendly. But that is insufficient. There are several inadequacies at the Ipoh Tourist Information Centre. Would we expect a tourist to write in and complain? Maybe one in a thousand would. The other 999 would simply go home and tell others of our incompetence.

At the Ipoh centre, I started by asking about the Matang mangrove reserve and was promptly told that I had come to the wrong place for information. It is frustrating to be told that, especially after coming to the centre for details.

How many tourists or locals are aware that tourism in Perak is split into two – one state-led and the other federal? Apparently, only Ipoh-based attractions are handled by this particular centre. If tourism in other Malaysian states is handled in a similar fashion, how is one to know which tourist centre covers which sites?

Friendly But Not Helpful

I was reluctant to go to the other tourist centre. I had posed as a newcomer to Ipoh and told them that I did not know what the city had to offer and was open to suggestions. The response was, "where you want to go?" Could the staff overlook the fact that only a stone's throw away was Concubine Lane with its colourful history? Or the Clock Tower? Or the Indian quarter with its blinding array of dazzling saris and assorted goods?

He could have told me about the flea market near Pasar Besar. There are several buildings of note in the locality and one only has to look up to the horizon to see what Ipoh is famous for – the limestone hills with its breathtaking treasure troves. He mentioned none of these but, after much prompting, insisted I visit the Azlan Shah Museum in Kuala Kangsar. So much for sites in Ipoh and so much for showcasing Ipoh/Perak to the world!

A good map detailing locations of particular attractions relative to known transport links and major towns is always helpful. However, very few attractions are highlighted on the various maps in the many booklets. The tourist struggles to see if the place he wants to visit is off the beaten track, close to the highway, near the coast or whatever.



Archived Picture of Ipoh Railway Station

No knowledge of attractions

I then asked about war memorials or any relics or ceremonies connected to any of the world wars. I even enquired about God's Little Acre in Batu Gajah where several planters and Commonwealth servicemen lay buried. The staff were unaware of its existence or that a remembrance ceremony is performed every June. Instead, I was told to visit the 'chee-na-tap'. A crash course in pronunciation would be beneficial as 'chee-na-tap' happens to be the cenotaph outside the railway station.

the white-water rafting trip only because she had been on a private visit. Nothing beats experience and I feel that frontline staff should be sent on these trips. Certainly not their bosses who sit in air-conditioned comfort, away from the information-hungry tourist.

Having achieved very little, I wandered around the centre. The displays look 'tired'. The glass fronted cabinets beneath the displays or photos, were used to store booklets or leaflets. It resembled a brightly lit storeroom.

Tourists Cannot Read Bahasa

Persistence pays and one staff member thumbed through a highly informative booklet "Perak: The Land of Grace" which was kept in a drawer at the counter. Unfortunately, this solitary booklet was not for distribution because it was out of stock. An order had been placed in November or December 2008 – eight months earlier!

Few, if any, of the staff have knowledge of the Ipoh attractions. One staff member had been on



Perak Tourism Information Centre?

I was fascinated with the remarkable black and white photos depicting various major timelines in Ipoh's history. All the write-ups were in Bahasa Malaysia for the benefit of foreign tourists who could read Bahasa naturally!

Ipoh has a fascinating array of majestic buildings with various architectural influences. A short history – type of architecture, the topical points, the person responsible for such a project, the dominating influence – would have been of more interest. A short walking tour, like in the university town of Oxford, would be good. This requires detailed planning, a good and interesting write up for the tour-guide and possibly incorporate a short stop at a typical coffee-shop in the old town for a cool refreshing drink.



At the left portion of the building, two mannequins were decked in Japanese costume. What these costumes have to do with Perak escapes me. Nevertheless, it would have been more appropri-

ate to display the commonly worn attire of the various ethnic groups, and preferably, on less European-looking mannequins. Several of the shelves held awards to do with DBI or MBI. Others held DBI or MBI issued souvenirs. How these displays will interest tourists is a little moot.

Excellent photos of Ipoh adorned the walls. The Ipoh tree, Ipoh's shops and roads in the earlier half of the last century, with brief explanatory words in Bahasa Malaysia beneath them. Do we expect foreigners to understand them? The opportunity to educate and inform how Ipoh came to be named is lost. If we are catering to the local crowd it is a let-down, as few will venture to the centre.

A few days later, I contacted the Gua Tempurung attraction and was told to phone yet another number. After much persistence, another person finally came on the line to give me the information I wanted. I was informed that the caves were closed on a Friday, ostensibly for repair and maintenance. This was never mentioned in any of the leaflets or by the staff at the Tourist Information Centre. The leaflets also failed to mention suitable clothing and footwear.

Airport and Hotels, Information Scanty

At the Ipoh Airport, the Information counter was manned but they did not have tourist information or brochures. The brochures are kept in the Duty Officer's room but there wasn't one on Perak. There were some brochures (mainly private locations, i.e., Grand Kampar Hotel, My Gopeng Resort & Lost World of Tambun) in the Arrivals enclosure, accessible only to passengers

that have just arrived. Most of the passengers had pickups and during the 20 minutes after the Firefly plane landed 4 taxis were waiting for pickup and only one passenger hired a taxi. A Parlo Tours van was waiting outside to pick up passengers. The booths at the airport looked derelict and most were empty. A big sign board had a taxi number and taxi fares printed.

Echo did a quick round up on tourist information at the hotels. At Impiana Casuarina, we got a Parlo Tours brochure and the latest issue of the Perak Tourist newsletter at the reception desk but only when asked for as they were not on display. In Syuen Hotel, one brochure entitled 'PERAK The Land of Grace' was produced from an unmanned shop lot, while at Tower Regency, the same brochure was proffered from the reception counter. At Heritage Hotel, we found the same brochure plus the Perak Tourist newsletter at the concierge. All of them had to be requested for, not readily displayed for easy browsing.

So the unsuspecting tourist can get information on Ipoh and Perak but it does require some effort. The process might be likened to that of dentist pulling out wisdom teeth. A painful process. So what is a tourist going to say of his experience in Ipoh?

Our efforts to promote tourism is disjointed, lacking cohesion and a sense of purpose. Talk is good only if accompanied by action and if tourism is to succeed in Perak, we need a concerted effort by all concerned to provide all of the accompanying services to go with the hype.

Mariam Mokhtar and the Ipoh Echo Team



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REVENUE COLLECTION AND GRADING OF EATERIES

Serious flaws in revenue figures. Council should concentrate on restoran mamak, kopitiam and warongs instead of McDonald, KFC, Starbucks etc....

Among the issues raised by the mayor in his opening remarks at the Ipoh City Council's monthly full-board meeting on Friday, July 31, were revenue collection, grading of eateries and enforcement. As expected Mayor Roshidi Hashim needed the extra boost to start the ball rolling. Revenue collection got top billing in his address to the councillors. Between the period of January to June this year, RM70.37 million was collected. The figure, said the mayor, was RM6 million more than the amount garnered for the same period in 2008 – a 9.21 per cent increase correspondingly.

Discrepancies In Figures

Roshidi attributed the success to an improved billing system and thanked the accounting department for a job well done. Default payment had been reduced from RM41.16 million to RM35.26 million over the corresponding period. The council, said the mayor, would continue with efforts to recover its dues. Based on Roshidi's report, errant house owners, numbering

some 35,059, are owing the council RM15.07 million in unpaid assessment bills for the accounting period of January to June 2009. The three problematic areas within Ipoh where the amount is highest are Pengkalan with 4,517 defaulters worth RM2 million, Bercham, RM1.32 million with 8,682 defaulters and Menglembu with 5,244 defaulters worth RM1.08 million.

Although Roshidi claimed that the on-going debt recovery exercise had been successful, a closer look at the problem areas proves otherwise. Bercham is high on the list for a number of years already. However, there are discrepancies in the figures quoted. Based on records received, the number of defaulters in Bercham in 2008 was 8,645 and the sum owing was RM3.1 million. Why the sudden drop to RM1.32 million when the number of debtors for both periods is almost identical?

Pink-coloured council notices are plastered on the doors of the defaulters' homes, a good indication that the much touted city



hall mobile team is hard at work. But on closer inspection these houses are vacant and the owners untraceable. Since the houses are empty and the owners missing how is the council going to serve them notices, let alone post a court order? And if auctioning of household items is necessary, as provided in the council by-laws, how is this to be done when there are hardly any movable items in the houses? These uncertainties will negate the mayor's efforts at keeping the council debt-free.

Figures Do Not Compute

In Menglembu the number of defaulters in 2008 was 4,666 with RM3.04 million in arrears. This year

Menglembu records a figure of 5,244 defaulters with RM1.08 million in debt. In Pengkalan 4,818 defaulters owed the council RM2.86 million in 2008. However, this year Pengkalan has 4,517 defaulters and RM2 million in bad debts. Something is not right with Roshidi's figures. They seem to fluctuate over time for some inconceivable reasons. A more accurate representation is, therefore, desirable. Correct computing is a necessity, especially when the mayor is making an all-important pronouncement at the start of an equally important monthly full-board meeting.

And if 70 per cent of the council's revenue

comes from the annual assessment rates payments how can a balance budget be proclaimed by city hall every two years? The method of computation is, therefore, suspect.

Grading System

Ipoh City Council has adopted measures to maintain a high health, safety and quality standards of food served at eateries. Earlier this year it introduced the food premises grading system. Of the 3,107 licensed food premises in Ipoh, 1,350 (43.5 per cent) are eateries. As of end June 2009, 556 premises were inspected and graded. Out of this only 35 obtained Grade A, the remaining having merely scraped past the qualifying marks. The top achievers, unfortunately, are mainly international fast-food franchises such as McDonald, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Starbucks, Coffee Bean, etc., where stringent health standards are being determined not by city hall but by the franchisers. It is the ubiquitous restoran mamak, kopitiam and warongs, which ordinary Ipohites frequent that

require constant scrutiny.

Enforcement Actions

The council's enforcement division had conducted over 32,000 enforcement actions within the January-June 2009 period. This had netted over RM800,000 in fines for the council's coffers. The formation of the anti-litter squad last year had borne some positive results. Over 1,500 compounds worth RM242,940 were issued to litterbugs within the six-month duration. Only six compounds were served for open burning, netting a paltry RM1,500. The number of complaints regarding uncollected rubbish and illegal dumpsites had dropped dramatically. Coordinated efforts by the council's mobile reaction team and the anti-litter squad was the reason, said Roshidi.

However, the rubbish heap next to the TNB substation at the Greentown Nova Complex remains an eyesore in spite of numerous complaints by tenants. Ironically, this seemingly innocuous yet noxious dump site is located within a landed property owned by MBI.

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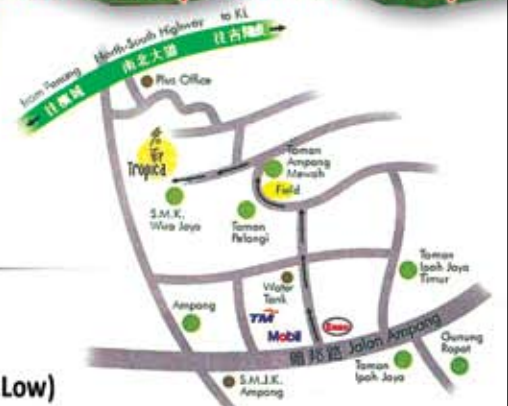
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THINKING ALOUD by G. SIVAPRAGASAM

TIME TO GET SERIOUS IN ENGLISH

At long last the government has made the decision to revert the teaching of Maths and Science back to Malay and the vernacular languages. It is a bold but right move. The government however has to come out with a clear declaration that the verdict was not politically motivated and the decision was based on pure pragmatic lines. The flaw in using English to teach these two important subjects was no more clearly verified than by the feedback that about a 130,000 will fail the SPM examinations if English was made a compulsory subject.

In the face of such an alarming confession, it is difficult to fathom how the majority of students who obviously have a poor command of the English language have been managing to grasp the difficult concepts in science and maths taught to them in English. Whilst the teaching of these subjects in English may have advantaged a number who possessed a reasonable competency in the language, there remained a lingering suspicion that the grading on these subjects had been compromised to make possible a respectable number of passes.

**Importance of English
Recognised**

Having said that, there is the reality that English is not only important but critical

for survival let alone progress in today's global world. It is gratifying to note that the importance of this language is being recognised by the nation's leaders. It is encouraging that positive steps are being taken to improve the standard of English of the whole pupil population with special care employed to ensure that those who reside in the rural areas are not left out. The reintroduction of English literature into the curriculum would undoubtedly go a long way to improve proficiency in the language. As I argued in my article in the 71st issue of the Echo, meaningful progress can only be made in English if it is made to come alive and nuances that are peculiar to the language can only be fully grasped through literature.

**English Compulsory
for SPM?**

The resolve of the government to improve the command of the English language among all school children was clearly demonstrated by the Minister of Education's statement that he was considering making English a compulsory subject for passing the SPM examination. Though it has been fiercely resisted, it needs to be done. However, the concerns of the detractors of this proposal have to be acknowledged and addressed first. It would imprudent to



implement this proposal if the infrastructure to support the plan is absent or ill formed. If done hastily it may lead to mass failures and result in compromise in the grading of the subject. If we truly want to achieve a standard in this language that will position us well in the global world it has to be real.

**Make English Second
Language**

I believe that the first step that needs to be taken is to popularise the use of English amongst the populace. For this we would need to make English the nation's second language. There is a great difference between treating English as a foreign language and accepting it as a second language. This is a policy decision that I feel would find favour with all sectors of society and across political divides. Such a decision once made has to

be fully embraced by the leaders and the populace. It must become a national mission implemented with a well thought out strategy. The government has to become more liberal in allowing the use of this language.

Even if English is not made a compulsory subject, policies could be introduced to motivate students to make an effort to obtain a good command of this language. It is a matter of delivering rewards to those who achieve a proficiency in this language. Malaysian students are generally competitive and possess an almost fanatical desire to excel in examinations. A special examination could be introduced for this language which could be conducted as part of the SPM examination but kept independent of it.

A pass in this examination could be made compulsory for those who apply for scholarships or wish to take popular subjects at tertiary level. A high grade in this special examination could be made a requirement for those who want

to pursue tertiary level disciplines that are conducted in English.

**English Essential for
Malays**

English whilst important for all the races in this country, is especially essential for the Malay community. Malays by and large are monolingual and in today's world only the English speaking community can afford to be monolingual and even they are attempting to learn other languages. It would be prudent for the Malay community to acquire proficiency in another language and English would be an ideal choice.

The sheer numbers of the Malay community will determine how well the nation performs on the global platform. English has emerged as a vital tool for progress and competitiveness in today's borderless world. As the dominant community, it is their duty to take ownership of this language and use it effectively to propel this nation into a progressive, modern and competitive society.





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MUSINGS ON FOOD by See Foon Chan-Koppen



SeeFoon finds 'jewel' in Pasir Pinji....

Ipoh is a treasure trove of food jewels especially in its cache of tucked-away 'Tai Chao' literally translated to mean 'big sauté' stalls which grow into biggish air-conditioned restaurants.

As I'm always on the lookout for new culinary adventures, my friends have been most obliging in leading me on new explorations, exposing me to taste treats I could never find on my own. One such discovery came from my friend Ginla Foo who introduced me to a new jewel, the Sun Poh Poh restaurant in Pasir Pinji.

Late Night Precious Jewel

Literally translated, the name means New Precious Jewel, a big bright air-conditioned restaurant that, judging by the open kitchen in the front, must have evolved from its 'Tai Chao' open-air stall in its early days, to what it is today.



Steamed Pomfret

Unlike most other restaurants where the service staff are staring into space and looking at their watches at 11pm, Sun Poh Poh is one of the few restaurants where you can get a hearty meal late into the night as they stay open till 1.30 a.m. So showing up at midnight for a feast or snack is not an issue. Proprietor Wong Ah Hing is also the Chef and between him and his wife, one is assured of a great meal at all times.

The decor is basic, the room spacious, with tables well spaced out. The usual plastic chairs provide adequate seating and tables have table cloths. Specialties written out in Chinese and pasted in strips on the walls are useful guides for the Chinese reader but otherwise, Mrs Wong will make the recommendations. The service is prompt and efficient as the dishes arrive in quick succession.



Eclectic and Extensive Menu

The menu at Sun Poh Poh is eclectic as well as extensive. While it is essentially a Chinese restaurant, one of its specialities for which its supporters praise highly is their Indian Mee, which is not unlike a Mee Goreng from any Indian hawker stall. This Indian Mee however while spiced with a similar pungency as its street cousins, is a sophisticated version, having sliced fish cake, cuttlefish, tow foo pok or fried bean curd, and a generous helping of prawns, served with limau kasturi, the small local limes – RM10.

A signature dish is their *Kwai Lum Heong Woo Kuen* or Fried Saito fish roll mixed with taro and given a crunch with water chestnuts. This dish has to be ordered at least a day in advance. *Wu Tao Mun Pai Kuat* or Spare ribs braised with taro is worthy



Thai Basil Fried Rice

of note as is their taro braised with dried prawns, the latter served almost as a paste with the bits of dried prawns providing texture.

Unusual Dishes

Unusual dishes here include their frogs legs done two styles, either steamed with chicken's essence, *Kai Chap Tsing Teen Kai* or *Kung Po* style which is spicy and laced with aromatic curry leaves; their yellow eels braised in soya sauce and their *Yi*

Heong Ngan Yu Tsai Chow Fan, an interesting fried rice heady with the aroma of Thai Basil, and fried with tiny white anchovies and long beans.



Saito Fish Roll

Other meat dishes include their many styles of presenting spare ribs including the *Fo Yim Pai Kuat*, their marinated fried spare ribs, drunken chicken, Marmite Chicken and their *Chui Pei Heong Siu Kai*, Crispy Skinned Fried chicken which is available only on Saturdays and Sundays. Their steamed pomfret, which are medium sized, are very fresh and steamed to perfection. Vegetables include their *Ham Dan Keh Tsee* or *brinjals* fried with salted egg and their *Kwai Tao Choi Po*, baby long beans fried with preserved turnip.

Prices at Sun Poh Poh are reasonable with an average dinner working out at around RM15-20 per head depending on what has been ordered. Of course, for those looking for a late night bite, a plate of fried noodles or fried rice will set you back a maximum of RM5-8 per person. Good value for good food at those times when you're hankering for food and most restaurants are closed.

Address: 1334-1335 Jalan Pinji, Pasir Pinji, 31650 Ipoh. Tel.: 05 2537273. Open: 5.30 p.m.-1.30 a.m. Closed: Mondays – every fortnight.

HAWKER FOOD

LUI CHA ('THUNDER TEA')

Surprisingly, not everyone knows what Lui Cha is! Ipoh is one town that appears to have a proliferation of Lui Cha stalls, owing no doubt to the fact that a large number of local folk come from Hakka origins. It is a Hakka dish that is primarily vegetarian except for the dried prawns that may be included for added flavour. Lui Cha comes in two parts – one is the diced or minced vegetables on white rice topped with roasted peanuts and sometimes sesame seeds, and the other is the aromatic green soup. Mix the two together and you have a fantastic blend of textures and flavours and a most satisfying meal. The soup is a blended combination of Chinese green tea leaves, mint leaves, saw tooth coriander leaves, Thai basil, peanuts and sesame seeds. Traditionally, the soup ingredients are put in a deep Lui Cha pot and ground with a guava stick until finely crushed and it forms a paste, and then steeped in boiling water or brought to a boil. If one is hard-pressed to find a Lui Cha pot and a guava stick, the trusty old blender works just fine! The array of shredded or diced vegetables can vary but usually one finds mustard green, Chinese *kai lan*, chives, French beans, *sayur/cangkuk manis* or sweet potato leaves, leek, beancurd, preserved radish (*choy po*), black-eyed peas, dried shrimps, etc. Altogether 7 to 9 types of vegetables and condiments are used. The vegetables are lightly fried in oil and seasoned. Of all the stalls reviewed, only one served raw vegetables as an alternative. If you have not tried Lui Cha, we recommend that you do. Healthy and hearty, you may just become a fan!



NAME	WHERE	COMMENTS	PRICE (RM)	
JERAM CHAI LUI CHA 9am - after lunch Saturdays closed 012-5818392	17 Psrn Greentown 7 Greentown Business Centre	Vegetables are tasty and the soup has lovely mint and basil flavour. The only stall that also has uncooked vegetables	3.30	★ ★ ★ ★
LUI CHA STALL 10am -2.30pm Closed Mondays & the 15th day (new moon)	Big Tree Food Garden, Off Jln Tokong, Behind Tuck Kee Restaurant, Pasir Pinji	Vegetables are tasty and soup has distinct mint & basil taste. More onions in ingredients	3.00	★ ★ ★ ★
LUI CHA HAKKA 10.00am till after lunch Off 2 days a month	43 Tgkt Tmn Ipoh 7, Ipoh Gdn South	Tasty and flavourful.	3.30	★ ★ ★
HER PO LUI CHA 9.30am -3 pm Mondays closed	494 Jln Sekolah, Kg Tawas	Lots of ingredients. Soup a bit light.	3.50	★ ★ ★

Our next food review will be **WAT TAN HOR**
Email your favourite recommendations to: food@ipohecho.com.my

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRO MUSICA Concert of Operatic Scenes & Arias (Handel, Beethoven, Donizetti, Rossini, Giordano, Puccini, Massenet, Gounod). Saturday, 22 August 2009, 7.45 p.m. at: Ballroom, Syuen Hotel. Admission by contribution: RM3,000, RM2,000, RM1,000 per table, RM100 per person (inclusive of dinner). For reservation and enquiries: PSPA 05-5487814 (Sara).

Community Health Campaign by the Perak Community Specialist Hospital (PCSH). Free screening. Sunday, 23 August 2009, 9.00 a.m.-1.00 p.m. at: Dewan SJK (C) Thung Hon, Tg Tualang, Perak. For further information, contact: Juliet Choo – 018-5713955.

'Teknik Menjawab Soalan PMR 2009' by Kinta Indian Association Education Committee. Sunday, 23 August 2009, 8.00 a.m. to 4 p.m. at: K.I.A., 7 Jalan Gurudwara, 30200 Ipoh. Admission is free. For registration, please contact: Mr R. Muniandy – 012-5262411.

Mayor Roshidi Zone Visit Programme. August 9: Zone 16 (Pekan Baru / Tebing Tinggi / Pasir Pinji) assemble at: Pasir Pinji Community Hall. August 26: Zone 09 (Kepayang / Fair Park / Bdr Ipoh Raya) at: Kg Kepayang Community Hall. September 2: Zone 06 (Jelapang / First Gdn / Tmn Rishah) assemble at: Jelapang Community Hall. All programmes start at 9.00 a.m.

Merdeka Day Carnival 2009 at 2nd Floor Glamour Square, Bercham from August 28 to August 31. Aug 28@1145am Ballroom and Hip Hop dancing. Aug29@11am Fashion Show, 5pm 1 Malaysia Hip Hop Dance Competition. Aug 30: 11am Children art competition. Aug 31-4pm Bridal Show, 6pm Singing Performance. For info contact Glamour Square: 0165241366 (Abby) or 0165261366 (Wai See)

IPOH DELEGATION VISITS SINGAPORE ON 1ST FIREFLY FLIGHT

When the inaugural Firefly flight from Singapore touched down in Ipoh on July 12 not only did it bring in the Singapore media and tour agents (featured in IE79) but on that same maiden flight going back to Singapore was a high profile delegation led by Perak State Health, Local Government, Consumer Affairs and Public Transport Committee Chairman, Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon; State Education, Science and Technology Committee Chairman, Mohamad Zahir Abdul Khalid; and the Menteri Besar's advisor on Indian community affairs, Dato' S. Veerasingham. Others in the delegation were Perak FMM Chairman, Dato' Gan Tak Kong; and Perak Chairman of the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lim Si Boon.

During their packed 3-day visit the delegation held discussions with the Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and met with Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, S. Iswaran. Dato' Mah described his discussions with the URA



Dato' Dr Mah leading the delegation to Singapore

and LTA as "positive bilateral discussions whereby the delegation was briefed on the planning and development of townships". Mah was pleasantly surprised to discover that the Deputy Director for the LTA was a resident from Sungai Rapat.

Wet Market Role Model

MICCI Chairman Lim Si Boon described the discussions with the URA and LTA as impressive as their urban planning policies enabled their communities to be "livable and vibrant". "On our first day we were taken on an impromptu visit at midnight to a newly renovated wet market Geylang Serai in Singapore. It was a double-storey building with wet market downstairs and a hawker centre selling also sundry goods. It had non-slip floors, running water, was disable-friendly and



Above Dato' S. Veerasingham and below Dato' Gan Tak Kong

very organised. Our Ipoh wet markets could benefit from this model as it appears to be very successful and well accepted."

Perak's Invitation to SMA

The Perak state government formally invited the Singapore Manufacturers Association (SMA) to bring a mission. The SMA indicated their areas of interest which lie in agriculture, food processing, biotechnology, foundry, and lifestyle products such as shoe manufacturing.

FMM Perak Chairman Dato' Gan Tak Kong highlighted that "the SMA had indicated their interest in setting up an International Industrial Park on a turn-key basis whereby the

Singaporeans would be in charge of development and marketing of the estate and in return be granted tax allowances and pioneer status". The SMA is planning to visit Ipoh after Hari Raya for follow up discussions.

Perak to Emulate Preservation Work

The delegation was also impressed with the preservation work being done by the Preservation of Monument Board when they visited a heritage temple. The whole delegation agreed that the buildings in Ipoh needed to be restored and preserved as a tourism product.

According to Mah, Singapore investors contributed 18% of the RM3 billion of foreign direct investment that came into the state last year. With the start of direct Firefly flights to Singapore, Mah hopes to see an improvement in the figures for both investment and tourist arrivals.

Lim Si Boon summed up the introduction of the direct flight quite aptly saying that it had brought "Ipoh closer to the world. Hopefully we won't be the best kept secret anymore".

JAMES GOUGH

LETTERS



We reprint some of our reader's comments from our online paper. Go to <http://www.ipohecho.com.my/> to read more. Why not subscribe online and get the Ipoh Echo in your email inbox and read the latest happenings in your community even before the paper arrives on your doorstep?

I recently attended the Perak Junior Age Group Tennis Championship held at MBI Sports Complex, Ipoh. The games started at 8.30 a.m. as planned. The players all went off and started their games in high spirit. Mid way through the games at 9.30 a.m., all play was stopped to await the arrival of Datuk Dr M. Kayveas, President of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) as guest of honour to officially open the event. Datuk Kayveas lost his way and was late in arriving. The ceremony only got underway at 10.00 a.m.

The young players had to line up on centre court for one hour listening to speeches in which they had no interest especially with Datuk Kayveas talking more about badminton than tennis. He then proceeded to hit three tennis balls into the crowd and the kids all rushed to grab the balls with prizes as incentive. This resulted in some kids falling over and possibly hurting themselves.

My question as a spectator is this: Firstly, how could the organizers, headed by

Dato' Daniel Tay, interrupt the tournament games in mid stream as this would very likely change the momentum of the games and possibly the results? The explanation offered was that it was planned and this was to ensure that the full field of players and parents were there to greet Datuk Dr Kayveas so that it would not be embarrassing if there wasn't a sufficient crowd present. My second question following from this is: Is it so vital to give a good show to Datuk Dr Kayveas that they had to break the rules of competition and stop the games in mid-stream? What has politics got to do with Tennis anyway?

This tournament is meant to encourage and develop young tennis players. We need to abide by the same international rules and courtesies as is practiced worldwide. The events of this last weekend turned it into a circus.

An Irate Spectator



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HEALTH

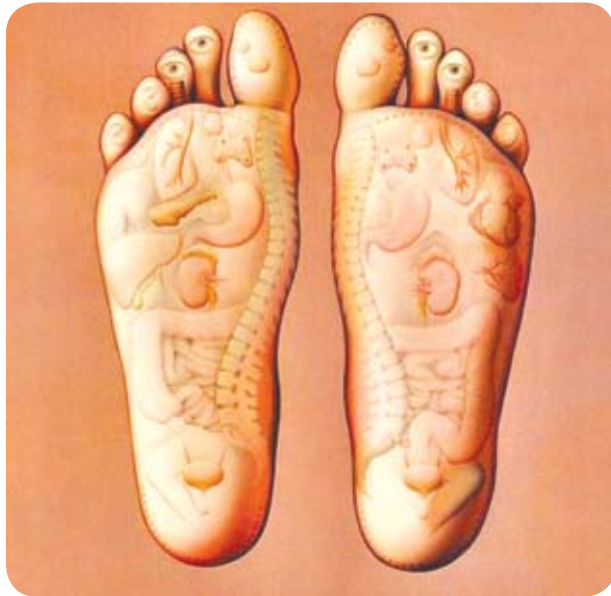
IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH – FEET FIRST

Reflexology is a non-invasive technique involving the practice of massaging or applying pressure to parts of the feet, or sometimes the hands and ears, with the goal of encouraging a beneficial effect on other parts of the body, or to improve general health. Its rise in popularity in recent years, emanating from China and Taiwan has seen the mushrooming of reflexology outlets in Ipoh ranging from the tiny one shop-lot manned by one or two therapists to the glitzy huge leisure centres clustered near Tesco and Kinta city.

Here trained therapists, mainly from China, will soothe tired feet and bodies with each one offering their own brand of pampering. Taking a drive through Ipoh town will lead the foot reflexology enthusiast – or anyone, for that matter – to find our city with a neat selection of foot reflexology centres. It does not take one with a particularly sharp eye to be able to find one. In fact, they are quite the eye-grabber as many of them will have large signboards at the front of their shop with a giant foot printed on.

Packages Galore

Having a browse through these reflexology centres led me to discover and understand the whole 'reflexology experience' better. The consultants were kind enough to go through special packages and treatments offered. They also further explained techniques or practices they incorporate as part of their own unique business. Yat Sum reflexology centre, for example, has a very calming, dim-lit atmosphere, and they even offer fruits and tea to the customer



while being massaged! Bliss! Weary travellers are also in for a treat when they find out that after being massaged to slumber, they are allowed to carry on sleeping for about 2-3 hours. Besides that, shower rooms for the customers together with soap and towels are provided. A foot reflexology treatment of 45 minutes is priced at RM36.

Happy Hours!

Huang Ting foot reflexology centre employs a similar concept to Yat Sum in terms of décor and ambience; however Huang Ting does not have shower rooms. VS Beauty Centre places much importance on hygiene, so instead of re-using buckets to cleanse the feet, each booth will have its own individual foot basin. Also, a crystal gel is rubbed into the feet to reduce odour. If that isn't enough, VS Beauty Centre does happy hours from Mondays-Thursdays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Further promotions include getting a 20% discount on treatments after introducing a friend, with the discount rate increas-

ing with every new friend introduced. Besides foot reflexology treatments, VS actually offers a variety of other pampering treats including spa treatments and facials. Customers can also check out the gym and café! These centres are all around the Ipoh Garden East area, and there are more, albeit smaller ones around. For example, Body Revolution which is located at No. 33, Jalan Perajurit, Ipoh Garden East, 31400, Perak. Tel: 05-5461084.

Long History

Traipsing through the various reflexology centres has allowed me to recognise the growing popularity amongst the local folk. Everyone yearns for a time to unwind and recuperate from the real world and reflexology is both affordable and beneficial. According to (The Complete Guide to Foot Reflexology (Third Edition) by Barbara and Kevin Kunz), it is based on a system of zones and reflex areas on the feet and hands each corresponding to a specific organ or area of the rest of the body. Indeed, this ancient health

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practice dates back to 2330 BCE (Egypt), 2704 BCE (China), and 690 CE (Japan), and applying pressure to these points promotes health benefits to the respective organs. Research has shown that Reflexology has an immediate impact on the body, and people actually feel a difference in their overall health, hence accounting for its increasing popularity.

All the centres have different pricings and some may charge more than the

other. But at the end of the day, what is a few ringgit when the outcome and experience is what matters? Of course, this also depends on what the customer is looking for, so in fact it does boil down to preference. Personally, I fell for Yat Sum almost immediately. Now, all you've got to do is try them out yourselves!

Yat Sum Reflexology Sdn Bhd. No.7, Medan Ipoh 1A, Medan Ipoh Bistari, 31400 Ipoh. Tel: 05-

5457000.

Huang Ting Foot Reflexology. Ipoh Main: No. 35A-C, Jalan Foo Yet Kai, 30300, Ipoh. Tel: 05-2557505. Ipoh Garden Branch: Lot 7a, No. 39, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah Utara, Taman Ipoh Garden, 31400 Ipoh. Tel: 05-5450505.

VS Beauty Centre. No. 219, Jalan Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, 31350 Ipoh. Tel: 05-3188989.

CHONG PEI SHYEN

NOAH'S ARK



Noah's Ark Natural Animal Shelter Ipoh Charter was set up recently with the sole mission to help and make the lives of animals a little bit better. Since its inception, the group consisting of Victor Oates (Chairman), Dr Ranjit (Veterinary Surgeon and Vice Chairman), Ms Jeya Jeyaratnam (Treasurer),

Ms Kit Vong (Secretary) and their committee have worked tirelessly to reduce the number of strays in the community.

The society's main objective is to spay and neuter both pets and strays so the unwanted animal problem is stopped at source. These strays once neutered or spayed are either found homes or released back into the area from which they came. Noah's Ark is contacted by the public who then go on their rescue mission. To catch these animals is often quite a challenge, sometimes taking days to catch even one. One cannot blame the animal as they are suspicious of the dreaded human. Many a time the volunteers

are either bitten, scratched or return looking worse than the ones they set out to rescue! On a brighter note, once the animal's confidence is gained, they are caught, treated, and then sterilised. The animal's daily needs are provided until such time when



Joy

they can be released. As with all charities the society relies on public donations and help. The public and Ipoh City Council need to be aware of this increasing problem with strays on our streets. They must wholeheartedly support the activities of

Noah's Ark and other similar charities through much needed donations to curb this situation.

Noah's Ark also promotes respect and compassion for animals through their activities, campaigns and education programmes. They provide advice and support and guidance for pet owners and increase public awareness of its responsibility towards animals in society. The public need to be made aware that unless their pets are within the walls of their homes and not allowed to roam the streets, they must take the responsibility to have their pets spayed or neutered. Many are under the false impression that neutering and spaying their pets makes them lazy and fat. The only reason for

this occurring is over feeding and lack of exercise.

Noah's Ark believes that animals as living creatures are entitled to moral and ethical consideration. They add to the quality of human life through their unconditional devotion and love and faithfulness. They, like many other charities, try to ensure that no healthy animal in their care is put to sleep.

Food for Thought

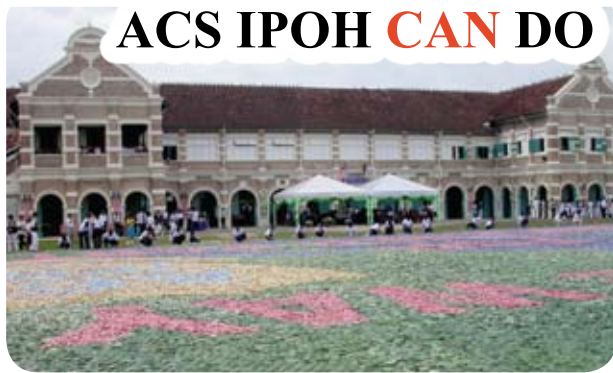
"A country is not judged by how it treats its people or children but how it treats its animals"

For further information contact: Victor Oates – 012-5217045 or Dr Ranjit – 019-5568292.

When 1,692 students and 117 teachers of SMK Methodist (ACS) Ipoh, combined their efforts for a common cause, anything can be achieved, even earning a listing on the Malaysia Book of Records (MBR) for their extraordinary team spirit.

The whole school virtually roared and thundered with excitement when a recyclathon project involving a whopping 185,640 recyclable cans, successfully made it into the MBR. The cans were used to construct the biggest logo, covering an area of 1,768 sq metres, with a width of 34 metres and a length of 52 metres. The feat, under the human achievements category, confidently erased the current record of 62 sq metres logo consisting of 20,760 cans.

The idea of the Herculean project was mooted by teacher Dr D. Kathirasan who started the



A sea of cans

ball rolling in early January this year.

Perak Education director Tn Hj Mohd Radzi Abd Jabar, in congratulating the school community for accomplishing an admirable project, said he viewed the achievement as a potent combination of creativity, hard-work, diligence, team spirit and a strong spirit of unity.

He commended the school for its quest in playing a role in the global efforts to maximise recycling and to do its bit for a greener earth.

ACS principal Mr Cheng Sai Lak said besides inculcating in the pupils the inherent value of protecting the environment, the project was also aimed at uniting the students from various races towards a common goal of achieving the set target through co-operation, innovation, proper planning and perseverance.

MBR representative V. Vijayakumar was present to officially announce the achievement and handing over the certificate to the school.

YOUNG PERAK

by PETER KHIEW

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

DRUG EDUCATION

Teachers at SK Tasek Dermawan in Bercham are highly commended for doing a good job in disseminating information about drug prevention to their young charges through a well-equipped and highly-informative drug prevention resource centre.

The centre, which grabbed the top prize in the state-level competition for two consecutive years, opens its door daily to pupils on how and why they can be strong and live without drugs.

Heading the team of teachers is school head Hajjah Kamariah Mohamad (who constantly reminds her pupils to always say no to cigarettes,



Hajjah Kamariah Mohd

alcohol and drug abuse.

Walking around the school, one can notice that each classroom has charts, sayings and graphics which encourage the young to build self-confidence.

She believes that when one's sense of self and self-esteem are strong, the pupils will be motivated to choose positive lifestyles.

SK Tasek Dermawan, through the teachers and pupils' hard work and team spirit, is representing the state for the national level competition.

We at Ipoh Echo congratulate the school for this outstanding achievement. For more details, visit <http://www.ppdasktd.blogspot.com/>

PERSONALITIES

ADELINE LEE - PUBLISHED AT 18

At the age of 10, when most young girls would be playing with dolls, Adeline Lee Zhia Ern set herself a challenge: to publish a book by the time she was 18. After 8 years, her dream has come true. Her first book, an anthology of poignant stories drawn from her imagination and past experiences, *Lethal Lesson* and other stories has been published last month by Silverfish Publications. The book is a compilation of 20 stories with different storylines.

'A letter from the past' tells the story of a woman reminiscing a lost love; 'no regrets' looks into the mind of a cold

hearted murderer determined to avenge his girlfriend's death.

Always Ahead

The eldest in her family, Adeline studied in Ave Maria Convent Ipoh, a Chinese school, from the age of seven. An outstanding student at school, she was selected in 2007 for a stringent interview with the Perak Education Bureau and became one of the three Chinese students in the state selected for the 12th Ipoh-Fukuoka student exchange program. Adeline was also the head editor of her



school's magazine in Form 5, the president of

the English society, and one of the 12 finalists in the ESUM /HSBC /The Star Public Speaking competition this year. She was the runner-up in the State Spelling Bee competition organised by NST and RHB bank last year.

At eight years old, her first story: "My favourite cartoon character - Mickey Mouse" appeared in the Star. This motivated her to explore writing further, leading to frequent submission of her literary works in local dailies and magazines. When she spoke of her dream about publishing a book before turning 18 to her parents, they merely thought that she was over-imaginative and did not take her seriously. Little did they know that she held on to this dream for many years to come.

In secondary school, as Adeline's skills improved, her writing became more diversified and she developed a passion for the

writing of short stories. "In April last year, I sent five of my stories to three different publishers. Of these, Silverfish got back to me and expressed interest", says Adeline. Although it was just the beginning, it was proof that her work was appreciated. At that time, she was in the midst of preparing for her SPM examinations. She was told by her publisher that she needed to rework some of her stories and she should contact Silverfish Books after her exams. She did exactly that.

Difficulties Being Published

However, publishing a book was not as easy as Adeline expected. Silverfish was very demanding of her and she had to make an average of four amendments for each piece of work. "I didn't mind rewriting as I noticed that doing so really improved my stories. I am thankful to my editor Mr Raman for his guidance. But there were times when I got very frustrated, espe-

cially when the ideas refused to come. Sometimes it took me weeks to complete one story", explained the 18 year old.

However, her hard work paid off. *Lethal Lessons* and other stories was launched a month after her 18th birthday. She is grateful that her parents, both avid readers themselves, encouraged her to read a lot when she was growing up. When she was just a two year old toddler, her mother exposed her to newspapers, thus exposing her to the very words which are now her stock in trade.

Encourage Local Authors

Modestly, Adeline confessed to not being all that talented, but by luck she came to be spotted by Silverfish. She gave credit to her publisher for having given her the opportunity of publishing her own book. Adeline counts Amy Tan and Haruki Murakami as her favourite authors. She went on to explain

that her motivation to write her book was the dearth of local authors and she hopes that the publishing of her book may spur more local efforts. She says that she wishes to publish a novel in the not too distant future. However, she feels that the characters and plots in a novel would be different and more complicated and it would take a much longer time to complete one.

Next Steps

Next, Adeline will pursue her A-levels at Kolej Tuanku Jaafar in Seremban under a scholarship, paving the way for her to fulfil her dream of becoming a lawyer. But she said that she would not give up writing then either.

In her free time, Adeline likes to read, listen to music, play the piano and learn new languages, currently Japanese.

Priced at RM30, *Lethal Lesson* and other stories are available in Silverfish Bookshop and other major bookstores.

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WARRIORS' DAY PARADE



Warriors' Day (Hari Pahlawan) in Perak was observed on Friday, July 31 at the General Operations Force Northern Brigade camp in Ulu Kinta. The ceremony, held at the brigade's parade ground, was graced by the Raja Muda of Perak, HRH Raja Dr Nazrin Shah who took the salute from the full police honour guards. Poetry to eulogise the heroic deeds of local warriors was recited by L/Cpl Mohd Arman Sukor and W/Const Norul Jamna Mohd Hasin. The ceremony ended with a display of unarmed combat by members of the police commandos, VAT 69. VIPs and guests, which included retired soldiers and policemen, adjourned for tea hosted by Perak police chief, DCP Dato' Pahlawan Zulkifli Abdullah and army brigade commander, Brig-Gen Dato' Zulkifli Mansor. While the guests ate they were entertained to songs and music rendered by the KL-based police musical band, Kumpulan Ghazal PDRM.

FATIMAH'S ONCOLOGY CENTRE BREAKS GROUND



Hospital Fatimah which was started 35 years ago by the Brothers of Mercy, recently held a ground breaking ceremony of their upcoming Oncology Centre (for the treatment of cancer). The ceremony was performed by Rev. Bro. Peter Berg, the Superior General of the Brothers of Mercy of Trier Germany who was on a visit here.

The Oncology Centre will be housed in a new 6-storey building constructed with 2 bunkers. According to its CEO Dr Lim Chie Kean, Block E, as the new block will be known, will be ready by the end of 2011. When ready it will be the second hospital in the state of Perak to provide oncology services and will be able to treat 30 patients per day.

STUDENT TOURISM PROGRAMME 2009



Perak Student Tourism Programme 2009 was launched by executive councillor for tourism and women's affairs, Dato' Hamidah Osman recently. The event, held at the playing field of SMK Anderson Ipoh, was aimed at instilling interest in tourism among students. "The objective is to create awareness in students on the importance of tourism and its impact on the state's economy", said Hamidah in her opening speech. "Students need to appreciate the necessity of maintaining the various tourism products in the state." The school field was transformed into a mini carnival with a number of activities in progress. They included a colouring contest for pre-school kids, quizzes, traditional games and obstacles crossings, such as flying fox, abseiling and wall-climbing. There was also a cultural contest involving teams from Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Negeri Sembilan and Perak. It was one fun-filled day for participants.

GRAND ROYAL OPENING



The official opening of the newly upgraded Royal Perak Golf Club 8 was indeed the grandest club function in the silver state this year. It was officially opened by its Patron DYMM, Sultan Azlan Shah on the morning of August 8 with the planting of a "Golden Chain tree (Lophanthera Lactescens)". Thereafter HRH and the golfers participated in the "DYMM Sultan Perak Silver Jubilee Golf Tournament". A total of 355 golfers participated in the tournament held in conjunction with Sultan Azlan's 25 years ascension to the throne. Golfers noted on the morning was the DYAM Raja DiHilir Raja Jaafar, YAM Raja Kecil Tengah Raja Ashman Shah and previous Ipoh Mayors Dato' Sirajuddin and Dato' Taalat. Also noticed was KKK CEO Dato Seri Lee Oi Hian. Current Mayor Dato' Roshidi was seen sharing the buggy with CPO Perak Dato' Zulkifli. Representatives from 13 affiliated clubs from Malaysia and Singapore also participated in the tournament. At the gala dinner held the same night DYMM Sultan Azlan Shah unveiled the plaque of the new club. Approximately 680 guests attended the dinner which was held at the club's new ballroom.

REMEMBERING YASMIN

Some 700 fans of Yasmin Ahmad attended a special Tribute called Remembering Yasmin in the HillCity Hotel organised by 34 non-government organisations comprising of Chinese, Malay and Indian groups. The event was organised to show the nation's appreciation of the late director for her relentless efforts in sowing the seeds of understanding, harmony, unity and humanity among the many races.

Chong Kin Mien, DJ with NTV7, shared his working experience with Yasmin and said that she was a team player and never exerted her authority on those working with her and was willing to listen.

An interview with TV3 was shown and when asked about the 1Malaysia concept, she said that she had been propagating this in her films for the past 20 years. She jokingly added, maybe the concept was copied from her.

Clips from her signature Petronas advertisements reflecting Malaysia's multicultural society were screened.

The function ended with screening of her famous award winning movie, *Septet*, which was filmed in Ipoh.



SPORT



The ladies team posing with HRH Raja Permaisuri Bainun and the winning trophy

The recent 2nd Indoor Asia Hockey Tournament held at the Indera Mulia Stadium was a thrilling affair.

The ladies Malaysia A team defeated Kazakhstan

3-1 in the final to take the inaugural Raja Permaisuri Bainun Cup much to the delight of the local fans. Team captain Nor Saliza scored the first goal in the 8th minute while another

2 goals were netted by A. Kannagi in the 22nd and 37th minutes.

What makes their win so amazing is the fact that the team was only selected just 10 days earlier prior to the start of the tournament. Similarly for their coach R.Vivekanandan who confirmed that he started training the team 10 days ago. All members of the ladies team are former national players and this was the first time they were participating in an indoor hockey tournament. The experience has left them avid fans of the indoor form of the sport. However, the rush of the formation of

the team and the minimal time for training caused some of them to have a fever during the finals but they pluckily played winningly to the end.

Indoor hockey is played on a smaller field and is played with 6 players, 5 field players and 1 goalkeeper. The game is divided into 2 periods of 20 minutes. Unlike outdoor field hockey the game is fast paced and the players have to be in top physical form to take advantage of every goal scoring opportunity.

The first indoor hockey event was held in December last year in Ipoh



Kannagi playing fast and furious

at the same stadium. At that time, there were only men's teams. This time around 5 countries, Malaysia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Thailand and Kazakhstan, participated and ladies' teams were included. A notable absentee was India who pulled out just 2 days before the start

date.

At the finals, Men's Malaysia A again met the Iranian team, their old nemesis in the 1st tournament last year. Malaysia A again lost 3-2 to Iran who went on to take the coveted Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. However the Malaysian Team this time around proved a better match to the Iranians than 6 months earlier.

On the game of indoor hockey Kannagi has this to say: "it's fast and you must be alert; and it's exciting". As a spectator I totally agree with her sentiments. **JAG**



COMMUNITY NEWS

WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY

The Semai of Ulu Geruh create history by celebrating the Day for the very first time

This is something unprecedented. Never before has the International Day of the World Indigenous People been celebrated anywhere in Malaysia until recently. The Semai community of Kampong Ulu Geruh, Gopeng was the proud beneficiary of some well-meaning non-governmental organisations who had pooled their resources to observe the United Nations declared, Indigenous People's Day on August 9. Although the occasion was celebrated a day earlier on Saturday, August 8, its significance was not diminished.

Kampong Ulu Geruh lies at the foothills of the Main Range beneath iconic Cameron Highlands. It is about 10 kilometers from Gopeng. The 30-minute journey along a windy and bumpy road takes visitors past three internationally acclaimed holiday resorts. The Gopeng Rainforest Resort being the latest addition.



Kampong Ulu Geruh is the largest of three Semai settlements in the Gopeng Forest Reserve complex. It has a population of about 500. The majority of the inhabitants eke out a living harvesting jungle products for sale in the nearby towns. A few, however, have ventured into the tourism business by becoming nature guides. They take visitors to sites where the rare and endangered Rafflesias bloom and to creeks and salt licks where Rajah Brooke butterflies congregate.

Event organiser, Sahak Bah Udai (Ahaa), Chairman of Sahabat Eko-Pelancogan dan Memelihara Alam Indah (Friends of Eco-Tourism and Nature Conservation) or SEMAI was coy when asked by Ipoh Echo what prompted him to observe Indigenous People Day. "It's an opportunity to showcase the Semai culture, traditions and ways of life to the outside world," he answered. "I am overwhelmed by the response. It's totally unexpected," he said referring to the large

turnout. "Hopefully, the state government will take notice and assist us in the future."

Australian Sarah Steward, a first-time visitor, was totally ecstatic. "I feel so fortunate to be here seeing things at close quarters," she exclaimed. She and her family had just seen a blooming Rafflesia at a nearby site and were thrilled by the whole experience. "There is much potential in this village," she declared. "We'll be back next year."

The whole village assumed a carnival-like atmosphere with much merriment in the air. A number of activities were organised to keep the visitors occupied – traditional games, handicrafts, basket and mat weaving, to name a few. The blow pipe stand was well patronised by the visitors, consisting mainly of school children from Ipoh, Kampar and

Gopeng. The time-tested telematches were a definite crowd puller. Teams representing various groupings participated and their antics on the village square had everyone in stitches.

The day-long celebration ended with the prize-giving ceremony for winners of the telematches and attap weaving competition.

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4-5 cups of green tea a day are good for health!

HONEY, WOULD YOU LIKE SOME WILD HONEY?



This could be Benji Leong's pet phrase to his customers as he pursues his hobby-turned-business in Sitiawan. Benji, a former supervisor and hotelier, took up honey harvesting nine years ago as a hobby but the sting of honey bees has made him a convert and it has become his passion. "During my younger days I used to roam the jungle fringes in Lumut and encountered all



kinds of insects, including honey bees", he said. His youthful experiences come in handy in his current venture, the result of urging from some old friends who are professional honey gatherers.

Although started as a hobby, Benji is so much into honey gathering that today he spends a major part of his time in the jungle hunting for bee hives. His favourite hunting grounds are in jungles near Lintang

in Perak at the foothills of the Main Range. Further afield, in Pahang, Benji hunts in the jungles of Triang near Tasek Bera.

Over the years, Benji has acquired the finer points of handling the bee hives, which are found on Tualang trees, 70 to 80 feet above the jungle floor. Gatherers know when a hive is ripe for harvesting. "The size of the hive is a good indication", said Benji. Pegs have to be implanted on the tree trunks to ease climbing. Harvesting of honey is done after dusk when the bees are in the hive. The harvesting process may take several

hours stretching into the night. Discarded oil palm fronds are doused and set on fire. The heavy smoke produced keeps the bees at bay while the climber removes the honey-laden honeycombs and let them fall to the ground. An assistant will then collect the honeycombs. Bottling is done at home or on location and a good outing will net him between RM600-RM800. But the going is tough.

Benji no longer climbs trees to get to the hives but employs others to do it while he supervises. Benji's wife, Madam Chow, a school teacher,

assists in bottling the wild raw honey. She said her husband always insisted in maintaining cleanliness and quality of the honey. Benji is still undecided whether to engage in the business fulltime, as the honey he collects is just sufficient for his regulars in Sitiawan, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. The medicinal properties of wild honey are well known. This is the reason that Benji's wild honey is sought after by his customers, and his supply often falls short of demand.

SAMINATHAN

MALAYSIAN AID PROJECT BY BRITISH GIRL GUIDE RANGERS

A group of 17 Girl Guide Rangers (between 16 to 18 years) and 4 leaders from Essex, England, were in Ipoh recently to carry out their community service at the Jelapang Salvation Home for the aged. This was one of the two community services under their Malaysian Aid Project. The other was tree-planting in partnership with R.E.A.C.H. in Cameron Highlands.

At the Home the rangers built a brick wall, made a cement path, painted chairs and tables and planted plants in pots and demonstrated to the

cooks how to prepare an English meal for the inmates. According to their leader, Mrs Ann Bailey, the Girl Guide Rangers had planned and prepared the project over a period of three years. The rangers financed the trip themselves by carrying out various fundraising projects and enrolled for paid courses like masonry to equip themselves with the necessary skills. Hence their finished job looked very professional and gained admiration from all at the Home especially Captain Tong, superintendent of the Home,

who was full of praise and appreciation for the work done. On their last day it was heartwarming and a great joy to see the inmates singing and dancing along with the group when the rangers put on an hour-long performance of dances and songs to entertain them.

The Perak Girl Guides Association President, DYAM Raja Puan Muda Perak Raja Mahani binti Raja Haji Shahar Shah who is very supportive of the Girl Guides Movement, welcomed them at the Istana Raja DiHilir. Despite her tight schedule and their ad hoc

visit, Raja Puan Muda presented each of them with her book "Heritage Cuisine of the Abode of Grace" as well as packed food. The British rangers were very impressed by Raja Puan Muda's warm hospitality and interest in the Girl Guides Movement and full of praises for her. Tuanku also expressed her wish to see Malaysian girl guides, especially those in Perak, emulate the British Rangers and be more involved in community service. After all the motto of Girl Guide rangers is 'Service to Society'.



Community service at the Jelapang Salvation Home for the aged

PARENTING

MOMMY WHAT ARE WE DOING TODAY?

ipohecho.parenting@gmail.com

Ipoh mom, Wern Sze Gill, struggles at being resourceful and creative when dealing with the challenges of raising children and wonders if most parents feel the same way she does....

School's out (again!) and my two active kindergarteners have been chewing my ear off on a daily basis... The persistent question "Mommy what are we doing today?" is what I endure these mornings before I leave for work, and "Mommy what are we doing tomorrow?" is what I will hear every night for the next four weeks.

One cannot help but wonder why it is that children get so restless so easily these days? Must their schedule be constantly filled with activities and things to do? What happened to those carefree days where children lived for the moment and enjoyed simple non-structured play without bothering what was to take place later?

An example of a recent tele-conversation I had with my 5-year old goes like this... "Hello son!" "Hi mom..." "Mama what am I going to do today?" "Anything you wish son... you're on holiday." "But there's nothing to do!" "Go play with your toys." "But I've already played with them." "Ok then go do your Kumon." "But I've already finished my Kumon..." "Play with

your sister." "But she's playing with her dollies... it's boring!" "Go read a book." "But mama, I need to do something!" "What do you want to do?" "I don't know." I am beginning to get agitated now... "Let me talk to your sister." "But mama..." "Danyl, please ask your sister to come to the phone." Pause. "Hello mama" "Hi Sonya... what are you doing?" "I'm playing." "Can you please ask your brother to play with you? Get him to pretend to be the daddy or the teacher or something..." "Ok mama." As you can tell... I am grateful I have a daughter!

A 'Kiasu' Mom?

Anyone looking at my kids' schedule would probably reason that I stand to be blamed for their constant restlessness especially during the school holidays. They are, after all, the 'products' of modern-day parenting, and as much as I hate to be deemed the typical 'kiasu' (afraid to lose out) parent, my closest pals would probably insist that I am one.

My kids will turn 6 and 4 at the end of the year and already they are enrolled in a host of after-school



programmes 6 out of 7 days in the week. They attend a reading programme, a Math programme, swimming lessons and a Sunday school programme at our church. And these are not counting regular playground visits or cycling sessions, and the ballet and music lessons of which I have stopped temporarily... Not because my kids did not fancy them but because my schedule was beginning to KILL me. And one wonders how working parents manage all of the above and at least 3 other learning

programmes! Phew!

Kids' Programmes Galore

So what is it with modern-day parenting that we feel we should be sending our children to a host of learning programmes in order for them to get a head start in life? Do children actually lose out to other kids if they did not have such opportunities for learning and are they 'left behind' as a result?

Before I had children I used to think that I would be the last to succumb to being a 'kiasu' parent when it came to education. I had visions of my kids

enjoying their childhood and not having to endure long hours at tuition or other after-school lessons. I had certainly not expected things to turn out this way. The irony of it all is that my kids actually enjoy their after-school programmes and brand them as fun!

This brings us to the point that I'm trying to make here. In the flurry of managing my kids' activities and their expectations, I have come to the conclusion that just like parenting, learning comes packaged in many forms. You could choose programmes or schools that are more rigid and

authoritarian in style, or those that present learning to the child in fun and invigorating ways. Modern methods of learning are beginning to lean more and more towards the latter and I am thankful that in this day and age, getting a child interested in learning is becoming easier for the busy parent.

So to all my friends who reckon I am quite the mad mom, my 2 consolations are these... That as long as my kids remain upbeat about their busy schedules and if it reduces my having to answer their incessant "What am I going to do today?" by all means, call me 'kiasu' anytime!

WERN SZE GILL

If you'd like to contribute to the Parenting Column or have useful and unique strategies for fostering strong family relationships, do share them with our readers. Email your stories to ipohecho.parenting@gmail.com

To Advertise
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Ramesh Kumar
016 5531092

ADVERTORIAL

The only unisex natural (human) hair wig salon in Perak has been operating for 52 years at No. 589 on the main Buntong road next to the Buntong market. The salon was opened by Mdm Yip Foong Ying on 1st May 1957 and is famous, among the villagers, for the special hair bun worn by Indian brides; the salon has had customers spanning 3 generations.

Mdm Yip retired in 1994 and her niece, Mary, took over the natural-hair wig business. The business is now run by her daughter, Pek Yoke, and Mary. According to Mary, they cater more for cancer patients who lose their hair after chemotherapy treatment.

Since the wigs are custom made, each wig is ordered to make to suit the customer and according to customers' needs. One full hair wig, according to the length of hair required, costs from RM300 onwards.

Men and women who face hair loss on the crown, only need a small hair piece to cover up the baldness or, used to prolong the interval between hair dying.

HAIR TODAY, HAIR TOMORROW
One Stop Solution for Hair Loss

The wigs can be washed, dyed, permed, re-bonded according to the style required.

Newly cut hair needs to be sewn together strand by strand; it passes through 2 sections of sewing before it can be sewn on the cap according to the style. Next, the wig will be sterilised, washed, cut and permed. The salon has customers from KL, Johor, Penang, Melaka, who make a day trip for their wigs to be serviced. The service could be adding more hair, changing the elastic hook, mending the side or holes that appear on the wig. With good care and service, a wig can last for 5 years or more. For

regular customers who cannot make it to Ipoh, Postlaju's service is used.

To master the skill of sewing wigs one needs patience and must have hair skill foundation. This skill is priceless and till now the salon has not found a pupil yet. People are willing to pay but Mary prefers to pass the skill to her daughter.

Mary finds satisfaction in being able to help people with their baldness problem.

For a consultation, Mary can be contacted at: **016-5687259/05-2547917.**

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A(H1N1) – MORE THAN A NORMAL FLU

The death toll in Malaysia from influenza A (H1N1) as of August 11 is 38 with a total number of 2,253 cases reported thus far. A day earlier the number of deaths was 26 and the day before it was 18. As the fatalities appear to increase exponentially, Perak appears to have been spared as witnessed by Local Government Minister Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon's report on the situation in Perak on August 6.

From May 15 till August 6 there were 90 confirmed cases of A H1N1. For the period July 16 till August 6 the number of ILI (influenza-like illnesses) cases reported was 98 while a total of 18 institutions were reported closed in seven districts. As Dato Mah exclaimed, "It is a pandemic. It is all over the globe and now all over Perak".

According to Dr Mah an average of 95-98% of the patients get through the incubation period. Those that experience difficulties are the vulnerable groups with underlying diseases such as obesity, diabetes among others. For those that get through the incubation period they develop an immunity to the virus.

The new flu is anti-



pated to be in the air for a year so it is best to know the symptoms and take all necessary precautions now. Additionally the whole community can help mitigate the situation by practising personal hygiene, ethical coughing and social distancing.

It was just 3 months earlier that our government was trying to keep out the flu virus by screening all incoming arrivals into the country. Any arrival that showed the symptoms was immediately quarantined. Indeed an official had stated then that the virus was under control and Malaysia was free of the flu.

That all changed last month when the virus was transmitted locally and has since been declared a pandemic. Currently only severe and complicated cases are being admitted into hospitals.

Indeed at this pan-

demie stage awareness is critical. You need to know what are the symptoms, how to recognise them and what to do to mitigate the spread to the community.

How it is spread: The A H1N1 virus is spread from coughs and sneezes or by touching contaminated surfaces then touching the nose and mouth.

Basic protective measures: Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw tissue in trash after use. Avoid touching your nose and mouth and contact with sick people and practise social distancing.

Signs and Symptoms: Fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue and vomiting (25%) and diarrhoea (25%).

If You Get Sick

For those showing symptoms of ILI, visit the near-



Dato Dr Mah(r) with Deputy State Health Director Datin Dr Ranjit Kaur(l) during the press conference on August 6

est clinic for treatment. For cases with light symptoms stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom free for 24 hours whichever is longer. Also limit your contact with other people as much as possible and wear a mask.

Emergency Warning Signs

In Adults: Difficulty in

breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting and flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

In children: Fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish or gray colour skin, not drinking enough fluids, severe or persistent

vomiting, not waking up or not interacting, irritable, flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

IN PERAK
(as of 13 Aug 09)
5.00 p.m.)
Confirmed: 159
Deaths: 5

IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU?

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Characteristic. High (102-104) lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General aches	Slight pain usual	Often Severe
Fatigue	Quite Mild	Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate hacking cough	Common. Can become severe

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