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ISSUE **135**



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CHINESE NEW YEAR

“Don’t Create A State within A State” Warns Menteri Besar

By Fathol Zaman Bukhari



Photo by Makkal Osai



Photos courtesy of Bernama

Ipo Echo's one-on-one with Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir on Thursday, December 22, 2011 at his residence. Zambry provides a candid appraisal of his achievements during his tenure as MB and his expectations for the New Year. We reproduce excerpts of the interview here.

Continued on page 2



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“As a leader the one thing I aspire for is peace followed by prosperity.”

IE: Since assuming leadership your visibility is most pronounced compared to your predecessors. You have established a very cordial relationship with the media which works in your favour. The general view, however, is of you being the frontrunner and not your subordinates.

MB: This is not something new but it's the prevalent view at the moment. My excos are few. There're only six instead of ten, therefore, each holds several portfolios. But that doesn't discount us from working harder.

The other factor is the work culture which I have inculcated. It will take them awhile to get used to. But I am certain they'll slowly and gradually but surely learn the ropes. You can now see how some of them are interacting with the *rakyat* in overcoming their problems. It'll take time, of course.

IE: Budget 2012 is much similar to the Federal Budget 2012. Can it be termed an Election Budget?

MB: Well, it's interesting to hear the Opposition's response after my budget speech. We're still uncertain when the election will be.

I, however, look at it differently. I am trying to present the best budget to the people. The approach I have adopted is to concentrate on certain target groups rather than the masses, as such people think it's an election budget.

The methodology may differ but it addresses specific groups of people. There are over 50 touch points. People can term it as an election budget, but in all honesty, it's a budget for the people.

IE: People's fear is the delivery of the budget 'goodies'. Some RM8 million has been allocated for NGOs responsible for the rehabilitation of abused women and children and the charity of the underprivileged and the poor. Has a workable mechanism been devised to deliver these goodies so they reach the right people?

MB: We may have the best policies and pronouncements but when it comes to delivery it fails miserably. I've devised a system whereby each exco will be responsible for the management of funds under his/her portfolios. From UPEN and the state financial department the money will be channelled to the respective agencies.



In the past, the flow and disbursement of funds were being reviewed every quarter. But this time around the effectiveness of the system will be scrutinised instead. Henceforth, this will be the strategy I'll adopt to ensure fairness and fluidity.

IE: Perak Women for Women Society is a fine example. It concerns itself in women's affairs. The society wants to know how to go about applying for funds?

MB: I am aware of this society. I believe Dr Sharifah, the president, is in constant communication with Dato' Hamidah, the exco for women's affairs. She should, therefore, channel her requests to her on all matters pertaining to women's welfare.

IE: The number of unemployed in Perak, according to statistics, stands at 29,000. What are your actions to address the problem besides resorting to a job fair as undertaken by IDR last October?

MB: Holding job fairs is one of the ways to address the problem of unemployment. The most important thing, however, is the setting up of PEKA or Pusat Kerjaya Amanjaya where job seekers can register themselves for employment. PEKA will job-match registrants based on their qualifications, skills and experiences. But you know the market needs today. Job-matching is difficult and getting the right job for the right people is not easy. You must remember the kind of job-seekers we deal with. Some are very choosy. I recall meeting one guy recently who complained that PEKA had not updated him on his request. I asked him what kind of job he was looking for. He replied, "I want to be a *pegawai*." Obviously, the Centre can't find a job of one's choosing.

Rather than wait for job-seekers to contact PEKA, minders go down to the ground to meet them instead. This is more practical, considering the difficulties those looking for jobs face.

Furthermore, we are working closely with the Ministry of Human Resources to update them on the numbers. With these measures in place I believe the problem of unemployment can be resolved to a certain degree.

IE: What about the issues of English language proficiency and labour mobility? How do these factors affect your plans?

MB: English language proficiency among graduates and diploma holders is poor. It affects their chances to be gainfully employed. Industrial players too are selective when looking for candidates to fill up vacancies.

I have discussed this with captains of industries and FMM Perak to seek a long-term solution to the problems mentioned. Industries are themselves worried about losing those whom they have trained to third parties. This is a universal phenomenon which affects not only us but the rest of the world. I suggest that employers take measures to instil loyalty by sending the employees abroad for specialised training as a means of maintaining their loyalty.



Regarding soft training, I have also suggested that vocational-training institutions conduct language courses to prepare their graduates for the job market. Polytechnic Ungku Omar is receptive of the idea.

IE: Cleanliness is a serious issue here in Ipoh. In view of *Visit Perak Year 2012*, what do you intend to do to overcome this? City Council's response has been dismal thus far.

MB: I am very aware of this shortcoming. I hope Ipoh City Council doesn't create 'a state within a state'. The Council has to comply. Ipoh is the capital city of Perak and is the nerve centre of the state. Like it or not MBI has to play its part by setting a good example for other local councils to follow.

The Mayor and the Council members must remember that they are being appointed by the state government. Conventional wisdom dictates that they should follow orders, not otherwise. It's therefore incumbent upon them to keep Ipoh clean as that is what is being expected of them. They have to walk the extra mile.

However, you can't blame MBI alone. Residents too need to change their mind-sets. They can't apportion blame on City Council whenever garbage is not collected or when an area gets dirty. It's a collective responsibility. Both MBI and Ipohites are equally liable.

Changing of habits and mind-sets will help resolve this problem, especially when we play host to tourists during *Visit Perak Year 2012*. The imposition and enforcement of laws will have little impact if people refuse to change their habits.

IE: Do you feel *Visit Perak Year 2012* will succeed considering the many difficulties?

MB: Considering the time frame, the duration and the general expectations, the difficulties are overwhelming. That's the reason why I have set very modest targets which are achievable with some commitment, of course.

I anticipate tourist arrivals, locals and foreign, to cap the 5-million mark. The number may increase the following year if things work in our favour. We have to put our best foot forward in order to achieve this.

We'll do our best to promote Perak to the visitors through the numerous activities and programmes in place. You must remember, however well these activities and programmes are organised and conducted, they will not succeed without the help of ordinary Perakeans. I, therefore, urge all Perakeans to come forward and lend a helping hand.

IE: What is BN's chance of retaining power in Perak post GE13?

MB: I wish to draw a parallel here. When you're on the battlefield, what's the utmost in your mind – to win or to lose? To win, of course. When we set our mind on winning we'll go for it. This is, however, dependent upon how Perakeans at large judge us. People will look at what you have done rather than your political rhetoric. We have been around for almost three years. I am certain by now people can make their judgment. Some may like us some may not but I believe most are with us.

IE: Will allegations about corruption involving UMNO leaders affect BN's chances of winning in GE 13?

MB: Well, there are two issues here. One is national the other is state. Some say that they are inter-related some say they are not. In any organisation there'll be black sheep, like in a barrel of apples there will be some rotten fruits but that doesn't necessarily mean that the whole barrel is rotten.

UMNO is a huge organisation and we have our problems. But that doesn't mean our opposite number doesn't have its own problems. We definitely don't condone corrupt practices. Actions are presently being taken against the wrong-doers.

IE: What do you consider is your one most worthy achievement during your 34-month tenure as Chief Minister of Perak?

MB: Wow! This is the most difficult question. As a leader, the one thing I aspire for is peace followed by prosperity. Thanks to God, who has answered my prayers. Peace and prosperity have descended on Perak. People are not fighting one another in spite of perceived differences. All these have translated into better economic performance, as evidenced by the state's annual GDP growth rate. This I feel is my most worthy accomplishment.

State-linked agencies like SEDC have been performing well unlike before. You can see developments taking place everywhere in the state. In Ipoh itself new buildings are springing up. The city's skyline is changing to an extent. Meru will soon transform into a booming township. This is my other worthy achievement.

The other aspect is the change in work culture of my staff. Therefore, it's not one but many achievements. In the spirit of Perak Amanjaya, the state will surge forward, economically. Trust me.

IE: Finally, your hope for 2012.

MB: I hope the people will continue to give us the support we so desire so we can fulfil our promise to make Perak a developed state.

IPOH **echo**

From the Editor's Desk

• by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

My Wish For 2012

Our backyard dalliance with city council to bring about changes in our city, has affected our impression of local authorities. Cleanliness is still a lingering problem in spite of the Mayor's fondness to turun padang.

Time Magazine had rightly declared 2011 as the Year of the Protestor. It was dedicated to the men and women of the Arab Spring and elsewhere in the world who rose to challenge their tyrannical governments. The Arab uprisings invariably led to regime change in Tunisia and Libya and the ouster of Egypt's unpopular and long-serving President Hosni Mubarak. Rallies and street demonstrations are on-going in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. Despite the loss of innocent lives, the intensity is growing by the day.

The quest for change is gaining momentum not only in the under-developed parts of the world but in the developed parts too. Fiscal uncertainties in the Eurozone countries and the United States of America are bearing down hard on the administrators. Obama's second term in the Oval Office is in doubt, given his lacklustre performance.

Kleptocracy, defined as a form of government corruption where party officials enrich themselves by embezzling state funds, has long been the bane of Third World countries. This is the root cause of dissatisfaction. Capital flight is a definitive sign of a kleptocratic government going astray, as corrupt leaders secretly transfer public funds to foreign banks for safekeeping. Between 2000 and 2009 Malaysia lost an estimated RM900 billion to capital flight making it the fifth largest source of illicit money in the world. This does not bode well for the country.

At home, Ambiga's Bersih 2.0 rally for free and fair elections hogged the limelight far longer than expected. It was headline news for a good part of the year till well past the July 9 show-down.

The shut-down of Kuala Lumpur by the Police left many KL-ites fuming. Their discontentment was not directed at the protestors per se, but at the authorities for



over-amplifying the fear of a possible economic disruption brought about by civil disobedience.

The fear of losing foreign investments is overtly exaggerated to cloud the minds of the *rakyat* and cow them into submission. That is among the favourite messages constantly drummed to the masses besides the oft-repeated stoking of racial and religious tensions by the irresponsible. Fortunately, the public is not easily influenced by crappy news these days. Thanks to alternative media which have made an impact here and around the world.

Defence spending is one area that is seldom highlighted due to reasons of security. For the last few decades our government has been spending on purchasing capital equipment as if, in the words of a local analyst, Col Tommy Pereira, the country has "a bottomless pile of money".

Tommy asserts that "no level of military sophistication would guarantee us safety". Recent events should serve to

remind us "that it is the unity of our citizens which will ensure a safe nation within which every citizen will be allowed to prosper."

"We can own any number of submarines, modern fighter aircraft and tanks, but if a true aggressor wishes to do so, all of them could be taken out within a short time. At the end of the day it will be the collective will of a united nation which will turn the tide," Tommy insists.

A classic example is Iraq, even with its wide array of weaponry and its bountiful arsenal, capitulated within matters of weeks to the combined might of America, United Kingdom and pro-Western Arab nations during the 2003 Gulf War.

However, if a nation spends on providing amenities to its people, ensuring good infrastructure, proper education, health care and creating job opportunities, the less likely its citizenry will forsake the country in times of emergency. Germany, Italy, and Japan learnt a bitter lesson for their belligerence in the last century and Iraq in this century.

In Ipoh, our backyard dalliance with city council to bring about changes in our city, has affected our impression of local authorities. Cleanliness is still a lingering problem in spite of the Mayor's fondness to *turun padang*. Nothing much has changed, prompting the Menteri Besar to chide the council for "creating a state within a state." This is a good enough warning for the council to start pulling up its socks.

With January fading into oblivion and Chinese New Year fast approaching, my wish for the Year of the Dragon is for the nation's leaders to take heed of developments in the world and make amends where possible. For the Mayor, go slow on publicity and concentrate on making Ipoh great. Your tenure in office is not the issue here. Remember, Ipoh was once the cleanest town in the country.

In The Name of My Father's Estate • by Peter Lee

"Good Morning, Maggie." "Good Morning, Mr Dave." "Is John Lee in?" asked Dave. "Yes, Mr Dave. Let me intercom him", replied Maggie. As Dave was about to open the door to John's room, the door swung open and John was there to greet him. Both men shook hands and greeted each other. "Would you like to have coffee or tea?" asked John? "Coffee please" was Dave's response. John leaned towards his phone and pressed on the intercom asking Maggie to bring in two cups of coffee.

Then, John said, "Dave the reason I asked you to come today is to ask for your advice on my late father's estate. As you know, he died one month ago and my brothers and sisters have been asking me when the distribution of his estate can commence. Now, my father's estate is sizable and he died without a will." "Since your father died without a will, the first thing your family has to do is to apply for the Letter of Administration (LA)," replied Dave "and to do that, an Administrator has to be appointed." "So, what is the Administrator's role?" asked John.

"Well, the Administrator is the person responsible for all the assets of your father's estate and needs to collect all the assets of the entire estate after the High Court issues the LA. Then the Administrator is to ensure that all the debts of the estate are settled before distributing to the beneficiaries." "So, can I be the Administrator since I am the eldest?" asked John. "Yes but provided you get the consent of all the beneficiaries and the Court agrees to it," replied Dave. "I will be damned," retorted John. "What's wrong?" asked Dave. "I have to tell you that I am not on good terms with my second brother and youngest sister," said John. Then their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Maggie holding a tray with two cups of coffee.

Once Maggie left the room, Dave said to John, "One thing I know is that your mum is still alive but can you tell me how many surviving brothers and sisters you have?" John replied, "I have two brothers and three sisters." Dave paused for a moment while referring to the Malaysian Distribution Act and then told John that his mother would be entitled to one-third of her husband's estate and two-thirds would be shared equally among the children. Dave further said to John that the Administrator would also be required to prove the death of his father's parents with their death certificates. John quickly asked, "what if we can't get that because they died some thirty years ago?"

Dave replied, "The other way of proving your grandparents death is by way of getting two witnesses who have witnessed their death or apply to the High Court for the Presumption of Death Certificate. John smiled for a second and said, "I think the witnesses would be in heaven by now." "There is one more thing you need to know, you also need to appoint two guarantors (who are sureties to provide an Administration Bond) for the estate", said Dave. "Why?" asked John. "The reason is that if the Administrator runs away with the estate money, then the Guarantors will have to pay the beneficiaries. The Guarantors are required to provide a guarantee of the gross estate value of the deceased's estate," replied Dave.

"After listening to you Dave, I think I have to arrange for my family to meet up with you next Thursday so that we could start off the LA application by appointing the Administrator. Is that ok with you?" Dave asked John. "I think I am okay but please confirm the time later."

To be continued in Episode 2.

Peter Lee is an Associate Estate Planning Practitioner (Wills & Trust) with Rockwills International Group. He is also an Islamic Estate Planner providing Wills & Trust services for Muslims. He is based in Ipoh and can be reached at: 012-5078825/ 05-2554853 or excelscc@streamyx.com. Website: <http://www.wills-trust.com.my>.

(Peter Lee's column will appear monthly.)



Wellness

Eye Health – Cataracts

Ipoh Echo's Eye Health series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. Gill talking to us about what happens during cataract surgery.

On the day of the Cataract Surgery

On the day of the Cataract Surgery be sure not to wear any makeup, eye-liners, cosmetics or powders of any kind. You should always have a thorough hair-wash and shower on the morning of surgery. The face especially should be thoroughly washed with a mild soap. Similar proper hygiene will have to be practised even during the healing phase after the surgery.

The first thing that will be done when you enter the hospital is instillation of eye drops to dilate the pupil. In the operation theatre, the area around your eye will be cleansed with antiseptic followed by sterile drapes or covers that will be placed around your eye that is to be operated.

You will be prepared according to what anaesthesia has been decided upon. In Malaysia, just as in the United States and the UK, the majority of cataract surgeries are performed by the phacoemulsification technique. The operation usually takes less than 20 to 30 minutes and is almost painless but a mild discomfort may be felt sometimes. You may choose to stay awake during surgery (local anaesthesia), while some others may request not to be awake during surgery (general anaesthesia). Either way, the surgery is essentially the same.

If you choose local anaesthesia, an anaesthetic to numb the eye will be used in and around your eye. You will not have to worry about holding your eyelids open during the eye surgery because an instrument (eyelid speculum) will keep your eyelids open. Patient's undergoing eye surgery under local anaesthesia will be able to see a bright light from the operating microscope that is used and movement of instruments during surgery.

What happens during cataract surgery is as follows:

The cataract surgery procedure is called *phacoemulsification*. It is a procedure in which the cloudy lens (cataract) is broken up using the phacoemulsification machine, irrigated, and suctioned out. Most cataract surgery today is performed using this method.

During the phacoemulsification surgery, a very tiny incision of 2.2 to 2.75mm is made on the surface of the eye between the cornea (clear transparent part) and the sclera (white part of the eye). A thin phaco probe is inserted into the eye to break up or dissolve the clouded cataract lens. The tiny cataract pieces are then sucked out through the probe.

An artificial lens (intraocular lens or IOL) is then implanted into the eye. This is a soft lens which will unfold in the eye as shown in the photo on the right, occupying the same space that the cataract had occupied.

After the operation, an eye pad and or eye shield will be placed over your eye and you will rest for a while before proceeding home.

Make sure you make arrangements for someone else to drive you home. The eye pad will be removed the following day. Remember not to wet the eye pad. If you are put on an eye shield instead of an eye pad, you may be asked to instil eye-drops regularly after cataract operation.



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



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

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Thinking ALLOWED • by Mariam Mokhtar**Gated Communities and Their Implications**

The recent proliferation of gated communities in Malaysia, not just Perak, raises more questions than answers. The sight of a single entry-point to the cluster of homes, of being “screened” by security guards, of identity cards being left at the check-point, of being monitored by closed-circuit television cameras as one drives through the compound, all serve to reflect the type of society we live in.

Those who approve of gated communities say that the people who live in high-security enclaves are driven by a fear of crime. These residents claim that the resources given to the police are limited and so they feel justified in paying for security guards, cameras and other security features to protect their families, their homes and their property.

Detractors argue that only the rich are privileged enough to afford this type of community living. The culture of the “haves” and the “have-nots” will ultimately give rise to a feeling of envy and resentment. Communities will become segregated and cause further social disintegration.

The government has always advocated a mixed, multi-racial society, so if this trend of gated communities is allowed to prosper unchecked, won't this result in a socially fragmented community and threaten the fabric of our peaceful co-existence?

Shouldn't the relevant housing bodies, like the property developers or chartered surveyors, in the state have a debate on possible issues that may arise? Problems of social cohesion and integration should be nipped in the bud before they escalate out of control.

Sense of Security

Those who live within the confines of a gated community may feel safe and lead a life which is totally different from their work colleagues or their friends and family. People say life in a gated community is secure and that these neighbourhoods are relatively quiet and litter-free. However, what does this say about you and your community?

A person who has lived in a gated community, for seven years said: “Once I go past the guards, I feel safe. I don't have to try and make friends or get to know my neighbours. I admit that I do not have to make the effort to know other people who live around me.”

“All this is unlike my previous residence. I needed my neighbour's help to keep an eye on the house, if I was away. She made sure the letterbox was not crammed with letters, thus alerting thieves of my absence. In a sense, I miss that neighbourly spirit.”

Another person said that he lived in gated communities because it was easier to screen unwanted visitors: “I was burgled twice before. My paranoia with crime starts there. A stranger tricked his way into the house by telling the maid he was sent to fix the plumbing. She was tied-up and the house ransacked.”

Less Social Integration

So does living in a gated community mean that you are an insular person who is not prepared to mix with the people outside of your gates?

When only the wealthy pool together to provide better security for themselves, in gated communities, it is another breakdown in social integration.

Are the people who are prepared to pay for extra security, helping or hindering the rest of society in terms of law and order?

Improve Policing

Many claim that the police are not able to provide an immediate



response to crime, or that their services are stretched because of a lack of resources. They say that gated communities lighten the burden on the police.

Isn't this wrong? Shouldn't we collectively demand that our parliamentarians supply our police with adequate money and manpower to protect the public?

Asking for an improvement in standards of policing should not be the preserve of the poor. The viewpoint of the rich should also be taken into consideration. Why should they be excluded?

Although gated communities are perceived to be secure, a few people have complained that criminals are not deterred. On the contrary, gated communities help advertise to the criminal world, that there is something worth taking from the homes behind the gates.

Others have wondered about the influence of gated communities on child development. When families are cocooned from the outside world, what level of engagement and interaction is the child able to have? Are his friends able to visit freely and can they learn to be street-smart rather than grow up ignorant of the ways of the world.

Children may moan about the isolation but the parents find that the peace of mind that gated communities provide, is just as important as the flaunting of wealth.

Living in a gated community may be a personal choice, but on the whole is a bad one for society.

Haven Fetes Its Customers

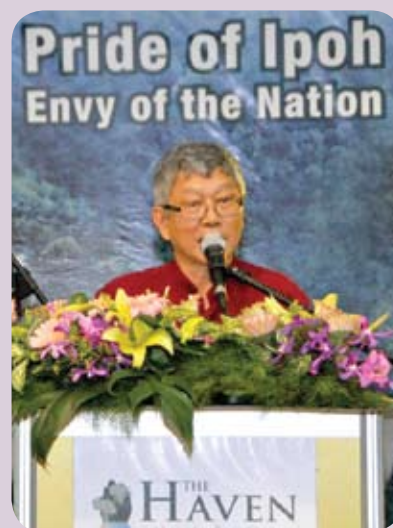
Tambun's Haven Lakeside Residences, developed by Superboom Projects Sdn Bhd, held a dinner to fete its customers recently. Contractors, suppliers, bankers, valuers, consultants, and purchasers were invited to view completed units and to enjoy some merriment, courtesy of the developer.

On track to be completed by middle of next year, the structure of all three towers comprising 26 floors, with 497 units, has been completed. Works on the jogging track is near completion and the swimming pool will start after Chinese New Year. Peter Chan, CEO of Superboom

Projects Sdn Bhd remarked that the Haven has passed the half-way mark in sales with almost 70% of the condominiums sold. The condos are said to have the lowest selling price per square feet in the country for luxury condos. Sales to locals are in excess of 50%. The current prices are a bargain, as it is not yet reflective of its status as a resort condo. This is confirmed by Chris Boyd, Malaysia's Executive Chairman of CBRE, the world's largest realtor. The Haven won the Best Resort Condo Award in the country last year.

Guests visited the different kinds of units available at the site. Surrounded by a 4-ha hilly terrain fringed by pristine tropical forest, the Haven comes with high quality finishing and eco-features like solar energy and rainwater harvesting. Every inch of each unit is put to good use, as the design is meticulous. There is no need for renovation, unless the owner requests. Buyers present at the function were overjoyed with their purchases and voiced their appreciation openly.

Incidentally, the purchasers have contributed a congratulatory ad to show their appreciation to the developer (see page 7). This is probably the first time ever a developer is appreciated in public by his customers.





Musings on Food

seefoon@ipohecho.com.my

By See Foon Chan-Koppen

Photos by VWSL

SeeFoon converges on Cowan Street and eats from morning till night

I have never ceased to be amazed at the plethora of food stalls and restaurants in and around Ipoh. Restaurants open and restaurants close, some move and are never to be seen again and some perennials just stay put, serving the same old, same old. But the ones that remain stay true to their quality standards and the faithful customers continue to beat a path to their door.

One such location is the short stretch of Cowan Street or Jalan Raja Ekram between Jalan Dato Seri Ahmad Said and Jalan Leong Sin Nam. Here, the ground is thick with coffee shops and restaurants, each with their own unique offerings, open at different times and appealing to different tastes and pockets.

This column today is devoted to covering the large variety and choices available on this stretch, with taste treats for all tastes, palates and religious orientation.

Curry Mee

Beginning from the Tower Regency Hotel end of the road, I began with breakfast at **Kedai Kopi Keng Nam (No. 27)** where their **curry mee** (big – RM4.50 and small – RM3.80) packs in the customers and they're inevitably sold out by 11.00 a.m. Here too, sample **prawn mee** (RM3); their **lor mai fan** (sticky rice) with chicken curry or their **chee cheong fun** (flat rice noodles with bits of dried prawns and scallions) and **wu tau ko** (steamed Taro cake).

All-Day Thosai

From here move on to **Restoran Ipoh Padang Curry House (No. 93)** where South Indian food is featured. Here you will find an assortment of curries (by the portion and dependent on type ordered), **nasi briyani** (RM7.00); **mutton briyani** (8.50); **murtabak** (RM4-5.00); and **banana leaf meals**. What I like best about this curry house is that unlike other Indian banana leaf places, this one



serves different types of **thosai** all day long except between the hours of 1-2.00 p.m. (RM1-1.70 each). Open from 5.30 a.m. - 8.30 p.m. For more info you can call Anand at 012-5240122 or Vasu 019-5115137. **Halal**.

Best Mee Rebus

Moving further along on the same side of the road a few doors down is **Nelli's Deli**, a newly-opened restaurant serving one of the best **mee rebus** I've ever tasted in Ipoh. Neither too sweet nor starchy, this **mee rebus** hit all the right taste notes for me (RM4.50). I then tasted their **nasi lemak** which came with a choice of chicken (RM5.00), cockles or **kerang** RM3.50; Squid or **sotong** RM3.50; and prawns or **udang** RM3.50. Do ask for the homemade sambal belacan which was spicily tantalising. Other items on the menu here include an **asam laksa** of a pretty good standard (RM4.50) and a **fried rice special** at RM4.50 which was very tasty. Open from 8.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m. **Halal**.

A few doors away from Nelli's Deli we pass **Koh Samui**, Ipoh's most well-known Thai restaurant where the decor is up market, the menu extensive and the food is a mix of Thai/Chinese. **Halal**.

For the Pub Crowd

Opposite to these two we find **Let's Rock (No. 48)**, a famous **Kao Chiew Pai** (old brand name) from Pasir Puteh specialising in **curry noodles** and '**yeong liew**'. Opening only in the afternoon from 4.30-11 p.m., this coffee shop caters to the pub crowd which has grown in numbers given the proliferation of pubs springing up in the area.

Noodles RM1.30-1.50; **yeong liew** 60 sen each. Apparently the **curry fish head** at the adjacent stall is worth checking out but I have yet to do so (S – RM23, M – RM26, L – RM32).

Coffee Shops on the Crossroad

Across the intersection, we come to three coffee

shops at the intersection of Cowan St. and Jalan Leong Sin Nam. These are all open from early morning till after lunch and each one features a variety of individual stalls with different specialties. I will mention only the items that I feel are worth tasting, the rest being quite run-of-the-mill and mediocre in taste.

Kedai Makanan & Minuman Hua Nam (No. 30) has had either a changeover in ownership or they decided on giving the shop a face-lift. Whatever the case may be, the shop used to be called Wah Pun and was closed for quite a period before re-opening. The new stalls (some of them are new) offer some quite spectacular specialties as in the **Gunung Rapat Asam Laksa** – RM3; **yeong liew** – RM0.60-1.30; **Siew Bee Nyonya Kuih** (must try their **rempah udang**), **Mee Goreng Pangkor** which is quite misleading as it is '**char koay teow**' and a delicious one at that – RM3.80; **Hokien Prawn Mee** – tender chicken, **kangkong**, tasty soup – RM3.80.

Kafe Wah Nam (No. 32) opposite does not fare so well in comparison. The only stalls I can recommend here is the **Pan Mee** in the morning and the **Chee Cheong Fun** stuffed with **sangkwan**. **Restoran Chang Keong Dim Sum (No. 34)** which is next door has a stall here in Wah Nam and the recommendation here is their **Fried Carrot Cake** 5.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.

Across the road from Wah Nam is **Kafe Ipoh Central (No. 51-53)**. Here the items worth savouring are their famous **Guan Kee Bak Chang** (sticky-rice dumpling) which is of a good standard – RM5.20; **Hor Hee** – RM4; **Apom Balik** – RM0.90 each; **Kee Heong Bak Kut Teh** – from RM8; **nyonya kuih** – RM0.70 and **Ipoh (Padang) Mee Goreng** – RM3.50.

Ayam Tauge

Last but not least is **Restoran Ayam Tauge** which only opens at night and even sporadically at that. Some swear by this small shop as the best **Kai See Hor Fun** (Ipoh's famous rice noodle chicken soup) in all of Ipoh. Don't get into your car expecting to eat these noodles though for they may not be open, but then there is always Lo Wong Tauge Ayam around the next corner!

HAWKER FOOD

Chicken Feet (Kai Keok)



If you think that only the Chinese eat chicken feet, think again. It is also eaten in Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Middle East, South Africa and Trinidad. The only edible meat on the feet consists of skin and tendons, mostly cartilage. Because of its gelatinous content, claims have been made about its cosmetic value in the extraction of collagen. Chicken feet are usually braised with garlic, star anise, oyster sauce, soy sauce, etc. with Chinese mushrooms. The tender feet are served whole. Another way of preparation is to fry the feet first until it's plump and tender and then simmer; this is usually served as a side-dish of **wonton mee**. Those who eat chicken feet can't help but love its unique flavour and texture; those who are squeamish about trying it don't know what they are missing.

Try:

- **Restoran Sun Up** (day)
5 Lorong Cecil Rae, Canning Garden. Has Chinese celery and mushroom – RM4
- **Restoran Tauge Ayam Lou Leong** (night) – 05-2412337
28-30 Jalan Theatre. Garlicky – RM6
- **Nasi Ayam Clay Pot K Ten** (night)
55-57 Jalan Medan Ipoh 2, Bandar Baru Medan Ipoh. A tad salty – RM4
- **Stall opposite the Sungai Pari flats** (after 8.30 p.m.)
RM5

Along Jalan Yau Tet Shin, New Town:

- **Restoran Tauge Ayam Lou Wong** (No. 49)
Pale in colour but has a nice herbal flavour – RM5
- **Onn Kee Restaurant (Tauge Ayam Kue Tiau)** (Nos. 48, 51 & 53) – 05-2531562
Sweetish and has a mild after-taste – RM5
- **Restoran Tuck Kee** (No. 61) – RM5
- **Restaurant Sun Tuck Kee** (No. 65) – 012-5142228
The feet are intact and yet tender – RM4

All prices are for takeaway; may be cheaper as a side-dish.



RECIPE

By Margarita Lee

Ingredients:

- 2 small Sea Bass or any fish of your choice
- 2 tbsp. fresh ginger julienned
- 3-4 stalks spring onion (only the white part, keep the green part for garnishing)
- 1 cup of cooking oil for deep frying

Mix well together seasoning:

- 2 tbsp. Shaoxing Wine
- 1 tbsp. soya sauce
- 4 tbsp. sweetened black vinegar
- ½ five spice powder
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. corn flour

Method:

1. Remove the scales and clean the fish thoroughly. Pat dry with paper towel. Make a couple of slashes on the fish.
2. Mix all the seasoning in a bowl, keep aside.
3. Heat up a wok with enough oil to deep fry the fish. Deep fry the fish until golden brown and crispy. Dish out for later use.
4. Drain excess oil from wok, keep 1-2 tbsp. in wok stir fry ginger and spring onion, and add in prepared seasoning.
5. Simmer seasoning under medium heat until caramelised.
6. Add in the fish to coat well with sauce. Dish out into a serving plate.
7. Garnish with chillies strips and scallions.



Margarita Lee

News Roundup

MB Hails Perakeans



Over 10,000 Perakeans filled the grounds of Stadium Indera Mulia to usher in the New Year. While they waited anxiously for the countdown to midnight and the approaching New Year, they were entertained to live music and songs performed by some of the country's top musical and singing talents. The line-up included popular singers such as Saleem of Iklim, Adam of the Akademi Fantasia genre, Ramli 'Papa Rock' Sarip and some home-grown talents. TV host and presenter, Dato' AC Mizal emceed the show, which helped keep the restless crowd at bay and on their feet.

The New Year signalled the start of the much-touted and talked about event of the state – *Visit Perak Year (VPY) 2012*. And there to do the honours was Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir. Accompanying the MB under the specially erected VIP tent were his wife, Datin Seri DiRaja Sharipah Zulkifli, Executive Councillor for Tourism, Dato' Hamidah Osman, members of the state executive committees, invited guests and senior government officials. Their singular objective was to celebrate the dawn of the New Year along with other Perakeans.

In his keynote New Year address, Zambry thanked Perakeans for their support and confidence in his administration in spite of the many complaints. "Together we'll develop the state and ensure that its economy will prosper with the rest of the country," he enthused. "This can be achieved if the people work hard and maintain peace and stability."

The MB was certain that VPY 2012 would succeed considering the prevalent mood engulfing the state. "With the support of Perakeans I am certain our target of attracting five million visitors will be achieved," he remarked. "We don't want Perak to be known for its many touristic destinations alone. We want to be known for our warmth, friendliness and hospitality too."

The occasion also marked the launching of the Perak Tourist Police, a dedicated police unit to help ensure tourists' safety while they are in the state. The unit consists of a mobile and a foot-patrolling team which will be deployed to areas frequented by tourists.

At 12 midnight the sky was lit by a brilliant display of fireworks much to the delight of the excited onlookers. It signified the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012.

An earlier event held in conjunction with the launching of VPY 2012 was Perak Tourism Idol, a karaoke competition pitting winners from the various districts. Fifteen finalists were on stage vying for the coveted title. Fendy Shah Nayan, 32, representing Ipoh, was adjudged the winner. Second placing went to Nina Pelez, 19, from Teluk Intan. Primary school student, Shahrul Izlan, 12, was placed third.

RM

Impiana New Year Celebrations with Julian Mokhtar

Bidding farewell to 2011 and welcoming 2012, Impiana Hotel Ipoh rang in the New Year not with fireworks but with Julian Mokhtar in the house, dishing out his all-time favourite blues tracks into the New Year with his band, Soul Doctors. Julian Mokhtar, Malaysia's very own home-grown living blues legend, was brought in to play at The Bistro to spark up the night. Definitely an overwhelming experience for everyone who was present.



Book and Stamp Exhibition



The annual book and stamp exhibition cum sale was held over three days one recent weekend at the Tun Razak Library, Ipoh. It was aimed at creating quality family time for the public, especially during the year-end school holidays. Additionally, it was hoped that by organising such an event, creative talent could be unearthed from the younger generation. The exhibition was jointly organised by Ipoh City Council and Pos Malaysia Perak. Besides exhibiting and selling, numerous activities were lined up, especially for children. There was a colouring contest for children from 6 to 9 years old, a drawing contest for 10 to 12 year olds and a Malay language story-telling contest for children from 8 to 10. These three activities alone attracted 100 participants.

Of particular interest was the drawing contest with the theme, "Fantasy World". Participants had to create a book cover with themselves as the author. For children below 12 years of age, their creativity was astounding.

Nine-year-old Balamuregan a/l Manivannan, from SK Methodist (ACS) Ipoh, bagged the first prize in the freestyle story-telling contest. He captivated the audience with a positive storyline on the importance of self-belief. Balamuregan, who aspires to be a pilot, has participated in story-telling competitions since he was 7 with encouragement from his mother.

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iSpeak

A. Jeyaraj

Reducing Truancy among Students

Recently there was a report about 27 secondary students who were caught playing truant by the police at a cyber café near Kampong Rapat Police Station. Is truancy rampant? What are the actions taken by the Education Department and Police to curb truancy? With these questions in mind, I set out to investigate.

A counsellor from Students Affairs Unit in Perak Education Department, who did not want to be named, informed me that only about one per cent of the 500,000 students in the State are involved in truancy with the same repeaters every time. The Unit does not have a special team looking for truants and only takes action if complaints are received. It conducts programmes and activities to help students refrain from truancy.

Some of these programmes involve representatives from the police, State Welfare Department, local councils and other agencies. Some 5,000 students from the state participate in the 'Heart to Heart' gathering to address disciplinary problems. The 'My Talent' programme brings out creativity in students and helps to prevent them from going astray while the 'Legal Literacy Course', for teachers, teaches ways to handle students. Other programmes include 'No to Rempit', 'Anti Bully' and specific programmes based on identified needs.

These programmes keep the students occupied but do they help to curb truancy? An officer, from Public Affairs Division of Ipoh District Police Headquarters, said they do not go after truants. They only act on complaints received. The police are sensitive

in dealing with the students and do not want to spoil their future. If students are caught, they are handed over to the schools which would then contact the parents who have to deal with the problem themselves as most of them usually do not want their children to be exposed to public censure.

All primary and secondary schools, totalling 153 in the state, have been assigned a Police Relationship Officer (RO) with a rank of Corporal or above who visits the school at least once a month. This RO works with the Principal and Parent Teachers Association to discuss disciplinary problems and gives talks on personal safety, crime prevention and other relevant topics.

The police have asked the state government to review the licensing of cyber cafés and to impose stricter guidelines for such premises. If stricter conditions are imposed it would reduce the truancy problem to a certain extent.

At the end of the day, despite programmes and all the assistance from the police, it is up to parents to play a vital role in ensuring that their children attend school including extra classes. Parents should make spot checks to see whether their children are really in school. It is a collective responsibility and parents should not think it is the responsibility of the schools and police to discipline their children. The bottom line is, however busy the parents are, they are responsible for the behaviour of their children.



News Roundup

Treats for Special-Needs Children

As part of their 'Service to Mankind' programme, St John Ambulance invited children with special needs from eight voluntary organisations for their annual celebration. The children and their parents were given a hearty meal and ang pow was presented by Dato' S. Veerasingham, Special Advisor to the MB, who was the Guest of Honour. The guests were entertained by dances performed by children of the voluntary organisations.



Manin Singh, State Secretary of St John Ambulance said that in line with their motto to help the disadvantaged, children with special needs must be brought into the main stream of society.

This year children from the following organisations were invited: Perak Society for the Promotion of Mental Health, Precious Gift and Joyful Home, Persatuan Pemulihan Orang Cacat Perak, Persatuan Pemulihan Dalam Community Buntong, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Home, Persatuan Kebajikan Orang Upaya Ipoh and Network Need.

AJ

Zambri Opens Bercham Link Road to PLUS Highway

The 'Alternative Link Road' linking Bercham to the PLUS Highway was opened on January 3 by MB Dato' Seri Zambri Abdul Kadir. The link road, which is connected to Jalan Bercham vide Lintasan Perajurit 17/Light Industrial Estate and Lebuhraya Bercham Selatan is under 500 metres long but commuters using this link to access the southerly direction of the highway can slash 20 minutes off their queue time when compared with the previous flow which connected via Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah.



The idea for the exit link road was proposed by Bercham Councillor Ir Lai Kong Phooi who brought it to the attention of State Exco for Infrastructure Development Dato' Ramli Zaharin. Work on the link road started in October.

According to Zambri the state considered this "a minor project but a 'priority', as traffic congestion in Bercham is a problem especially during peak times" and gave it immediate approval to proceed with the project.

According to Councillor Lai, over 40,000 vehicles ply Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah daily while 20,000 vehicles use Jalan Bercham daily. The opening of the alternative link has relieved the traffic congestion by 30%.

Zambri who later drove the lead car onto the highway for a quick tour subsequently made a proposal to JKR Director Dato' Safry Kamal and Lai to look into "improving the traffic flow when exiting onto Jalan Tambun to get to Ipoh Town" explaining that motorists have to make a U-turn first at Taman Tambun before they can head to town." The correct flow should have the vehicle facing Ipoh Town upon getting onto Tambun Road.

With regards to the time line when the alternative entrance into Bercham, via the proposed Giant Hypermarket location, would be opened, Zambri stated that a "separate committee headed by MBI" would look into the issue.

JAG

Subsidised Housing Scheme



Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan (YBU) will soon introduce a funding scheme to allow the less fortunate an opportunity to own a house. The foundation's proposed subsidised-housing scheme is estimated to cost RM5 million. For a start, a pilot project will be built near Taman Kaya in Taiping on a 50-acre former mining land site. Application for funding has been forwarded to the Prime Minister's Department for approval, said Dato' Zainal Abidin Omar, CEO of YBU. "I expect it to be approved sometime this year," he said.

The foundation-initiated programme is targeted at those earning RM3,000 and less a month. "There are plenty in this category. Due to their financial standing they can't commit themselves to a housing loan primarily because they neither have the means nor the resources to service bank loans," he told Ipoh Echo after handing over keys to three recipients of houses under YBU's Housing Infra Aid Programme (Bantuan Perumahan Infra) recently. The proposed project in Taiping will take the form of low-cost housing with each unit costing between RM35,000 to RM 55,000.

"They only need to pay YBU a monthly instalment of about RM150 for a fixed number of years to repay the soft loan," said Zainal Abidin. "We'll simplify the application procedures to reduce bureaucracy and red tape," he remarked. The availability of this new scheme will be announced once the green light is received.

Last year YBU spent RM4 million to build and repair houses under its Housing Infra Aid programme. "A total of 60 new houses were constructed while 710 houses were repaired. Another RM4 million will be set aside for a similar programme this year," said the CEO. Those in dire need to repair their dilapidated houses will, however, get a reprieve, as the state has allocated an additional RM1.3 million for the said purpose.

Eligibility for such privilege is contingent upon the applicants' disposition. Application for the housing-aid programme must be supported by proof, preferably by the applicants' political representatives (Aduns) or their village heads.

This is part of the state government's strategy to eradicate poverty and to assist the poor and the marginalised, regardless of ethnicity and beliefs. A number of public and private agencies are involved in the programme. Among them are CIMB Bank and Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Melayu Perak.

Those keen on applying can enquire with YBU at 05-255 5945/46 or visit the foundation's office at Greentown Square, Jalan Dato' Seri Ahmad Said, Ipoh (near Restoran Simpang Tiga).

The handing-over ceremony (pic) was done at the finished house belonging to Puan Robaiyah Abdullah, 48, in Kampong Kepayang.

RM

Business

Atrio @ Lang Valley

A new commercial development has been launched in Lang Valley (Desa Lang Indah) with a gross development value of RM85 million. Located strategically within minutes from Ipoh city centre and the highly populated residential and commercial areas of Ipoh Garden, Bercham, Tasek, Chemor and Meru, the development comprises 72 units of 20'x85' 3 and 4-storey Lifestyle Shops (some with basements) which are well suited for retail, food and beverage, entertainment and offices.

The development is situated within the upcoming 90-acre commercial vicinity of Lang Valley, where a retail anchor tenant, commercial shops, fast-food drive-through outlets, a hotel and apartments are planned. Easily accessible are Taman Rekreasi Gunung Lang, Kinta City Shopping Centre, Tesco Hypermarket, Pantai Hospital Ipoh, Hospital Permaisuri Bainun and most schools in the city.

Boasting North-South Expressway frontage *Atrio @ Lang Valley* is directly accessible via a newly-completed interchange, located between the Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman (Jalan Kuala Kangsar) and Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah Utara exits, in the north-bound direction. This interchange connects to the Lang Valley residential neighbourhood and Jalan Kuala Kangsar.

Developed by Chye Hin Development whose past projects include Mahkota Wira Condominium, Taman Muhibbah Baru, Racing Circle, gated and guarded Balinese themed luxury bungalows, all in Ipoh and other projects in Kampar and Sungai Siput, the development's main feature is their 'Atrium' concept, which is a 200-feet long and 40-feet wide, pedestrian-only area that is sheltered and naturally ventilated. This provides an ideal environment for alfresco dining and retail. The 'Atrium' is a space where public events and weekend bazaar markets can be held. There are also overhead sky-bridges and lifts to enhance the connectivity between the units facing the 'Atrium', forming an outdoor retail complex. All units are equipped with high-speed broadband infrastructure, catering for the growing ICT needs.



Three-storey units start from RM878,800, while 4-storey units are from RM1,298,800. As part of the pre-launch special for a very limited period of time, they are offering an early bird discount and incentives whereby legal fees for the Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) and loan agreement will be borne by the developer. They also offer the Developer Interest Bearing Scheme (DIBS) under their panel banks.

Contact: **Chye Hin Development** at **05-2412426** or **012-5881226** or visit their Sales Gallery at 7 Jalan Dato' Seri Ahmad Said, 30450 Ipoh, Perak.

Arts and Culture

Malaysian-Japanese Society Annual Dinner

The Perak Malaysian-Japanese Friendship Society (PMJFS) held their annual dinner at Ipoh City and Country Club recently. Attended by about 400 members and guests, the event was graced by the Consul-General of Japan in Penang, His Excellency, Mr Tetsuro Kai together with his wife Mrs Kai, and Mr Shoichi Toyoda, the Director of The Japan Foundation in Kuala Lumpur.

There were a variety of dances and a string performances presented by the society's members and their children, with the highlight of the evening being a *hanatamae* demonstration (offering to God for peace and prosperity for the New Year) by Mrs Sasaki and her



granddaughter Yuki. Awards were also given to top students for the society's Japanese proficiency test concluded recently.

The Perak Malaysian-Japanese Friendship Society aims to promote mutual understanding and enhance relationships between Malaysians and Japanese in Perak through volunteer activities. The society offers Japanese language classes and cultural exchange demonstrations of both Malaysian and Japanese culture.

For more information on their activities, contact the PMJFS at **05-2537530** or email pkmjfs@yahoo.ca.

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Sport

Ipoh Hosts National Wushu Championship



Ipoh played host to the 23rd Malaysian Wushu Championship held from December 21-23 last year. The last time the championship was held in Ipoh was 13 years ago.

The event was organised by the Federation of Wushu, Dragon and Lion Dance of Perak. Over 350 participants throughout the country attended the championship which was held at SJK (C) Yuk Choy.

State Exco for Local Government and Environment and MCA Youth Perak Chairman Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon who officially launched the event warmly welcomed the participants saying that it was an honour for Ipoh to host the event and reminded the visitors to savour Ipoh's delicious local cuisine while here. The state government contributed RM50K towards the organisation of the event.

Wushu Federation of Malaysia President, Dato' Seri Kee Yong Wee in his address remarked that "Wushu unlike most other sports stays with you for the rest of your life once you've learnt it."

The 2-day competition was a hard fought competition amongst all the teams. Ultimately the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur emerged the winner with 14 gold medals. Sanshou gold medalist from KL, Muhammad Meeraj (90kg) "was surprised to have won gold. I waited over an hour for my slot and it was over in less than a minute".

The second place went to Sarawak with 10 golds and Negeri Sembilan 9 golds. Host Perak finished in 10th position earning one gold medal won by 18-year old UTAR student Chu Yuet Yee in the Women's Taiji Push Hand event (52kg).

Wushu in Malaysia has progressed from being a provisional sport to being a core sport and will become a full-fledged MSSM (Majlis Sukan Semenanjung Malaysia) event in 2013. Since 1990, the Malaysia Wushu Team has won 320 international medals. Of these, 83 are gold medals where 24 of the 83 medals were achieved at world series Wushu championships.

With the possibility of Wushu being included in the 2020 Olympics, there is a strong possibility that the sport could earn Malaysia a gold medal.

The next major Wushu event will be in 2013 when Malaysia plays host to the 12th World Wushu Championship 2013.

JAG

Boost for Perak Soccer Team

Almost a thousand football fans gathered at the Menteri Besar's residence recently to witness the launch of Perak 2012 Super League Season. At the event, new jerseys for the state team were unveiled and two foreign players were introduced. They are Lazar Popovic from Serbia who will take on the role of striker and Michal Kubala from Slovakia, as midfielder.



The Perak football team will receive new sponsorships this season; the main sponsor being Vale. Kika is the sponsor for kits, Arwana for transport and Ipoh City Council for venue. Yayasan Bina Upaya, the charity partner, will handle the sale of the 2012 season passes.

Perak Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir announced an allocation of RM25,000 to Perak Football Association. He asked that the players be disciplined and to perform their best in the spirit of sportsmanship. Fans were also reminded to continue supporting the team.

At the post-event press conference, Zambry disclosed plans to set up a football academy in Perak to nurture talent in the young, to not only achieve football greatness for the state but also the country. The Perak State Government, through the state's sports council, will look for sponsorships. Site for the proposed academy has yet to be identified.

EL

Perak Closed Chess Tournament 2011

The 2011 Perak chess calendar wrapped up recently with a fitting finale. The Perak Closed Chess Tournament 2011 opened to those born in Perak or those who live and work in the state, attracted a total of 64 chess enthusiasts. The nine-round tournament was played over two days at the school hall of SMK Seri Putera, Ipoh. The school was co-organiser of the tournament along with Persatuan Catur Negeri Perak.

There were three categories in the tournament:

Under-12, Under-16 and Open Category. The Open Category championship, with a prize of RM500 cash, trophy and certificate of participation, went to Fong Yit Ho, a sixth-former at SMK Seri Kampar. His younger brother, 17, came in second. Third place went to Lawrence Teoh Yi Hearn.

The winner for Under-16 was Amirul Rafiq Ahmad Ridzuan while 9-year-old Jagathees a/l Guna Balan was the winner in the Under-12 category. The best female player of the tournament was Akmar Laily Othman. Ahmad Mudzafar Ramli was declared the best veteran player.

Ir. Chan Swee Loon, President of Persatuan Catur Negeri Perak, on behalf of the Perak State Government, handed over a cheque of RM10,000 to Jagathees as partial sponsorship for a one-month intensive chess training in Chennai, India. Jagathees will leave for India this month with his father.

EL



Kelab Taekwondo Yikang (WTF) Wins 2 Gold 3 Bronze

Kelab Taekwondo Yikang (WTF) from Perak has won two gold and three bronze medals in the first TM Interclub Championship held at the Cheras Badminton Hall, Kuala Lumpur. Founder and Chief Instructor Master Liew Sang, and Instructor Mr Tung Chee Hao, led 17 players from Perak in the event, expressed satisfaction over the students' performance where a high level of skill and sportsmanship was exhibited in the competition.



The above Championship attracted more than 900 enthusiastic Taekwondo exponents to compete and enhance their skills.

The two gold medalists from Yikang, siblings Yeap Chuan Jie and Yeap Nai Ying, will be called up for national pelapis training in preparation for future international championship. Other winners were the three bronze medalists: Jacintha Quek XinPeng, Loke Cilane and Alson Andrew.

National Basketball Championship 2011



The 53rd Agong Cup National Basketball Championship 2011 ended recently after a full week of intense competition. It was held at Stadium Indera Mulia, Ipoh. A total of 22 teams (Division 1 and Division 2 – men and women) participated in the tournament.

At the opening ceremony Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry bin Abd Kadir announced the state government's sponsorship of RM100,000 to Malaysia Basketball Association to ensure the smooth running of the tournament.

In the women's finals, defending champions Johor, lived up to its top billing with a 68 - 56 win over Kuala Lumpur. In an earlier play-off match, Polis DiRaja Malaysia (PDRM) was promoted to Women's Division 1 pushing Perak to Division 2 in a closely fought match beating the home team 49 - 40.

In the men's finals, Malacca won the championship for the fourth consecutive year defeating Johor 84 - 78. It was a very close game all the way. Fitness and teamwork were the contributing factors that won the team the match. PDRM came in third beating host Perak.

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LETTERS

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A Badly Conceived Election Budget Allocation

Recently, the leading state newspaper in Perak carried an article which contained details of the Perak State Government's budget for 2012 which was tabled before the State Assembly on November 21, 2011 (Ipoh Echo, Issue 133, 1-15 December 2011).

Among the key items of planned allocation in what is clearly a pre-election budget aimed at buying votes for the present state government in the coming elections, the most problematic is the RM60 million fund set up to assist first time house buyers by providing the 10% deposit as required by banks to purchase a new house.

I sympathise with the plight of first-time low-income house buyers and agree on the need to assist them in helping with home ownership. I can also understand the populist intention of the programme. However, this programme – as it is currently designed – is not only likely to fall short of its noble goal but will result in grief to the Perak administration.

I can already foresee the following difficulties:

1. What will happen if the buyers cannot pay the monthly instalments to the banks? A Housing Loan Manager of one of the leading banks told me that the bank can issue the first letter of demand after the defaulter fails to pay up only after three months. Also that the bank is able to initiate legal action only after three letters of demand have been sent out. In all likelihood, the legal procedure to recover the property will take six months or more. Hence, it could take more than one year at least for the bank to evict a defaulter. By the time the house is repossessed, it would be in such a deplorable condition that the bank will not be able to recover its loan and administration costs in most of the cases. To sell a repossessed property, the bank also has to advertise to invite bids. In most cases, the bank will not be able to get

the reserved price in the first auction. If this happens, the bank will have to reduce the reserved price by 10%. If the second auction is not successful, the reserved price will have to be reduced by another 10%.

2. What will happen when a buyer cannot pay back the 10% to the State Government? Does the Government have the necessary machinery to recover the debt? As you can see above, there are laws to protect the poor men. Even the commercial banks with all the rules and regulations in place, still have difficulties to recover their money, how can the Perak State Government expect to do better? The administrative costs to recover the debt is not only likely to be considerable but could also exceed the 10% loan outlay. This will further impoverish the state by diverting resources to unproductive expenditure. What this means is that any recovery of loan funds will be much less than what has been dispensed, leading to a short life-span for the so-called "rolling" fund.

I hope all members of the Perak State Assembly will consider these comments seriously and delay the implementation of the scheme until a later date when all the design and operational kinks and problems are fully understood and accounted for.

A better planned and more stringent housing loan scheme is needed for the state if it is to be sustainable. The unseemly haste with which this poorly designed scheme is being pushed through for the coming elections will surely backfire on the state government and all Perak subjects.

Koon Yew Yin

Nur Sofiera's Condition

We refer to the letter "Nur's Parents Seek Justice" (Ipoh Echo Issue 134, December 16, 2011).

We wish to extend our deepest sympathy to Nur Sofiera's parents for their child's condition. Nur Sofiera was initially admitted to the Paediatrics Ward at Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun Ipoh on March 11, 2009 for fever and fits. She was treated and discharged. She was again admitted on April 5, 2009 with similar problems and developed other complications which were treated. As she was noted to have *hypocalcaemia*, a slow injection of Calcium Gluconate was given for *hypocalcaemia*. Unfortunately, the Calcium Gluconate extravasated and caused tissue necrosis of the right hand, which healed with permanent scarring and deformity of the said hand. This is a known complication of Calcium Gluconate injection.

Nur Sofiera also has cerebral palsy due to the exposure to cytomegalovirus while she was still in her mother's womb. As a result, she had neurological deficit and developmental delay. This had been verified by blood tests and MRI brain scanning of the child. This information was repeatedly explained to the parents by Paediatric doctors during consultations as well as during home visits by the hospital team with the state health director.

We have provided the best possible medical care and referral to appropriate departments for the rehabilitation of Nur Sofiera in order to improve her neurological and functional outcome.

To resolve the parent's anxiety and dissatisfaction, we have, to date, initiated an Independent Inquiry on this issue.

Dato' Dr Hj Ahmad Razin Bin Dato' Hj Ahmad Mahir
Perak State Health Director

Misleading Information

On my way home recently, I chanced upon a billboard, outside of the Low Cost Carrier Terminal in Sepang, extolling the virtues of Visit Perak Year 2012. What puzzles me is the depiction of Istana Kenangan in Kuala Kangsar as the primary image associated with the occasion. Istana Kenangan, incidentally, is under renovation and is closed to the public. Its portrayal, therefore, is not appropriate at this moment in time.

At the Medan Mega Fair recently the Mayor was seen showing an Indonesian official a map of Ipoh. The map is a folded brochure detailing historical landmarks within the city, places to eat, to shop and to recreate and a list of private hospitals. Obviously, it is meant for Medan folks who wish to seek an alternative location for their medical needs.

The English-language brochure has many factual errors, including grammatical mistakes which I had raised with the council staff. The continued use of this brochure may not be in the best interest of Ipoh City Council, as the information available is misleading. Hopefully, remedial measures are taken before it is too late.

Nadim

Aerobathon



PUSPANITA Perak's debut aerobics marathon, held at Stadium Indera Mulia recently, attracted a total of 200 aerobic enthusiasts some from faraway Kedah, Penang and Kelantan. Participants were grouped into three categories based on their age. Category A for those between 20 to 35 years old, Category B between 36 to 45 years old and Category C, 46 years old and above.

There were three aerobics instructors, each leading a set of aerobics exercise for approximately 40 minutes. The competition lasted for two hours, with only a couple of minutes break in between. Winners were selected based mainly on their fitness level and how well they could follow the instructors.

Category A title was won by Nurul Huda Abd Hadi from Taiping. Salina Omar from Kedah won the Category B title while Rokiah Abd Talib, the Category C top spot. Wong Kheng Chee and Faridah Daim received special awards for being the oldest participant at 65 years of age.

EL

Sport

Table Tennis Championship 2011

The 48th Malaysia Table Tennis Championship 2011 was held over four days at Stadium Indera Mulia, Ipoh in December last year. It was organised by the Perak Table Tennis Association (PktTA) with Dato' Thong Fah Chong as its president.

A total of 130 players were entered in the championship, forming 15 teams, representing all states in Malaysia, including the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) participated with a contingent consisting of five players.

The men's single title was won by Chan Koon Wah of MAF, Ng Sock Khim from Kedah won the women's single crown, Mohd. Syakirin Ibrahim and Chan Koon Wah from MAF, the men's doubles, Kueh Wan May and Wendy Lau Jun Zhen from Sarawak, the women's doubles and Sarawak's Chai Kiang Peng and Kueh Wan May, the mixed doubles. The overall team champion was MAF for men while Selangor wrested the women's title.

Perak, being the host, was allowed to enter 20 players. The women's team won third placing.

This was the fourth national-level tournament organised by PktTA since inception in 1964. This year's tournament will be hosted by Negeri Sembilan.

EL



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