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ISSUE **144**

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## Ipoh Property

by Sylvia Looi

### Getting Noticed

Developers in Perak are bullish over property development in the state with some feeling its capital Ipoh has finally entered the major league of property investment by getting noticed. CEO of Superboom Projects Peter Chan, the developer of the award winning condominium project The Haven in Tambun, said the lull in the building industry currently being experienced elsewhere in the country is a good sign for Perak and Ipoh in particular.



The Haven



Kinta Real Estate development

Continued on page 2

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## Ipoh is One of the Least Risky Places for Investment

“Buyers will look for the least risky places to invest and Ipoh will definitely be one of them,” he told Ipoh Echo in a recent interview.

Chan, who has stayed in Ipoh for the past 10 years, based his opinion on the leads and lags factor. “Ipoh is fast becoming the number 1 property investment destination as seen from the steady rise in property prices here over the year,” he said. “The time has come for the successful to own a second home or a getaway home,” he added.

Citing The Haven as an example, Chan said locals formed the bulk of purchasers. Chan foresees that Ipoh will be the next centre of attention in the coming years.

“Ipoh has a good prospect with the Electric Train Service and the extension of the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport runway which will lead to more flights and more destinations being offered,” he said. The low cost of living in Ipoh makes it another attraction to investors, added Chan. “Best town in the world is Ipoh with its laid-back lifestyle,” he enthused.



Dato' Francis Lee

### Double Storey Doubled

Agreeing with Chan, Tumbuh Merata Sdn Bhd director Tony Khoo said the price of double-storey projects in the city had almost doubled since three years ago. “A double-storey house for RM180,000 then, can now fetch between RM290,000 and RM300,000,” he revealed. Khoo was however quick to add that property prices are still relatively low in Ipoh as compared to other cities.

Khoo added that most purchasers of properties in Ipoh now, are middle income earners with more disposable incomes. “Compared to 10 years ago, properties in Ipoh are being snapped up by Ipohites working overseas and planning to retire in the city,” he noted.

The local property scene, according to Khoo, lacks medium-cost units, which he blamed on the high land costs. “Coupled with high building costs, developers cannot sell their projects at a bargain,” he explained. He said, however, that purchasers would weigh in factors like locality, whether a project is gated, its design and pricing before deciding on investing in a project. “Bank policies are also affecting our sales as we can't close a deal if prospective buyers can't get a bank loan,” he added.

Khoo said projects with safety features will definitely be a plus point for purchasers when considering a property to invest in due to growing concern over high crime rate. “I would say 70% of buyers will go for it if they can afford it,” he said, adding that the only drawback of a gated community is the high monthly maintenance charges they have to incur.

### Locality

Kinta Real Estate Sdn Bhd managing director, Dato Poo Tak Kiau, however believes that the location of a project determines the marketability of a project. Citing Bandar Baru Meru as an example, Poo said due to plans to relocate Government offices there, projects there are being snapped up like hot cakes.

“Even before the dust for the first phase project has settled, investors are queuing up to purchase the second phase,” he said. Citing Meru Desa Park as another example, Poo said the price has appreciated from more than RM308,000 to more than RM400,000 within six months.

In Bandar Meru Raya, a 24"x90" terrace house project which was fetching RM400,000 previously is now changing hands at RM600,000.

With a hypermarket, central bus station, hotel, convention centre, education centres and amusement park being built in Bandar Meru Raya, Poo reckons that when the entire Bandar Meru Raya is fully developed, the prices of properties will skyrocket.

Poo said another location that investors should be on the lookout for is Kampar. “With Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, there will be more demand from students for accommodation,” he said. Citing the Taman Mahsuri Impian as an example, Poo said investors are assured of rental returns. “Purchasers can be assured of between 13% and 27% return on their investment,” he added.

### Loans

On complaints by some developers that difficulties in obtaining loans for buyers are causing them to lose some deals, Bank Negara Malaysia said this was to ensure individuals do not borrow beyond their means.

In a report on online news portal The Malaysian Insider on March 22, Bank Negara Malaysia assistant governor, Dr Sukhdave Singh, was quoted as saying that “while easy loan approvals may give a boost to economic activity in the short term, there would be a price to pay in the long term that would be borne by the whole economy”.

“Credit guidelines are not intended to deny loans to genuine borrowers with genuine needs and who can afford to repay,” Dr Sukhdave Singh was quoted as saying.

The ruling came into effect in November 2010 when the central bank announced a maximum loan-to-value ratio of 70% for third housing loans to curb excessive investment and speculative activity in the residential property market. Financing for the purchase of first and second homes was, however, not affected by the ruling.

The central bank said the measure would help ensure housing remained affordable and promote home ownership among Malaysians, which was an important item on the

national agenda.

### REHDA Confident of Property Boom in Coming Decade

The Perak chapter of Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association Malaysia (REHDA) is confident that Perak's property market will take off in the coming decade.

Its chairman Dato' Francis Lee said that apart from the laggard pricing from Peninsular Malaysia, Perak's house prices are also increasingly laggard from the cost of delivery of the housing development.

“With the increase in household income over the last few years and the current low interest regime, the affordability index is at an all time high for the intended target group of purchasers,” he told Ipoh Echo through an email interview.

Lee said that the Government's measures to curb speculation by way of a revision of rates to 'Real Property Gains Tax' and a 70% ceiling on housing loans, would have little impact on the housing market scene in Perak.

“The other positive measures implemented to promote home ownership by way of 'My First Home Scheme' and '1 Malaysia Public Housing Scheme' (PR1MA) will be supportive of the housing industry in Perak,” he said.

Lee noted that investors contemplating a purchase of a property in Perak will be comforted by an assurance that the prospective property is comparatively cheap and defensive in value and has capacity for strong capital appreciation into the future.

### Perak Cheap by Comparison

“A cursory review of the average transacted price of housing properties within Peninsular Malaysia for 2010 and 2011 shows that the price of properties in Perak for the corresponding period is indeed very cheap by comparison” he said, pointing out that the average transacted price for properties in Perak for 2011, consisting of transactions in both the primary and secondary market, is RM122,275.

“This ranks the pricing of housing property in Perak at the tenth spot in Peninsular Malaysia and only ahead of Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu,” he added.

“As the major variance for the cost of delivery of housing properties within Peninsular Malaysia is the land cost, there is no rationale for the vast laggard pricing and the prices for housing in Perak will inevitably move upwards in the coming years,” he noted.

### Current Stock of Housing

Lee said for low-cost housing, there were 90,606 units in Perak in 2011 representing 23.32% of total housing stock. “This is largely represented as mandatory delivery of low-cost housing by housing developers under corresponding state guidelines,” he said.

Lee noted that single-storey terrace, two to three-storey terraced and detached houses form the bulk of the housing stock in Perak, tallying at 264,667 units or 67.83% of total stock.

“With the increasing household income of the last few years and a growing affluent population, there will be a corresponding growth in the percentage of delivery of semi detached, detached and condominiums in the coming years,” he added.

As the 'Population and Housing Census of Malaysia – Preliminary Count Report 2010' reports that there are 559,405 households in Perak as at census date, this would mean that 169,188 households in Perak are living in non-conventional housing in the form of small holdings with rural residence, shop houses with residential facilities and residential premises built on TOL (temporary occupation licence) land, said Lee.

“The fact that the price of housing in Perak is much laggard from Peninsular Malaysia pricing, it would be fair to infer that there is no element of a property bubble subsisting in Perak,” he said.



Tumbuh Merata's project at Jalan Pasir Puteh



Peter Chan

## LETTERS

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

## Fatimah Hospital Building Extensions

Thank you for enlightening the residents of Ipoh regarding the new Cancer Treatment building in Fatimah Hospital. I am sure many a resident and even far-off residents will be glad to make use of this facility as cancer is a very widespread disease these days.

May I also take this opportunity to highlight to you the inconvenience being experienced by the residents living in the surrounding vicinity of this hospital. Due to the constant expansion of Hospital Fatimah's medical facilities, including wards, there is increasingly

serious traffic congestion on the road in front and beside the hospital due to the haphazard parking of vehicles. So far there has been no police or local authority (DBI) action taken on these inconsiderate owners of parked cars. It is incumbent on the Hospital Board of Directors to provide ample car and other vehicle parking space when they have decided on such a magnitude of expansion of hospital facilities!

Did the DBI negligently ignore these requirements when approving the plans for expansion? Are the residents to continue suffering the uncouth attitude of drivers who park so very dangerously? Would Ipoh Echo send a photographer to the junction of Lebuhraya Chew Peng Loon and Jalan Carlos in Taman Ipoh on a working day to see the chaos?

Thank you very much.

A Jalan Carlos Resident

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## From the Editor's Desk

• by **Fathol Zaman Bukhari**

## A MONTH OF SHAME

*Violence through show of disrespect using lewd language and gestures is becoming a norm. Could this be a new culture that will inhabit our social landscape or is it just a passing fad?*

May is up and gone. To some it is just another month in the calendar but to many peace-loving Malaysians, May is a month of shame. It was also in May, 43 years ago that the infamous racial riots of May 13 took place. May too has several other significant events among them VE (Victory in Europe) Day on May 8, 1945. It was on May 8, 1968 that I took my solemn oath, on the drill square of the Royal Military College, Sg Besi, to serve King and Country and did so for 30 long years. While others consider May as a fleeting passage of time that merits little or no acknowledgement, to a band of brothers and sisters from Ipoh, it was a moment of truth and sad reflection.

What had befallen now renowned BERSIH chairperson Ambiga Sreenevesan can happen to anyone, given the eminence that surrounds this gutsy lady lawyer. From merely clamouring for a free and fair election, as provided for in the Constitution, Ambiga has evolved into someone the ruling government coalition loves to loathe. It could be this seemingly "inglorious" significance that prompted "paid goons" of the Establishment to make her a marked person. How circumstances could descend to such depths is beyond me. Violence through show of disrespect using lewd language and gestures is becoming a norm. Could this be a new culture that will inhabit our social landscape or is it just a passing fad?

In Merlimau, Malacca on Saturday, May 12 a hi-tea event which Ambiga was supposed to appear was derailed by thugs who threw stones and eggs. The incident damaged several cars and the event was called off. Preceding the Merlimau incident was a series of bizarre protests outside of Ambiga's house in Bukit Damansara, Kuala Lumpur which included a "butt exercise" by a group of unknowns who claimed to be army veterans. On Thursday, May 10, a band of traders set up stalls and served free beef burgers in front of Ambiga's house. It was a deliberate act since Ambiga is a Hindu and a vegetarian.

The developments in the capital city have not gone unnoticed elsewhere. In Ipoh, a group of concerned citizens, representing 51 non-governmental organisations, denounced the despicable acts as disgusting and an affront to Ambiga's dignity as a Malaysian. At a press conference on Thursday, May 24, lawyer Augustine Anthony, the chairperson of BERSIH 3.0 Perak made the group's stand known.

Alluding to Article 5 of the Constitution, which states that "No person shall be deprived of his/her personal liberties save in accordance with the law", he said that the "perpetrators have stooped so low as to have no qualms in belittling Ambiga's religious sensitivities." Echoing Augustine's sentiments, Dr Sharifah Jaafar, President of Perak Women for Women Society, decried the attacks as being "politically motivated". "No citizens of the country should be subjected to such incessant tormenting just for



speaking up for the rights of the people," she insisted. Abdul Rahman, President of Perak Consumers' Association (CAP), condemned the actions of the petty traders and promised that "members of CAP would stop buying burgers forthwith."

No sooner had the dust settled, when the authorities went after protesters who breached the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011. Opposition leaders, Anwar Ibrahim, Mohamad Azmin and Badrul Hisham are now being charged for contravening the Act. Their case will be mentioned in court on July 2.

Malaysians cannot grasp the significance of the rule of law. We have been cowed into submission by too many repressive laws. Over in the United States, Americans are subject not only to their state constitution but also their federal constitution.

By "due process" the U.S. Department of State refers to the constitutional protection afforded the accused person under the Fifth Amendment of the federal constitution. It is basically a human rights issue which is universal. Sadly, this is alien here. State-sponsored bullying and intimidation will, therefore, continue unabated.

## News Roundup

## Century Ride 2012

Bigger than before

The sixth 160-km Century Ride Malaysia event is back and it is bigger than ever before. The event which will be held on July 15 has already registered 1,600 participants as of May.

The Chairman of Kinta Road Runners Club Ipoh, Chong Him Shoong, the organiser of the event said he was overwhelmed by the positive response describing it as 'phenomenal' and indicated that the club would stop accepting participants at 1,700 participants.

Chong made the announcement at the launch of the event which was attended by State Exco for Culture, Youth and Sport Dato' Zainol Fadzi bin Haji Paharudin together with the directors of the various government departments such as the Fire, Police and JPJ.

Also present were the directors of Tourism Malaysia and Perak Tourism and a host of sponsors for the event.

During the launch, Dato' Zainol praised the organisers for organising the Century Ride annually saying that since he first flagged off the event two years ago, "the participants have been increasing from 900 to 1200 till 1600 this year".

Zainol later presented a cheque of RM30,000 to the organisers on behalf of the state government.

Century Ride is not a race but rather a ride where one goes through a process of discovering one's hidden strength and potential. It attracts two primary types of cyclists, the seasoned athlete who trains hard to master this marathon event and the cyclist whose aim is simply to complete the distance.

Organising chairman Alvin Chooi explained that they had to cap the number of participants at 1700 for reasons of safety and efficient organisation adding that traffic and course control would be a challenge this year.

This year's routing will be flagged off at 7am from Kinta Riverfront Hotel and will traverse through Silibin - Ipoh/Lumut Highway to Parit - Karai - Lintang - Lasah - Ulu Kuang - Chemor and Kuala Kangsar Road and back to the hotel.

When asked for the opinions from tourism officials both Norshamsida Abdul Rahman, the State Director from Tourism Malaysia and Abdul Fathil Ghani, the CEO of Perak Tourism, gave the event the thumbs up saying the event is a positive development especially as this is Visit Perak Year.



## Eye Health - Pterygium

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

A pterygium (pronounced with the "p" silent) is a wedge-shaped growth of thin tissue (conjunctiva) that covers the white outer surface of the eye (sclera). It may involve one or both eyes. It may remain small or may grow large enough to interfere with vision. When someone has a pterygium, it will be clearly visible to others and seen as a fleshy, reddish growth commonly affecting the inner corner of the eye.



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



### What are the causes of a pterygium?

The cause is not really known but there are some observations. Pterygium occurs more often in people who are excessively exposed to sunlight and wind. It is due to the chronic exposure to high ultraviolet-light. It is also seen more in individuals who have eye irritation due to low humidity, dusty and smoky conditions. Patients who suffer from underlying dry eyes may also

be more prone to developing a pterygium.

It is therefore seen more amongst farmers, fishermen, golfers and in those people living near the equator.

### What are the symptoms?

Pterygium often has no symptoms. A fleshy growth commonly on the inner aspect of the eye will be seen. It is painless except when it becomes inflamed. When this happens, it becomes red and swollen due to the dilated blood vessels in the pterygium.

In some patients itchiness of the eye or a dry sensation may occur. An increasing need to change spectacle power may also occur when the pterygium grows large because it has a tendency to induce astigmatism resulting in blurred vision.

In advanced cases the pterygium can grow over the clear part of the front of the eye (cornea). When this happens it obscures the optical centre of the clear part of the eye (cornea) resulting in significant loss of vision.

### Are there any tests that need to be done?

Testing of a person's eyesight will need to be done because a pterygium may induce astigmatism in the early stage. In the late stage, it may block a person's vision completely. The eye doctor will need to do a routine slit-lamp eye examination in order to determine the extent of eye involvement. an assessment of the amount of tear production would be helpful in order to look for underlying associated Dry Eyes.

### What is the treatment?

In the early stages, no invasive treatment is needed. A person is usually advised to wear protective sunglasses whenever exposed to sunlight or windy conditions. Any underlying dry eyes will need to be treated properly in order to prevent progression of the pterygium.

In cases where the pterygium grows to the extent that it blocks vision or develops symptoms of inflammation that are hard to control, then it should be surgically removed and the outcome is usually good in most patients. However, a pterygium may return after it is removed. Wearing protective sunglasses and a broad hat to prevent the exposure to sunlight is advised.

For more information, contact Gill Eye Specialist Centre at  
05-5455582, email: [gilleyecentre@dr.com](mailto:gilleyecentre@dr.com) or visit [www.fatimah.com.my](http://www.fatimah.com.my).



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# Thinking **ALLOWED** • by Mariam Mokhtar

## On Your Bike!

In April, \*Perak Menteri Besar Zambry Abdul Kadir went around Ipoh and the nearby areas on his bicycle claiming that he preferred this method of meeting Perakians, to his usual walkathon.

On April 1 he visited the Kinta Heights flats, Cherry Park apartments in Jalan Tun Abdul Razak and the Ipoh Municipal Council flats in Jalan Ashby.

A few weeks later, he led a group of 700 cyclists on another 50-km tour around Ipoh. He started his ride at the crack of dawn to visit Kampung Ulu Chepor in Chemor, Kampung Manjoi, Kampung Temiang and Kampung Seri Kinta. According to the MB, cycling enabled him to meet the people and hence address the issues of cleanliness and clogged drains.

"I prefer this approach to meet the people instead of the normal formal visits. This way, people feel free to mix with us and share problems affecting them. The bicycle tour attracted many from the younger generation from schools, colleges, universities as well as the working community. I feel this is the best way we can mingle without protocols".

The MB's attempt to meet Perakians is commendable but has attracted mixed responses. "He has hit on a bright idea but will he keep it up and look into the many problems each community faces? Someone said he is only emulating what the Penang CM started in 2009."

A resident of Greentown made a barbed comment, "The MBs in Malaysia act more like health inspectors checking drains and rubbish. This shows a breakdown in the basic services provided by the state."

Another person was more sanguine, "I hope all politicians from both sides of the political divide will meet the *rakyat* in this way."

Many of Ipoh's residents, especially its students, once relied on bicycles as their normal mode of transport. With more roads, an increase in heavy traffic and an abundance of inconsiderate drivers, cyclists have been slowly edged off their bicycles. The lack of an efficient public transport system has forced people to use their cars or motorbikes, thus increasing traffic congestion.

Zambry may have found bicycling in and around Ipoh a thrilling experience. He was surrounded by several other cyclists and no doubt, would have had a police escort and dedicated traffic police presence to control traffic flow.

What of the normal, everyday bicycle user? Some claim that they put their lives at risk once they negotiate Ipoh's roads. Lorry and bus drivers claim not to see them. Other road users have no consideration for them at all.

Two years ago in Bercham, an 11-year-old pupil of SJKC Bercham was cycling to school when he was hit by a school bus at a junction. The upshot of the tragedy was that the chairman of the school, advised parents not to allow their children to cycle to school.

This knee-jerk reaction is misleading and the statement was issued before the facts were established. Despite this, dangerous drivers should be punished in a court of law, and guidance should be given to all road-users who are not well-versed in road safety.

Not all parents own cars or motorbikes, or have the time to ferry their children everywhere. Some can ill-afford the excessive petrol costs or private van-hire charges. Even with reasonable bus-fares, not every child may live near a bus route.

We talk of wanting a greener nation, with a reduced carbon footprint. We desire an environment of reduced pollution, less congestion and safer roads for all, especially pedestrians and bicyclists. It would help if cycle lanes and cycle racks outside shops or offices were provided. Visitors to Amsterdam, London and Paris, will have noticed the hordes of bicyclists in cycle lanes. Bicycle-couriers travel faster in these cities during peak hours. If Ipohites adopted this attitude, we'll have a less polluted city and fewer obese children and adults.

Road safety is everyone's responsibility, including the bicycle users. Cyclists share some of the blame in accidents and they must be aware of the basic highway rules.

Motorists complain of cyclists riding without lights when it is dark or riding on the wrong side of the road and pedestrians fear cyclists mowing them down when they ride on the pavements. Ignoring red lights or not using hand signals, to indicate their intention to turn, will only increase the risk of an accident. Straying into the path of a vehicle is another problem associated with cyclists.

Although wearing a helmet is a personal choice, the most important thing is for cyclists to wear clothes that make them visible to other road users.

In major cities around the world, some mayors and leaders cycle to work as a matter of course and not part of a publicity stunt. If Zambry would also like to encourage a greener and healthier lifestyle, he could make several provisions for the state government to improve road-conditions, have strict enforcement and build a highly efficient public transport system. Education is key, but involvement at state level is critical, at all times and not just prior to an election.

\*Sources: *The Star* and *The New Straits Times*



*Bicycle-friendly Amsterdam*



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## Musings on Food

seefoon@ipohecho.com.my

By See Foon Chan-Koppen

Photos by Ginla Foo

## SeeFoon relishes oodles of noodles in Greentown

I often drive past the bright orange signboard emblazoned with the name Fonzie on the way to or from the Ipoh Echo office in Greentown and although it evokes memories of that popular TV series in the '70s and '80s 'Happy Days' which featured the loveable rogue the Fonze, as is usual in Ipoh, nothing piques my curiosity unless it is recommended by a friend. And as usual, my partner-in-crime, fellow foodie, Ginla Foo got me interested.

Located very conveniently two doors away from the Excelsior Hotel, **sinFonzie** actually dates from the '70s, having been established 35 years ago. Alan Wong, the current chef/proprietor took over the restaurant in 1997, bringing with him a wealth of experience from 10 years with Overseas Restaurant.

### Homemade Noodles

Alan, who's a meticulous perfectionist when it comes to all natural and healthy ingredients, tells me that his specialty lies in their homemade noodles: both wheat and rice. Unlike most other restaurants who buy their noodles ready-made from factories, he even makes their signature yeemeen by frying their homemade noodles himself. This way, he can assure customers of their freshness and eliminate the possibility of rancidity from stale oil.

This is not your banquet-style restaurant but a place to bring friends and family for



hearty noodles and rice, accompanied by a few selected dishes.

We started with a selection of their appetizers or as listed on the menu, their snacks. The **vegetable roll**, vegetables wrapped in bean-curd sheets and deep fried, were crispy at the edges and succulent in the middle – RM4.00 for two pieces. The **fried dumpling** or **Gao Tze** came with vinegar and sliced fresh ginger – RM4.00 for three pieces. The **homemade fish balls** were extra large and came in a soup – RM4.00 for two pieces.

### Hong Kong Style Congee

As we were a large group on this particular day, we proceeded to order a variety of their noodle and rice dishes. My first taste of their **porridge or congee** justified our visit. Evoking taste memories of the congee I used to eat in Hong Kong; smooth, semi fluid, the rice reduced to creaminess that only hours of simmering can create, this congee had meat balls and egg, umami to the last spoonful – RM15.00 for a claypot enough for three or four people sharing other dishes. Other congee can be ordered with fish, abalone, or conpoy (dried scallops). But the base for all their congee comes with Chinese *Kam Wah* ham and eggs.

### Noodles Galore

Then came oodles of noodles. The **Lo Shu Fun** (short fat rice noodles), literally translated as 'Mice' noodles, with seafood, tomatoes and a touch of Chinese rice wine, came in a creamy sauce with the addition of Zhejiang vinegar, one of the finest in Chinese black vinegar. I loved the tangy mildly tart taste of the vinegar which imbued the sauce with its own unique character – RM18.00 for a claypot.

This was followed by the quaintly named **Lat Duck Hoi Sum** (spicy hot and happy), rice noodles in a creamy sauce laced with evaporated milk and with enough chilli spiciness to give bite without searing and tear-ing. Topped with their homemade crispy bean curd skin (Fu Pei) sprinkle, this was delectable – RM18.00.

### Piece de Resistance

More noodles ahead as we tucked into their piece de resistance **Prawn Noodle** soup, homemade wheat noodles in a well-simmered soup redolent of pork bones and prawn shells, topped by large prawns and served with a few sprigs of green – RM28.00 for grade 2 prawns and RM48 for grade 1 (to be ordered one day ahead).

Another of their signature noodles is their claypot-braised **Yeemeen** which Alan proudly informed me that because they are homemade and not rancid, is not soaked in water prior to braising (as is the usual method). This allows the noodles to soak up all the braising liquids from the prawns, meat and mushrooms that up the dish – RM28.00 per claypot.

Already groaning with the surfeit, the **Lemon Grass homemade hollow rice noodles** that came in a 'Tom Yam' type of broth with Chinese shitake mushrooms, cabbage and prawns – RM9.00 per portion, was the icing on the cake.

In between the group sharing the congee and noodles, we also ordered their **60-day old free range chicken**. This was the blanched chicken which arrived without breast meat, one of the special touches that proprietor Alan Wong pointed out was their signature, given that most Chinese prefer the dark meat – RM13.00 for a portion to serve three or four people.

Fonzie serves a variety of healthy drinks which Alan is more than willing to recommend. They also do take-outs.

### Restaurant sinFonzie

53 Jalan Sultan Abdul Jalil

Tel: **05-2558481** Alan Wong: **012-5587988**

Hours: 12-3.30pm and 5.30-10pm

Open 24/7 except for long holidays. Call to find out.

## HAWKER FOOD

### Nasi Kerabu

by VWSL



**Nasi Kerabu** is lovely blue rice mixed with raw vegetables and herbs, and *kerisik*, which is grated coconut pan-fried and mixed with other ingredients sometimes fish, tamarind and seasoning. The blue colour of the rice comes from the butterfly pea flower. A gamut of raw greens are finely julienned and mixed together: string beans, cucumber, cabbage, *bunga kantan* (torch ginger), lemongrass, *daun kesum* (Vietnamese coriander), bean sprouts, *daun sup* (celery leaves) and some others. Eaten with salted egg, turmeric-coated fried fish, fish crackers, *nasi kerabu* is basically a healthy meal. Some stalls will give a spicy sambal or watery chilli sauce and *budu* [ikan bilis (anchovies) sauce]] and *keropok ikan* (fish crackers) too.



### Places to try:

- **Stall at Jalan Teoh Kim Swee**, Taman Hillview, Rapat Setia. With fried chicken – RM3.50
- **Stall at Jalan Putera**, Taman Putera Permai, Bandar Baru Putra, Bercham. With fried chicken and a small slice of salted egg – RM2.50
- **Stall at No. 92 Jalan Permai 5**, Bandar Baru Putra, Bercham.
- Value for money – good amount of rice with plenty of *keropok*. If you like spicy food, try the chicken curry – not much raw vegetable, mainly cabbage – RM3.50.
- **Terengganu Corner** (05-5272055; Mohammad Zarilan 017-5751889). Jalan Jelapang (opp. the Klinik Kesihatan). RM2.50 with salted egg; RM3.50 with fried fish. Opens 6.30am-4.30pm except Tuesdays.
- **Allongs Restaurant**, 24 Pesara Ipoh 1, Ipoh Garden. Comes pre-wrapped with brown paper (just like *nasi lemak*) with either chicken or fish – RM3.50. This is made by someone else, the restaurant. Go early, it finishes fast.
- **Pasar Tani (Farmers' Market) at Stadium Perak** (3 stalls). Fried fish & salted egg RM3.00; fried beef RM3.50; add other dishes for RM2 onwards.

## RECIPE

By Margarita Lee



## Chicken Rendang

### Ingredients:

- 2kg chicken – cleaned and cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 6 stalks lemongrass (*serai*) – bruised
- 1 inch piece young ginger – bruised
- 2 inch piece galangal (*lengkuas*) – bruised
- 4 young turmeric leaves – finely cut
- 4-5 pieces Kaffir lime leaves (*daun limau perut*) – crushed
- ½ cup *kerisik* (finely ground coconut, dry fried) – keep aside
- 3-4 pieces Tamarind peel (*asam keping*)
- Salt and sugar to taste

### Blended Ingredients:

- 30 dried chillies soaked in hot water and discard seeds
- 30 shallots
- 2 bulbs garlic
- 1 candlenut (*buah keras*)
- ½ cup *kerisik*
- ½ inch piece turmeric (*kunyit*)
- 2 Tbsp coriander seeds (*ketumbar*)

### Method:

1. Heat oil in wok and add blended ingredients, add lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, young ginger and turmeric leaf, stir fry for 5 minutes or until paste separates from the oil.
2. Add chicken and stir fry for 5 minutes. Add coconut milk and allow to simmer over medium heat for about 45 minutes or until chicken is tender, adding a bit more coconut milk as necessary to keep sauce from drying and burning.
3. Add the Tamarind peel, coconut *kerisik* when the meat is tender, keep stirring frequently to avoid burning. When the meat is tender and the sauce is almost dry, remove from heat.
4. Serve with rice.





## Young Perak Appreciating Teachers



Appreciation for teachers throughout the country was shown during teachers' day at SK Raja Perempuan Muzwin, Kuala Kangsar. The *Guru Penyayang* (Compassionate Teacher) Programme was launched by Education Director-General, Dato' Seri Abdul Ghafar Mahmud at the school hall in conjunction with the National Teachers' Day celebration recently.

The programme's objective is to establish a closer relationship between students and teachers. It is expected to be implemented by all schools in the country by year's end though it is not made compulsory.

The programme requires students and teachers alike to get to know one another on a more personal basis. Students are encouraged to show their appreciation for their teachers throughout the year and not only on teachers' day. Teachers, on the other hand, will reward students' achievements and are required to remember their birthdays.

A mentor-mentee relationship will therefore be established. Students will then be able to confide in their teachers should they have problems at home.

To get the event going, a group of teachers greeted students as they arrived in school. Teachers and students whose birthdays fell in the month of May received goodie bags and cards from the school. A congenial start to the programme was thus ensured.

Tiffany

## Zambry Commends Teachers

Datuk Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir showed his emotional side during a dinner speech in conjunction with the 41<sup>st</sup> National-level Teacher's Day celebration at his residence recently.

The Chief Minister shed tears when he recalled his childhood days. He alluded to his formative years by mentioning the hardships he and his family faced in Pulau Pangkor. "At first, I didn't have any vision but my teachers changed all that. Now look where I am today. Whoever we are, it all starts from the guidance given by our teachers."

Nearly a thousand teachers from all over Perak attended the dinner held at the banquet hall, an annexe to the chief minister's residence. Zambry took the opportunity to launch 15 books which were authored



by teachers from around the nation. Coming in different genres, the books were meticulously written to help readers, especially students, to broaden their knowledge.

Othman Bin Mat Ali, 55, the principal of SK Kg Senta, Bidor was glad that the Perak government was doing its bit to honour the contributions of teachers.

More, however, could be done for those in the teaching profession. According to Abdul Jalil Abdul Hamid, 56, teachers should be given their due recognition via promotions and salary increments.

Vinesh

## Study Tour

Forty students from various schools in Perak were taken on a study tour of interesting landmarks in the state recently. The tour, organised by Yayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan (YBU), began with a visit to the State Secretariat Building. The students and their teachers were greeted by the Chief Minister, Dato' Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir who briefed them on the system of government. They were then taken to the state museum nearby.

In conjunction with Visit Perak Year 2012, the young visitors were given free passes into the Taiping Night Safari. The two-day study tour ended with a demonstration on the making of Sayong pottery in Kuala Kangsar. The idea of taking these students on tour in the state was the brainchild of the Chief Minister's wife, Datin Seri DiRaja Saripah Zulkifli.

"It's not only educational but also beneficial for the students, as it helps broaden their knowledge of Perak," said YBU's Fauziah Abdul Aziz who accompanied the visitors.

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## News Roundup

### Dinner and Dance



**M**Y Dancesport Studio held its 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner at Kinta Riverfront Hotel and Suites, Ipoh in a blaze of twirling, sequined and lithesome bodies.

Guests were thoroughly entertained by dance routines performed by the dancers. They jived and did the rhumba, cha-cha and samba to the delight of the appreciative dinner crowd.

MY Dancesport Studio has been around in Ipoh for over a decade. It was established by Michael Yeap and his children, Derek Yeap and Yeap Yen Chin. The trio, along with qualified dance instructors, conducts most of the classes at the studio. Their students have, over the years, won several dance competitions further enhancing the studio's stature.

The dancers' long and dedicated hours of practice paid off when they stunned the audience with their dazzling moves. With girls as young as nine years old taking the floor, not a single second was wasted, as the dancers gyrated to a steady beat in their sequined costumes.

Guests were later given a two-hour footloose session. It was their turn to let their hair down and they did so with high energy.

**Tiffany**

### SMC Launches Kalvi Viratham 2012



**S**ri Murugan Centre (SMC) launched its Kalvi Viratham 2012 (Education Pledge 2012) by awarding medals and souvenirs to high achievers in the PMR, SPM and STPM examinations during a ceremony held at the Kinta Indian Association.

Santha Subramaniam, wife of a lorry driver was honoured as Mother of the Year. The couple have five children; three sons have graduated and are working and a daughter is studying in USA under a PSD (Public Services Department) sponsorship. Their youngest daughter scored five As in STPM and is one of the 12 best students in the country.

A. Prakash Rao, Co-Director, Sri Murugan Centre Malaysia gave a motivational talk and said that education begins at home and parents must be supportive of their children and guide them.

More than a thousand students took the pledge to start preparing for the forthcoming examinations from now on and make their parents proud.

**AJ**

### Police Chief Claims Success

**P**olice Chief, DCP Dato' Mohd Shukri Dahlan said that the overall crime rate in the state, for the first four months of the year, had reduced by an average of 15 percentage points. The monthly rates were as follows – January (12.1 per cent), February (15.7 per cent), March (25.9 per cent) and April (18 per cent). The rate, according to the chief, was above the 5 per cent fixed under the National Key Result Areas

## Finding Solutions to Bercham's Traffic Woes

**B**ercham Councillor David Lai has been consistently trying to improve the traffic flow in his zone, Bercham.

This time around he is proposing to improve the traffic flow for traffic originating from Taman Bercham Bestari, where Giant hypermarket is located, going across onto Jalan Bercham main road in the direction towards Bercham town.

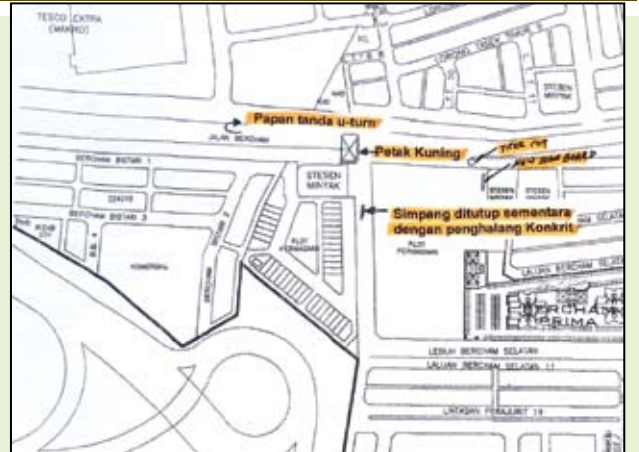
The congestion from the Lintasan Perajurit 17 traffic lights till the Tesco Extra junction began in March when the entrance road into Bercham, from the PLUS highway via Taman Bercham Bistari, was opened simultaneously with the opening of the Giant hypermarket.

The problem of congestion was created when traffic originating from Taman Bercham Bistari wanted to go towards Bercham town and Ipoh Garden East via Lintasan Perajurit 17. During the peak hours from 5.00-7.00pm the congestion in the area can be quite chaotic, "during which time accidents have occurred" added Lai.

Marcus Lau, who manages the Caltex petrol station on Jalan Bercham confirmed Lai's findings saying that "the number of customers during the peak time has declined since March because they are unable to drive into my station at that time".

Lai will submit his traffic improvement proposal to Ipoh City Council's engineering section at the end of May and anticipates the work will be completed within the month of June.

Lai then went to check on upgrading work being carried out at the slip road from the highway heading



south leading onto Jalan Tambun. This will enable traffic to immediately turn right onto Jalan Tambun and immediately head towards Ipoh. The current flow has traffic heading towards Ipoh having to make a U-turn at Taman Tambun. The upgrading work will widen the existing road to allow for two lanes one heading towards Tambun and the other heading towards Ipoh. Traffic lights will be located at the intersection and will subsequently be synchronized with another two existing traffic lights to enable smooth traffic flow. The works was started in April and at the time of the visit was 30% completed. The total cost of this upgrade is RM400,000 and is anticipated to be completed by early August.

**JAG**

## Celebrating World Nurses' Day



**W**orld Nurses' Day is celebrated worldwide on May 12 of each year. In Ipoh the auspicious occasion was marked with an official visit by Datin Seri DiRaja Saripah Zulkifli, wife of the Chief Minister to the Perak Community Specialist Hospital located at Jalan Kampar, Ipoh.

Saripah was greeted upon arrival by Chief Executive Officer, Rajinder Singh, Matron Yap Poh Yoong and a retinue of nurses who formed an informal guard of honour of sorts. Rajinder led the Chief Minister's wife and her entourage on a visit to the surgical and paediatric wards. Saripah presented hampers to the patients and children in both the wards. She then attended a cake-cutting ceremony in honour of nurses of the hospital.

"The responsibilities of a nurse are heavy," she said. "Some may consider the profession tedious and unrewarding, especially our youths who are very choosy. But without them where would we be?"

Caroline Teoh, a senior nurse with the hospital, prided herself for having chosen the profession. She has been a nurse for over 30 years. "My happiness is to see my patients recovering and walking out of the hospital, healthy once more," she exclaimed.

**Faiz**



in fighting crime and the 10 per cent ascertained under the Perak Police Contingent Strategic Plan 2012. Mohd Shukri announced these figures during his monthly parade held at the contingent headquarters on Tuesday, May 15.

"The success has placed us among the most successful contingents in the nation," he remarked. He later presented letters of commendation to outstanding police and civilian personnel from the state.

## Poverty Eradication



**Y**ayasan Bina Upaya Darul Ridzuan (YBU) organised a symposium to discuss the subject of poverty and ways to eradicate it. The forum, held at the multi-purpose hall within the premises of the Chief Minister's residence recently, was attended by public and private sectors staff and members of non-governmental organisations. Over 300 participants were present in the hall when the Chief Minister, Dato' Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir delivered his keynote speech.

The objective of the one-day symposium was to find ways to eradicate poverty in the state and also to provide an opportunity for the participants to interact with one another. "Hopefully, in the course of this one-day discussion we'll learn more from each other," said Zambry mindful of the benefits the forum would engender. Since the formation of YBU in 2009, the foundation has managed to resolve several incidences of poverty in the state. "Presently, only about 1,700 cases are still pending," he said.

Zambry then witnessed the tripartite signing of a memorandum of understanding between YBU Education Services Sdn Bhd, Perak Institute of Technology and Quest International University. The memorandum will provide opportunities for poor students to pursue tertiary education at Quest University and Perak Institute of Technology at discounted prices.

"This is an opportunity for students to further their education without burning a hole in their pockets. YBU Education Sdn Bhd will foot the bill based on one's capacity," Zambry reminded the appreciative audience.

**RM**

Touching on the two incidents which were widely reported recently, he said that the perpetrators were presently in police custody. One was an armed man who was apprehended after a short chase in Lumut. The other involved a group of men who stormed into Ipoh Specialist Hospital to attack a wounded man who was warded. Shukri commended his men for their quick response.

**Faiz**



## By Sylvia Looi



Lunar Properties Sdn Bhd's executive director Vivienne Ooi said since its launching three months ago, 50 per cent of the 132 units double-storey link houses have been snapped up.

For details, surf its website at [www.lunarproperties.com.my](http://www.lunarproperties.com.my) or call them at **05-2421288/2556288/2414781**.

## Assistance for Enterprising Youths



## Social Media Convention

## Vinesh

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## Sport

## Seladangs in Review



Over half a season has gone by now, Perak FA has faced plenty of adversities and challenges in this campaign; it doesn't seem to get easier at all. From inconsistency to complacency and misfiring forwards, the problems seem endless. Nevertheless, with all the international football action hogging the limelight, the Seladangs are in for a respite, for the moment at least.

With only eight wins out of their 18 league matches so far, Perak is currently ranked seventh in the league table. Perhaps it's time we sit back and analyse what went wrong for the Seladangs.

**No Hunger in Attack**

This is one significant drawback of the home team. It has failed to produce enthusiasm when on the offensive, which translates into the fact that a mediocre midfielder, in the form of Michal Kubala, is currently leading their goal scoring charts with only 11 strikes. Lazar Popovic was a great disappointment during the first half of the season, failing to score a single goal. Experienced forward, Akhmal Rizal looked jaded as well. A lot of hope was placed on young forward Failee Ghazalee, especially after his impressive outing during Perak's Malaysia Cup campaign last year. However, the former USM striker sustained a serious injury early on in the season and, in spite of recovery, has failed to regain his form.

**Inconsistency**

Fans, however, seem to agree on one fact – Perak players are not on par with their counterparts in the Kelantan and Terengganu teams. Fans want Norizan Bakar's men to be composed on the pitch and remain consistent in their build-up. Unfortunately, this is the key element that is missing in Perak this year. Its longest winning streak this season was during the early stages of the season, when the players were on a roll with four consecutive wins over Negeri Sembilan, Johor FC, Felda United and Sarawak. Since then, inconsistency has dogged the team all the way.

**Complacency**

This is a worrying trend for Perak. There have simply been too many occasions this season when opposing teams are allowed to peg the team, despite dominating the matches on the whole. The Seladangs outplayed LionsXII at the Perak Stadium last February. After leading 1-0 scoreline for much of the way, complacency crept in and they ended up losing 2-1. Similarly, Norizan Bakar's men were expected to steamroll past Sabah at home in April, after beating them a week before. The Sabahans fought hard and secured a 2-2 draw much to the dismay of diehard fans. Team manager, Khairul Azwan appeared to have had the last straw in their wasteful 2-2 draw with Terengganu in May.

With only seven games left in the season, there isn't much Perak can do to save its downward spiral. With LionsXII, Terengganu and Kelantan leading the title charge, the only thing Perak can do right now is to salvage some pride. It's time to have a good rest, recuperate and go for broke. A good ending to the Super League season would provide a timely boost for the Malaysia Cup campaign later this year.

Keesh

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements must be sent by fax: **05-2552181**; or email: [announcements@ipohecho.com.my](mailto:announcements@ipohecho.com.my), by the 9<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of every month in order to meet deadlines. Announcements by phone will not be entertained. Ipoh Echo reserves the right to verify any announcement before it is published.

**Simee Family Day Food Fair**, Saturday **June 2**, from 9.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m. @ Simee Home for the Aged. Tickets are available at the Home's office at RM10 per book.

**Blood Donation Drive by Y's Men's Club Ipoh and Perak Malayalee Association**, Saturday, **June 9** from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. @ First Floor, Ipoh Parade, Ipoh. For details call: Chanika **012-546 3943** or R. Narayanan **012-525 7894**.

**Ipoh Fine Arts Society AGM**, Sunday **June 10**, 6.00 p.m. @ the Royal Ipoh Club. This will be followed by a vegetarian dinner and Carnatic Vocal Concert by Ms Shobana Jagathieswaran with live accompaniment. Dinner is free for members; RM10 for non-members. For further details, contact: Mrs Shanti Kumar **016-5321087** or Mr R. Sathiyamoorthy **012-5206885**.

**73rd Annual General Meeting of the Andersonians' Club, Ipoh**, Sunday, **June 17** at 10am at Andersonians' Club, Jalan Hospital, Ipoh. Members are cordially invited to attend.

## Community



## “Kheer and Cha” for Vasakhi

The Sikh Awareness Event is like a tonic. You can be feeling down due to watching your favourite football team get beaten and then, like magic, the event's buzz envelops you and you are all in happiness and joy. Well at least, this was the case for me.

When we first arrived at the Gurdwara Sahib Tanjung Rambutan at 10am, we were rather disappointed with the number of people there. After an hour, the gloom lifted immediately once we saw the familiar faces of friends impatiently walking towards us with smiles on their faces. We were encompassed by the atmosphere of buzzing excitement in anticipation of the coming hours.

We were all busy packing “kheer (sweet rice porridge) and cha (tea)” into tupperware and arranging them into their specific boxes. Where the girls and women were busy packing, the boys helped with the loading of the boxes into cars. Everyone was in a jolly mood; laughter filled the air.

Then we all headed towards the orphanage in Tambun. On arrival, the kids were very excited to see us. We started off with a small introduction of ourselves. We then played football with the kids, and had a chat with them. We also managed to take pictures with them. During teatime, we gave them “kheer n cha” which they loved. We also told them what Vasakhi was all about.

At 3.30pm, the group headed towards Lost World of Tambun. Upon arrival, the girls started unpacking the boxes while the boys set up the tent and had a short brief on our responsibilities and other necessary information. Immediately, the group spread out and started serving “kheer and cha” to everyone.

Not forgetting the Dholis (drummers) who played a big role in alerting and entertaining the public with nonstop beats. They caught everyone's attention. We also had photo sessions with the general public besides explaining to them what Vasakhi was all about, gave them cards and handed out pamphlets. Most of them enjoyed the “kheer n cha”, though most of them had never had kheer and it was something which was very new to them. In addition, the public also got to know that we as Punjabis celebrate Vasakhi.

About 600 cups of “kheer n cha” were given out. We had very good response because in the end we managed to distribute all the “kheer and cha” we brought. We started packing and cleaning up ready to head home at about 6pm.

The main purpose in organising this event was to let the public know that Vasakhi is celebrated by Sikhs on April 14 every year. This day marks the birth of the Khalsa (baptised Sikhs, with an unique identity and discipline), in the year 1699. From that moment on, Sikhs were gifted with names Singh and Kaur by our 10th Guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

In a nutshell, the event was a success and we hope to organise a similar event next year.

Nisha Bhandal

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## Cutting Trees in the Name Of Development

Many residents get upset when they see trees being cut down indiscriminately in the name of development in their neighbourhood. I am describing three projects within a small area where I think more trees than necessary have been cut.

The first project is for shop lots and houses along Labrooy Road. One evening while I was taking photos of the trunks of trees that were cut, the boss of AK Nasi Kandar was passing by and said "Murattu marathai vettitaanga" which means "Tough trees have been cut". I was surprised that a layman knows the value of trees, whereas the engineers who approved the project were ignorant of it.

In the United Kingdom there is a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) which is part of town and country planning. Trees on development sites are protected by TPO attached to a planning permission to protect specific trees. TPO's can prevent felling or uprooting of trees without permission. Local council can make an emergency TPO within a day. TPO was introduced in 1947 and is still relevant.

The British Standard Trees in Relation to Construction Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2005) details the steps that should be taken to ensure that trees are appropriately and successfully retained when a development takes place. BS5837 requires that this decision is made by a "competent arborist". This means that where there are trees either on a potential development site or within close proximity to the site the District Council will take them into consideration.

If Malaysia wants to be a developed country then it must adopt these types of laws. If MBI engineers were aware of these laws and applied them, the project could have been scaled down and a number of mature trees could have been saved. Can the engineers replace these trees which may be more than 100 years old?

I worked for Brunei Shell in Brunei for many years and when land was cleared for major housing projects, all the trees were not cut. They have a template of the housing plan and do not cut trees between blocks of houses. Trees and a small plot of land would be separating blocks of houses. Bungalow houses do not have fences and are separated by trees. This makes the housing site beautiful.

The second project is the construction of the retention pond in Merdeka Garden. All the trees in a large area have been cut and there are no trees in the vicinity. There were fruit and coconut trees. Birds used to nest in the trees and now have been stripped of their habitat. Where I used to see iguanas and wild fowl, the construction has decimated them. Was it necessary to cut all the trees? If the engineers had been discriminating, many of them could have been saved. I have seen mature trees being dug up and replanted using cranes. I understand that if the trees were not cut, it would be difficult for movement of machinery. This has to be done to preserve nature.

The third project is the construction of the Esso filling station along Jalan Raja Musa Aziz (Anderson Road). When the trees were cut, a number of readers phoned Ipoh Echo to complain. There was no explanation from MBI. Was it really necessary to cut that many mature trees? In fact the trunks of the trees were tall and would not have obstructed the view of the filling station. Is this a suitable place for a filling station?

Do we really need all these developments at a cost to Mother Nature? It is our duty to preserve the earth for our future generations. We must not allow a few people to make quick money.

Has man the right to destroy the flora and fauna. We must have a holistic approach in approving projects and think of the long term impact and not of making a quick profit. Let us replant our beautiful trees and restore Ipoh to its former beauty.



## Eye Chat – From a Retinal Surgeon's Perspective

### Eye injections for the treatment of retinal diseases

Intravitreal injections are a very effective way of delivering drugs for treatment of certain serious diseases in the eye and particularly the retina. This has been done for many years when used to treat severe infections or inflammation of the eye but it was not until recently that a 'revolution' in the treatment of age related macular degeneration (AMD) led to the very routine use of these injections and has now become a very important part of the armamentarium of a retinal surgeon.

#### What exactly is an intravitreal injection?

As shown in this image, it involves "sticking a needle" into the eye and releasing specific drugs into the vitreous cavity. It is used for the treatment of a variety of eye diseases but in recent years, it has revolutionized the management of retinal diseases and has a significant impact not just on affected patients but also on retinal surgeons' lives!!



Dr Lee Mun Wai

#### The "Revolution"

The rise of intravitreal injections started in 2004 when intravitreal Macugen was first used in the management of AMD. This drug was developed to inhibit vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) which is a growth factor involved in the development of blood vessels. This had modest effect on the disease but the following year when Avastin (another inhibitor of VEGF) was first used to treat AMD, the revolution truly took off!



This was the first time there was any treatment that could actually improve vision in people with wet AMD. From Avastin, another drug came into the market in 2006 – Lucentis. This was a designer drug specifically manufactured to treat VEGF driven eye diseases as compared to Avastin (which was a cancer drug for metastatic bowel cancer).

The impact of this 'revolution' extended beyond its positive effects on patients but also the increased workload for retinal surgeons as these injections had to be given every month in order to maintain its efficacy. There were also far reaching consequences for healthcare services in some countries as reimbursement for this very expensive drug burned very large holes in the healthcare budget!

#### What conditions are treated with intravitreal injections?

The anti-VEGF drugs (Avastin & Lucentis) were initially used to treat wet AMD. However, its use has extended to many other retinal diseases which all have a common association; i.e. the blockade of VEGF would result in a positive impact on the disease. Aside from wet AMD, other diseases would include diabetic retinopathy, retinal vein occlusions (or eye stroke), neovascular glaucoma and even retinopathy of prematurity.

So far, I have mentioned only anti-VEGF drugs which have resulted in an exponential increase in the number of intravitreal injections in recent years. In actual fact, this technique of drug delivery is not at all new. We have been giving antibiotics (in cases of severe eye infections), anti-virals (in patients with AIDS) and steroids (for inflammatory eye diseases) for a long time. This mode of drug delivery allows for a good amount of drug getting to the intended target without having large amounts in the body (when taken orally or through a vein) and giving unwanted side effects.

#### The Future of intravitreal injections?

More drugs are being developed to treat these retinal diseases – some which can last longer and would therefore, reduce the frequency of injection. Other techniques are being researched i.e. different ways of storing and releasing the active drug in a gradual and controlled manner could mean even less frequent injections. Safe to say however, intravitreal injections will continue to play a big role in the treatment of retinal diseases in the near future or until the next "revolution". I leave you with a link to a nice video clip which describes the intravitreal injection process from a lay person's point of view.

<http://www.lec.com.my/youcare-eyecare/the-rise-of-intravitreal-injections>

For more information about this topic or other eye health subjects, please visit my blog at: [www.lec.com.my/youcare-eyecare](http://www.lec.com.my/youcare-eyecare). Or call Lee Eye Centre : 05-254 0095.

## Arts & Culture

### "Bah" for National Theatre Festival

"Bah" a Malay play, will be Perak's entry at the National Theatre Festival in Kuala Lumpur in October. The play, written by Jamsari Sali and directed by well-known Malay playwright, Rashidi Abdul Kharis, was staged at the auditorium of the Perak Arts and Culture Department in Ipoh recently.



The story revolves around a village community whose disbelief in the teachings of Islam creates tension amongst the villagers. God's anger is unleashed when a tsunami flattens the village killing all the protagonists.

Six plays from theatres around the country will be staged at the October festival. The last time a play from Perak was given such honour was when "Penunggu Puaka" made it to the 2001 festival.

"Twenty five personnel, including crew will be involved in the production," said Rashidi to Ipoh Echo. The production is jointly sponsored by the Perak Arts and Culture Department and the Perak Cultural Council, incorporating several theatre companies in the state. "The effort by the two entities bodes well for the future of Malay theatre in Perak," exclaimed Rashidi.

Present to watch the play that night were Dato' Zainol Fadzi Paharudin, Executive Councillor for Arts, Sports and Culture and Abdul Mutalib Rahman, the department's director.

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