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Dec 16, 2013 - Jan 15, 2014

PP 14252/10/2012(031136)

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ISSUE **180**

PERAK IN REVIEW **2013**

- Or What Lies Ahead for Ordinary Perakeans

by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

Year 2013 is about to come to a close. Before we welcome the New Year let us reflect upon what has occurred in our beloved state. Let us look at events, which I feel may have both positive and negative impacts on ordinary Perakeans, in general. When I mean ordinary Perakeans I refer to the Ahmads, Ah Chongs and Muthus and, possibly, the many foreigners who eke out an honest living without resorting to violence and deceit to make ends meet.

Continued on page 2



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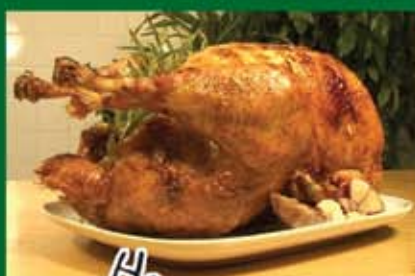


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Has 2013 been bountiful or one of missed opportunities or let-downs?

Perak may be the proverbial land of milk and honey to Indonesians, Bangladeshis, Indians and a horde of other nationalities whose affiliation and loyalty we are unable to ascertain, unless probed. But that is not the issue here. What I am trying to highlight is whether Year 2013 has been a bountiful year for Perakeans, as being repeatedly and proudly claimed by our political masters; or has it been one of missed opportunities and let-downs. Let us make an honest assessment without alluding to the numerous too-good-to-be true forecasts and innuendoes made by our overbearing and often delusional leaders from both sides of the political divide.

Election Anxiety

Year 2013 started with so much anxiety as Malaysians were literally in a voting mood, believing that the much-anticipated General Election, the 13th since 1955, would be called anytime. The waiting game went on for the next five months until the Prime Minister finally chose May 8 as the D-Day, the day when Malaysians use the ballot boxes to pick a new government. The delay had caused many to suffer from election fatigue, and I was no exception.

The political debacle of February 6, 2009 when the state government changed hands from Pakatan Rakyat to Barisan Nasional was still fresh in Ipohites' minds. It was no surprise that most went to the polling stations with a vengeance convinced that they could bring the much-touted change that had eluded them for over five decades. The Opposition, as expected, won the urban areas but lost the rural heartland where Malays predominate.

Outcome of General Elections

Some political heavyweights from the ruling coalition were made to eat humble pie. Among them were Umno's Dato' Hamidah Osman, Gerakan's Acting President Dato' Chan Ko Youn, MCA's comeback kid, Dato' Thong Fah Chong, former state assembly speaker R. Ganeson of MIC and current speaker SK Devamany also of MIC.

Democratic Action Party's stalwarts, M. Kulasegeran, cousins Ngeh Koo Ham and Ngo Kor Meng and former Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri Nizar Jamaluddin of PAS were returned with a larger majority.

Although Barisan Nasional lost the popular vote, it got to govern the state based on the controversial first-past-the-post electoral system where candidates with the highest number of votes are declared winners despite their winning numbers being inferior to their opponents contesting the same seats.

But over time Perakeans have managed to reconcile themselves to the inevitable and so did the majority of Ipohites. Whatever it is, Perakeans have to face reality, as nothing is permanent. Life has to go on and most moved on with the tide. "Better the devil you know than the angel you don't," said former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. He may have a point, as the policies of the Opposition are still vague and hazy.

Price Hikes

Having accepted their fate, Perakeans moved on but with some trepidation. Most were bracing for the worse, as news of price hikes were making the rounds. It did come eventually. Price of RON 95 and diesel went up by 20 sen effective midnight Tuesday, September 2.

"It's a subsidy rationalisation exercise aimed at reducing fiscal deficit providing a saving of RM1.1 billion for the Government," said the Prime Minister. But what is RM1.1 billion when the Auditor-General's Report 2012 revealed some very startling news. RM1.33 billion loss in Police assets and RM67 million spent by the Youth and Sports Ministry to host its 2012 Youth Day!

After petrol and diesel, the price of sugar came under the hammer. A cut in sugar subsidy caused the commodity to go up by 34 sen. Sugar is now sold at RM2.85 a kilogramme. There was, however, a funny side to this episode. The ruling coalition had to resort to damage control in the run-up to the Sg Limau bi-election when the Deputy Prime Minister said that raising the price of sugar would negate the spread of diabetes and had alluded to the late Menteri Besar of Kedah, Tan Sri Azizan Abdul Razak, as an example. The results of the bi-election did much to sober up the protagonists.

Goods and Services Tax

Goods and Services Tax (GST), a taboo subject before GE 13, featured prominently during Najib's October Budget 2014 speech. The much-feared GST will be implemented in April 2015, as the Government needs the money to finance its developments and to maintain a ballooning civil service, which many have come to regard as ineffectual.

A 6 per cent quantum will be imposed on goods and services once the consumption tax is underway. The tax, being incremental in nature, will rise as goods and services pass hands. Therefore, the price of an item at the source may increase many folds before it is finally sold to the consumer. Such is the making of GST that its impact would only be felt when the time comes. Presently, much is left to conjecture.



Electricity Tariffs Up

Beginning January 1, 2014 tariff for electricity will rise by 4.99 sen per kWh for usage above 300kWh per month. Hard hit will be middle-income households in Perak as they may have to fork out anything between RM40 to RM60 extra per month. Commercial rates too will be revised from the present 41.01 sen per kWh to 47.92 sen per kWh while industrial rates will be adjusted by 5.21 sen capping at 36.15 sen per kWh. According to the Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water, Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili, the increase in electricity tariff is to reduce energy subsidies. "It's also to reflect market prices to ensure greater efficiency," he added. But he said nothing about subsidies given to the 11 independent power plants operating in the country.



Assessment Rates Hike

There is little to cheer come 2014. A few days ago I received my annual assessment rate bill for my link-house in Bercham. It has gone up by RM10.80 sen. Rates for commercial and industrial buildings too have been revised without prior consultation with ratepayers.

When confronted with the cold facts during the recent sitting of the state assembly, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir denied knowledge of a hike and had told opposition lawmakers to refer to Ipoh City Council instead. He could not have been so naïve as to claim that revision of assessment rates is the prerogative of local councils when the burden of responsibility lies squarely with the state government.

Spiralling Prices

I do not expect hawkers and petty traders not to react to price increases, especially when prices of petrol, diesel, sugar and electricity go upwards. They are the most price-sensitive people on Mother Earth. What goes up will come down, so the saying goes. But when prices of goods and services go up they seldom come down.

My barometer to gauge spiralling prices and, to a lesser degree, inflation is my favourite *mee goreng* stall along Jalan Yang Kalsom. Early this year a plate of *mee goreng* at the stall cost RM3.80. It was RM4 a few months ago. Now it is priced at RM4.50. Prices of drinks too have gone up. A glass of fresh orange costs RM2 a few months back. Today it is RM2.50. Expect more surprises coming our way when the dreaded GST is in place.

At a time of rising costs and shrinking surplus, Malaysians are constantly reminded to tighten their belts while our leaders and their spouses think nothing of flying about in government jets at taxpayers' expense.

Soon, toll rates will be raised making it a double whammy of sorts with GST in the lead. I cannot think of a more gloomy scenario than this. Call me a doomsayer if you wish, but that is one bitter pill we all have to swallow.

Despite these very grim prophecies there are many economic activities taking place in Ipoh and major towns in Perak. The mushrooming of star-rated and budget hotels is proof that the state is ticking and the MB's claim that investments, by both foreigners and locals, are trickling in holds true.

Negative Perception

What could be the reasons behind this boom? Confidence and political stability are the driving forces. However, too much confidence could result in overproduction, as evidenced by the many empty shop and office lots found all over the city. The glut, if left unchecked, could have a debilitating impact on the state's economy.

Should the government intervene to halt the rot? Most are of the opinion that it should not. "Let market forces be the deciding factor," said an academician.

Poor Foresight and Bad Planning

The government, however, should play its role as an active facilitator of economic developments. But of late some very disturbing news has leaked out which could make us the laughing stock of the region.

The much-publicised Sultan Azlan Shah Airport, which was upgraded to a tune of RM42 million will be a non-starter, as the runway is currently being upgraded. This has affected the operability of Flying Fox Airways, which was due to take off on its maiden Ipoh-Medan flight on December 13 but was instructed to postpone the date, possibly by four months, for safety reasons (see page 11 for the full story). So much money and effort have gone to waste leaving many feeling flabbergasted, frustrated and disgusted. This is one of the many pitfalls the state should avoid, as it creates a negative perception among investors.

The Amanjaya bus terminal in Jelapang has been touted as being the best in this part of the country. But the terminal's locality and distance from downtown Ipoh makes it rather inaccessible to Ipohites. Again, good tax-payers' money has gone down the drain due to poor foresight and bad planning.

One other ticking time-bomb is escalating household debts and income disparity. Although the malaise affects the whole nation, the fact that Perak has a sizeable middle-income population, the outcome may be less than favourable. The government's promise of cash handouts will not lessen the problem.

Indelible Imprint

The proliferation of high-rise condominiums in Ipoh, on the other hand, can be attributed to one man. Peter Chan, the developer of Haven Lakeside Residence in Tambun, has left an indelible imprint on the property market in Perak. Love or loathe the guy, Peter is here to stay.

In the meantime, I am joining the outgoing mayor, Dato' Roshidi Hashim by taking a long deserving holiday in one remote corner of the world.

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Looks like we all have to work harder to make ends meet. Do we have an option?

IPOH **echo**

APPEALING FOR JUSTICE

From the Editor's Desk
by Fathol Zaman Bukhari

The establishment of an appeal board provides an avenue for the public to challenge decisions of local authorities, which they regard as lopsided

It never occurred to me, and I believe to many, that there is an appeal board formed for the express purpose of arbitrating on cases involving rates payers and the local authorities.

The Perak Appeal Board, formed in 1996 pursuant to Section 36 of the Local Government Act 1976, is the second in the country. Most states in the country have established such a board to resolve disputes between the public and the local authorities. The most active to date are the appeal boards of Penang (421 cases), Selangor (320 cases) and Perak (109 cases). Perlis has yet to register a single case.

The establishment of an appeal board provides an avenue for the public to challenge decisions of local authorities, which they regard as lopsided.

The appeal board shall consist of not more than 12 members and shall be presided by a serving or former judge or lawyer. The president of the Perak Appeal Board for the 2010-2013 Session is Dato' Shamsuriah Sulaiman, a well-known syariah lawyer and a former Perak Bar Committee President. Up to November 2013, she had heard and arbitrated over 53 cases. Presently, there are 12 cases at the hearing stage.

The majority of Shamsuriah's cases involve disputes between individuals and the local authorities over issues relating to the rejection of planning permission, objections to the development of lands and properties, alienation of lands, imposition of fines, etc. Bread and butter issues which could have a detrimental impact on citizens' quest for justice should the wrong decisions be made.

Here are two cases where Ipoh City Council (MBI) and Taiping Municipal Council (MPT) were the respondents. One concerns Lee Yew Seng whose application for planning permission was rejected without him being given the opportunity to present his side of the story. The board found that the decision by MBI was a breach of natural justice and proceeded to hear out the case in full. The appellant was allowed to continue with his project subject to conditions imposed by the council.

The second case concerns an application for the turning of a residential building into a food court at Taman Tasek in Taiping. MPT rejected the application on the grounds that there were objections from neighbouring owners. It was discovered at the appeal board hearing that only one occupier of the neighbouring lot objected. The appellant was never given a chance to present his case. Since there was a local plan in existence and the objector was someone who was not the owner of the neighbouring lot, the board found that MPT had "misdirected itself and had wrongly acted in constituting a hearing".

There are many cases which are of interest to Ipohites but the conduct of Ipoh City



Council over such matters leaves much to be desired. The proliferation of unfettered developments in Taman Canning is a case in point. Residents complained of owners renovating their properties beyond the scope of works approved. In spite of complaints made through numerous channels, the Council has adopted a *tidak apa* attitude and appears to condone the actions of these "rogue developers".

Over in Bercham a property owner is in the process of converting his newly acquired house into a swiflet hotel to harvest the birds' nests. Neighbours are up in arms over his insensitivity but are powerless to act, as he seems to be beyond reproach and has challenged residents to make a report. Should MBI, upon counselling, act in the guy's favour, appealing against the council's decision is the right way out.

A seminar to enlighten departmental staff regarding the working and conduct of an appeal board was held at the Kinta Riverfront Hotel on Monday, December 2. A number of papers were presented by experts conversant with the subject matter, including one by Dato' Shamsuriah Sulaiman.

To lend credence to the occasion, the Director-General of the Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia, Datuk Fadzil Hj Mohd Kadir, officiated at the opening of the one-day seminar.

Unfortunately, the forum was only for the privileged few. Had it been opened to the public it would have generated a lot more interest and provided for a better understanding of the rule of law, especially those related to local governments, which affect every Dollah, Ah Chong and Muthu.

In The Name Of My Father's Estate

Episode 24

by Peter Lee

When Mrs Patricia Lee (Lee Sr's first wife) arrived in Singapore, she wasted no time and went straight to ZNA Bank, Singapore to withdraw the S\$3 million from the joint account which she and her husband (Lee Sr) shared. While in the bank, the bank officer informed Mrs Patricia Lee that she could not withdraw alone as this account required two signatures. In addition, she was also informed that this account was at the moment frozen pending further clarification. Mrs Patricia Lee then asked the bank officer "Look here, this is my joint account with my husband. So, what kind of clarification do you need?" The bank officer replied, "I am sorry about this but our system shows that we have just received an email and also a phone call yesterday from a Malaysian lawyer claiming to represent your husband's wife in Malaysia. They have informed us of your husband's death and at the same time instructing us to freeze this account until they have obtained the Letter of Administration (L.A.)."

In a fit of anger, Mrs Patricia Lee said, "This is bloody ridiculous. Friends in Singapore have recently withdrawn the money in their joint bank accounts with their parents when their parents passed away without any problem. So, why can't I do the same or does the practice vary in different banks?" The officer then replied, "Madam, I am not sure about other banks but at the moment our system shows that you cannot withdraw." Mrs Patricia Lee then said, "Ok! I want to speak to your manager." In response, the bank officer said, "Madam, can you take a seat and wait for a moment while I speak to my manager about this matter."

After ten minutes, the officer came back and took her to see the bank manager. The manager then explained to Mrs Patricia Lee "Madam, I am sorry for this inconvenience but we are doing our best to solve this issue." Before the Manager could continue, Mrs Patricia Lee intervened and said, "This account has nothing to do with my husband's second wife. By the way, she was not legally married to my husband. So, she and her lawyer have no right whatsoever to freeze this account. The other thing is that the application for L.A. is only meant for assets in Malaysia, and I was told by my friends in Singapore that these types of accounts should be given to the survivor." Then the manager said, "Ok Ok! I understand your feelings but can you please let me finish explaining our position first?" Mrs Patricia Lee nodded and said, "Go ahead". The manager proceeded and explained, "Firstly, I am going to get clarification from my legal department as to whether this money can be released to you. We realise that the bank has a 'survivorship clause' which means that the survivor of the account can receive the money. But your case is a unique case where I have a lawyer from Malaysia representing your husband's second wife giving us instructions to freeze the account. For your information, I just received another reminder of this same instruction and this time telling us that they will take legal action against us if we release the money." Mrs Patricia Lee then responded, "Why can't you ignore their threats since you have the 'survivorship clause'?" The Manager then replied, "Can you give me a day and I will come back to you on this tomorrow?" To this Mrs Patricia Lee said, "I hope to receive your good news or else I myself will be taking legal action against the bank."

To be continued...

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EYE HEALTH – FEAST FOR THE EYES

Ipoh Echo's EYE HEALTH series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. GILL talking to us about foods that help promote eye health.

As we approach the year-end festive season with Christmas, followed by the New Year and Chinese New Year, we are once again presented with numerous opportunities for indulging in our favourite foods. Nothing wrong with some generous eating, but do think about incorporating some of these ingredients into your festive dishes. They are not only delicious, but promote good eye health at the same time!

Green Leafy Vegetables

We all know that carrots, which are full of beta-carotene, are good for the eyes. Dark green, leafy vegetables are equally good for the eyes as they are loaded with lutein and zeaxanthin; both of which are antioxidants that help lower the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts. In the *Age Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS)* of 4757 patients, it showed that those who had a higher intake of lutein with zeaxanthin in their diet had less incidence of *Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)*. These carotenoids keep the eyes safe from oxidative stress especially from the exposure to blue light (high energy photons) which damages the eyes.

Berries and Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits and berries are packed with vitamin C which helps in keeping the lenses in our eyes clear and while also helping in reducing the effects of degeneration of the macula. Citrus foods include oranges, grapefruit, lemons, some limes and some tangerines. Of course, there are also fruits like papaya and kiwi fruit that are rich in vitamin C too. Berries such as blueberries, cranberries, bilberries and strawberries contain powerful antioxidants which include Vitamin C, Vitamin A and Vitamin E. They help reduce damage from free radicals that injure the cells in our eyes.

Seeds and Nuts

Seeds and nuts are full of nutrients like omega-3 fats, zinc, niacin and vitamin E, which help boost eye health, reduce your risk of cataracts and macular degeneration.

Fatty Fish

Fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel, anchovies and cod have high amounts of DHA (*Docosahexaenoic Acid*), which is a fatty acid found in your retina. Studies done in patients with dry eyes have shown that they have reduced levels of DHA in their retina (nerve of the eye). DHA is also important in the development of the eyes and nerves in a child.

Eggs

Surprised? This food, which is a basic ingredient in many types of desserts and cakes, has had its fair share of bad press because of its supposed high cholesterol content. But did you know that the yolk of the egg is a prime source of lutein and zeaxanthin, including zinc, which helps reduce your risk of macular degeneration? So, we can now say, "An egg a day keeps the eye doctor away!"

In a nutshell, it is important to get a good balanced diet that includes sufficient fresh fruits and vegetables. However, if you feel that your diet lacks adequate vitamins and minerals, you might want to consider taking a supplement for general eye health when:

- your regular diet does not include enough fresh fruit and vegetables
- it is hard to obtain or prepare fresh fruit and vegetables
- you have been told to take a vitamin supplement by your eye doctor.

For more information, please call Gill Eye Specialist Centre at Hospital Fatimah (05 545 5582) or email gilleyeccentre@dr.com.



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Ipo Echo Sdn Bhd
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Kuala Kangsar, not just another royal town

Kuala Kangsar, affectionately called KK is home to around 40,000 people. It is sometimes difficult to appreciate your hometown especially when you have lived there all your life. Often, it is the visitors and tourists who see an area differently from the person who has spent many years there.

Why Kuala Kangsar?

KK has much history, culture and many activities. For the people who call KK home, the area between the clock tower and the Perak River, commonly known as Lembah, is the centre of activity.

What do you miss most when you're away?

Going to Lembah and enjoying the six things KK is famous for; *popiah basah* (spring rolls), *cendol* (a type of dessert), *laksa KK* (an authentic *laksa KK* has noodles which are hand-made from rice flour), *pasembor* (Indian salad), and any dish with durian, such as *tempoyak* (fermented durian) and also *murtabak* Pa' Mat Pendek.

What's the first thing you do when you return?

Pa' Mat Pendek's *murtabaks*. He can be found selling his generous portions of *murtabak* – *roti canai* filled with an egg, red onion and chicken or beef mixture, at all the *pasar malams* in KK.

Where's the best place to stay?

Although KK has a range of budget hotels, most visitors find the rest house, within walking distance of Lembah, a convenient base.

Where would you meet friends for a coffee and chat?

The Lembah, for its food, and the fantastic views of the jungle greenery with the Perak river flowing towards the coast. Kids can play on the playground amenities whilst waiting for their food, but you must keep an eye on them and tell them not to venture too close to the river banks. The currents can be deceiving.

In town, the Yut Loy, a typical coffee-shop which whips up Hainanese food, is a fantastic place for the dishes which have stood the test of time. Get there early because the *pau* (steamed buns) sell out quickly.

Where are your favourite places for lunch?

The Lembah has several stalls to cater for a variety of tastes. The Yut Loy for nostalgia and home-cooked Hainanese cuisine and western favourites like beef steak or chicken chop, always served with crinkle cut fries and thick brown gravy.

The town is easily explored on foot and many restaurants are available. A good guide to popularity and quality, are the long queues at lunchtime.

And for dinner?

The *pasar malam* is perfect to see the food KK residents have to offer the first-time visitor and long-time resident. They are excellent value for money. The *pasar malams* are located at different locations around the town, so just ask around to find out where they are.

Where would you send a first-time visitor?

The Clock Tower is the perfect starting point to discover KK. In the great flood of 1926, the river waters rose and reached the top of this clock tower. The nearby school, Sekolah Menengah Raja Perempuan Kalsum has two main sporting areas – the hockey field, which is connected by a series of steps to the netball area. Each step records the height of flood waters in successive floods, when the Perak river broke its banks and engulfed the town.

The town is dripping with history, from architecture to artifacts. The royal palace with its art-deco design. The pillars and staircases of the school buildings of KK's more famous schools, which reflect its colonial past. The older royal palaces made of wood, the Ubaidiah mosque with its Moorish design and the sprinkling of traditional houses dotted in and around KK and Sayong, on the opposite side of the Perak river, to Lembah.

Take a boat ride across the river to Sayong, and walk around a traditional Malay village. You can see the fishermen mending their nets, housewives gossiping as they make their *kuih* and children diving off the jetty into the river. Beware! Sungai Perak is reputed to demand a sacrifice every five years.

People flock to Lembah for traditional wares and kitchen implements such as pounders and moulds for *kuih* and local cakes. There are winnowing trays, graters and knives ranging from *kris* to *parangs*.

The swimming pool near the Rest House, has, over the past two years, become quite an attraction. The Rest House is less than a 15-minute walk from many of KK's major attractions. In the morning and late afternoon, the recreational parks are teeming with people jogging or doing Tai Chi. Families like to take their children out for a walk and perhaps a bite to eat at Lembah, a short walk away.

As one walks along the path, away from the town, the visitor can marvel at Raja Mazwin's house, the Sultan Azlan Shah gallery, the administrative offices of Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri (SUK), the royal mausoleum, the Ubaidiah mosque, the palace and the old royal palace, Istana Kenangan, made entirely of wood.

Away from the river and heading inland, one can see the first rubber tree planted in Malaya and then proceed towards the two boys' schools, which has a high level of academic excellence – The Clifford School and the Malay College.

The girls' school with outstanding achievement is the Sekolah Menengah Raja Perempuan Kalsum, which is located near the Clock Tower.

What would you tell them to avoid?

At night, avoid Jalan Bukit Chandan, the road from the rest house leading to the palace, as it is rather eerie, and visitors are advised not to travel alone.

Public transport or taxi?

There is a taxi stand near the bus station. The taxi ranks are busy during the day but at night, are converted into food stalls. The bus station is a hub for travel with express buses and hop-on, hop-off buses operating.

Am I safe walking around KK?

Most locals claim that KK is relatively safe. As in every town, one should exercise vigilance and be streetwise. Keep handbags close to the body, and walk along the kerb.

What should I take home?

Labu sayong (the clay vases), *parang* and *kris* – all available from Lembah. The local fruits, if it is the fruit season.

And if I've only time for one shop?

Lembah.



A team effort by
Mariam Mokhtar, Mrs Y. Engga & Ms Fossil

Dr Saravana.K

Consultant Physician,
Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist

Digestive Health

What is constipation?

Constipation is caused by infrequent bowel movements or difficult passage of stools. What's considered normal frequency for bowel movements varies widely. In general, however, you're probably experiencing constipation if you pass fewer than three stools a week, and your stools are hard and dry. Constipation most commonly occurs when waste or stool moves too slowly through the digestive tract, causing it to become hard and dry.

Normally, the waste products of digestion (stool) are propelled through your intestines by muscle contractions. In the large intestine (colon), most of the water and salt in this waste mixture are reabsorbed because they're essential for many of your body's functions. However, when there is not enough fluid or fibre-rich food in your diet — or if the colon's muscle contractions are slow — the stool hardens, dries and passes through your colon too slowly. This is the root cause of constipation. You may also experience constipation if the muscles you use to move your bowels aren't properly coordinated.

A number of factors can cause an intestinal slowdown, including:

- Inadequate amounts of fluid intake and fibre in diet
- Ignoring the urge or delaying until later
- Lack of physical activity
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Changes in lifestyle or routine, including pregnancy, aging and travel
- Illness
- Frequent use or misuse of laxatives
- Specific diseases, such as stroke, diabetes, thyroid disease and Parkinson's disease
- Problems with the colon and rectum, such as intestinal obstruction or diverticulosis
- Certain medications
- Hormonal disturbances, such as an underactive thyroid gland
- Anal fissures and haemorrhoids, producing a spasm of the anal sphincter muscle
- Loss of body salts through vomiting or diarrhoea
- Injuries to the spinal cord, which can affect the nerves that lead to and from the intestine.

Fortunately, most cases of constipation are temporary. Simple lifestyle changes, such as getting more exercise, drinking more fluids and eating a high-fibre diet, can go a long way toward alleviating constipation. Constipation may also be treated with over-the-counter laxatives. Constipation may signal more-serious medical conditions, such as colorectal cancer, hormonal disturbances or autoimmune diseases.

When to see a doctor?

- Unexplained onset of constipation or change in bowel habits
- Symptoms are severe and last longer than three weeks
- Bowel movements occurring more than three days apart, despite corrective changes in diet or exercise
- Intense abdominal pain
- Blood in your stool
- Constipation that alternates with diarrhoea
- Rectal pain
- Thin, pencil-like stools
- Unexplained weight loss, fever, lethargy

Your doctor or nurse will decide which tests you should have based on your age, other symptoms, and individual situation.

- There are lots of tests, but you may not need any.
- Rectal exam – Your doctor will look at the outside of your anus. He or she will also use a finger to feel inside the opening.
- Colonoscopy – For this test, the doctor puts a thin tube into your anus. Then, he or she threads the tube into your large intestine. The large intestine is also called the colon. The tube has a camera attached to it, so the doctor can look inside your intestine. During these tests, the doctor can also take samples of tissue to look at under a microscope.

For more information call Saravana.K Gastroenterologist and Liver Specialist Clinic at Hospital Fatimah 05-5487181 or email gastrosara@gmail.com.

MUSINGS ON FOOD



By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen

Pics by Caroline Wong

SeeFoon hankers after Italian and finds it at Marianis



Ever since Deano and his wife sold Italia Mia in the Sunway area, my hankering for tastes and aromas Italian has gone largely unsatisfied. That trattoria ambiance, with Mama in the kitchen and Papa taking the orders and fussing around to make sure that your meal is okay, homemade pasta served al dente, the smell of garlic and virgin olive oil permeating the room has remained nostalgic in my gustatory memory banks for quite a while.

Now all that has changed with the arrival of **Marianis**. Located in the De Garden shopping and restaurant complex, it occupies the space where Pappa Rich used to be, just below Daorae the Korean restaurant. Proprietor Dato' Dr Wenddi Chong and her partner Kim Goo have gone to great lengths to fit out the restaurant tastefully. A bar at the entrance is ideal for drinks as you wait for a table while the kitchen boasts its own wood-fired oven for pizzas. They have even gone to the extent of having their own private restroom for their clients so that one need not traipse the long distance to the public toilets and most likely to face the inevitable stench and mess commonly found here in Malaysia.

Kim who designs the menus with the Chef, comes from a strong Food and Beverage background and manages the restaurant. One evening when I was there, he came over and offered me a Scotch, a Tarans Blended Scotch 18 years old. Being a keen Scotch drinker and never having tried this particular brand, I accepted with alacrity and found it mellow and smooth – my kind of liquid gold. According to Kim, he is the only person serving this particular brand of Scotch in Ipoh and one that I would definitely recommend sampling.

The menu is extensive with ample selections in each of the usual categories of starters, pastas, meats, fish and desserts and of course pizzas from their wood-fired oven.

For starters, their **Carpaccio Con Rucola E Grana** which is thin slices of raw beef on a bed of rocket salad with lemon and extra virgin olive oil dressing topped with parmesan cheese flakes, is well worth trying if one has no aversion to eating raw beef. The same goes for their **Carpaccio Di Salmone** which is thinly sliced smoked salmon with a tangy lemon dressing.

This was shortly followed by a pasta dish and on this particular occasion we had the **Spaghetti Aglio Olio Peperoncino**, which is spaghetti with garlic, extra virgin olive oil and fresh chilli.

What is worth noting on their menu is the admonition on the menu for pasta which stated that if you wish to have your pasta well cooked to please inform the chef as they cook their pasta 'Al Dente' which means still resilient to the bite. However, I was disappointed on this particular evening as the pasta arrived well overcooked! On questioning Kim, he explained that the local taste was for well cooked pasta and his chefs were accommodating local tastes! So a word of advice. If you wish to have your pasta 'al dente' stress to the person taking your order that you will return it if it's overcooked!

I was well rewarded on another occasion when I returned to taste their 'pièce de résistance' one of Marianis' specials of the month. This was an irresistible **Aragosta All'Marianis** a whole lobster, served with a choice of Alio Olio (extra virgin olive oil and garlic) or **Sorpasso** which is a spicy sauce. This time I was emphatic about the pasta being 'al dente' and sure enough it arrived, the grilled lobster aroma wafting ahead, a juicy whole lobster of around 700-800 gms, split in two, sitting on top of spaghetti that was garlicky, spicy (I chose the Sorpasso) and perfectly 'al dente'. It was a treat worth the RM138 per portion price and must be pre-ordered as they have a limited number of lobsters. For those who might find this price a bit steep, the same pasta with fresh grilled seafood is equally good.

A dish I would recommend especially for the vegetarians is their **Ravioli Crema Di Spinachi**, the Italian 'wonton' of homemade pasta filled with spinach, mushrooms, white truffle oil and cheese flakes. Again, if you insist on al dente, it will be so but I suspect that a lot of our Ipohite taste buds prefer the softer version.

The **Cannelloni Al Funghi E Parmigiano Con Tartufo** is another vegetarian delight and a rich meal in itself. These are crepes with creamy mushrooms and parmesan cheese baked with mushroom sauce and drizzled with truffle oil.

For fishterians, I can recommend the **Trancia Di Cod**, a grilled fillet of cod served with sun-dried tomato sauce and for the carnivores, the **Stinco D'Agnello Al Forno** which is lamb shank slow roasted in red wine and herbs. This was juicy and fall-off-the-bone tender, the sauce lending a smooth mouthfeel to each morsel.

As I said at the beginning of this review, the menu at Marianis is extensive with items to suit most taste buds and pockets. And I haven't even mentioned their pizzas and their Focaccias!

There is a choice of 18 pizzas and one **Calzone** (a folded over pizza like a huge curry puff) ranging from the vegetarian ones with herbs, cheese and tomatoes to the carnivore's favourites with beef, turkey ham, seafoods, a selection to suit every palate. Their selection of homemade **Focaccia** (a type of flat Italian bread made with yeast and olive oil and flavoured with herbs) makes for excellent Italian sandwiches. The selection of vegetarian, Tuna fish, grilled chicken, smoked salmon and beef burger makes for a difficult choice although the **Focaccia burger** which I sampled was scrumptious.

For dessert, the one item that is a 'must

try' is their **Panna Cotta Alle Noci E Miele**, their homemade cream pudding served with walnut and honey sauce. This was velvety smooth, the pudding gliding like silk on the way down the gullet with the crunchy walnuts lending texture to the mouth feel.

I am happy that Marianis is here to stay and not another half-year wonder that we've seen in past years. Ipoh needs more dining outlets for the gourmet experience and I hope that the quality of their food remains consistent. So Kim, as General Manager and Executive Chef Sonny Teh, please keep giving us Ipohites something to rave about.

At the time this goes to print, Marianis will be awarded a Class A recognition by MBI which is quite an accolade considering that the restaurant has only been open for four months.

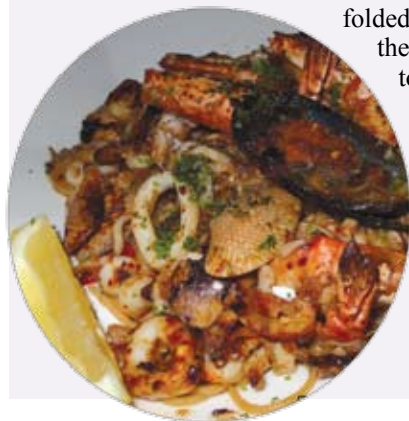
Recommendations:

- **Carpaccio Di Salmone** with lemon dressing (smoked salmon) – RM26
- **Carpaccio Con Rucola E Grana** (Raw beef tenderloin on rocket salad) – RM28
- **Ravioli Crema Di Spinaci** (Spinach Ravioli) — RM38
- **Cannelloni Al Funghi E Parmigiano con Tartufo** (Mushrooms Crepes) – RM32
- **Pizzas** – RM18-35
- **Focaccia** – RM18-28
- **Trancia Di Cod** – RM48
- **Stinco D'Agnello Al Forno** (Lamb shank) – RM48
- **Spaghetti Sorpasso** (Spicy spaghetti with fresh grilled seafood) – RM48
- **Aragosta All'Marianis** (Whole lobster with garlic and olive oil or Spicy) – RM138
- **Panna Cotta Alle Noci E Miele** (Cream pudding with walnuts and honey) – RM12

Marianis will be offering a special Christmas and New Year's menu. Priced at RM158* per person, the 4-course meal includes a glass of sparkling Prosecco Vetrano. Call them for a preview.

Marianis Italian Ristorante (Pork free)

GF 11,12,13 &13A DeGarden,
#3 Persiaran Medan Ipoh, Medan Ipoh.
Tel: 05 548 6505; Kim Goo: 014 212 9211
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Economy

The Economic Reality of Malaysia Today

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, affectionately known as Ku Li, was in town in November as the guest of the Perak Academy to present a speech on the topic 'The Economic Reality of Malaysia Today'.

Tengku Razaleigh was a former Finance Minister of Malaysia, former Chairman of the World Bank, ADB and Islamic Development Bank and a founding Chairman and CEO of Petronas hence his talks at Perak Academy are always well and warmly attended.

Thanking the Academy for giving him another opportunity to delve into the current state of the economy, Ku Li added that the timing was most appropriate especially so soon after the 2014 budget presentation in October.

Noting that the 2014 budget projected that GDP growth rate next year will likely be around 4.5 to 5 per cent, he nevertheless stressed that the figure had remained in that range for the past budgets since 2000 adding that the figures concealed some forewarnings that are not highlighted.

He noted that the Najib government has promised to bring the budget into balance by 2020 but also added that the budget deficits had remained in negative territory for over twenty years.

He stated that the "federal deficit has been sustained by borrowings that are now reaching close to the statutory debt ceiling of 55 per cent of GDP". In fact, the federal debt levels in absolute terms doubled. Coupled with private debt currently at 83 per cent of GDP the total debt exposure which will have to be carried over into the next generation will now approach 140 per cent of GDP at current prices by the end of the year.

While assuring that this is not yet a worrying figure compared to the likes of Greece recently and Ireland previously, he gradually pointed out the issues currently



ailing the economy.

His comprehensive speech touched on a whole spectrum of issues from GST and subsidies, development expenditures to transparency and accountability and the Auditor General's report concerning wastage, unaccountable losses and sheer incompetence.

He also addressed the current full circle scenario of inflation and the rising cost of living in relation to increased household debt. Noting the low unemployment rate in the country he nevertheless highlighted the need to create employment for quality and high income jobs for new entrants into the labour force, who are gaining higher post-secondary and tertiary qualifications instead of the low paying jobs that are now being filled by foreign workers in the plantations, construction and assembly-based manufacturing.

The solution to all these issues will require new and bold ideas that need to be implemented over the next five to ten years with supporting institutional reforms to generate maximum impact and to ensure success. Failing to do so would have a downside which meant being left behind once again against South Korea, who in the '60s were behind us but is now three times more in terms of per capita income.

Similarly, neighbours Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia are now proceeding on their reform path. If we do not take rapid and serious action, they may surge ahead of us.

His solution is the proposal of the *Amanah Plan*, an economic plan that will ensure Malaysia's future economic growth is accompanied by an equitable development of the nation's wealth and prosperity; one that guarantees that all segments of the Malaysian society have a stake in the economy.

Ku Li presented this plan during the official launch of the Economic Roundtable sponsored by the Mahkota Foundation earlier in September.

The *Amanah Plan* involves four strategic components. These are an Accelerated Infrastructure Development (AID) Strategy, a Human Capital Development (HCD) Strategy, an Agriculture and Industry (AI) Growth Strategy, and a Comprehensive Islamic Financial (CIF) Strategy to complement the on-going implementation of the Financial Sector Master Plan and proposes that the Public-Private Partnership model (PPP) be adopted as a means to provide critical infrastructure service delivery.

Ku Li closed with the reminder that as an economy and society we cannot afford the luxury of idly gazing at our political navels. The people expect bold changes, not political slogans and myths about our development experience that do not hold up to facts.

We must renew our resolve to build a united and prosperous nation through commitment to fundamental reform of our policies and the institutions that support them to restore the people's trust in the government and provide a secure feeling about Malaysia's future.

The full text of Tengku Razaleigh's speeches may be viewed on his website tengkurazaleighhamzah.com.

JAG

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.

Commendation for Police at Polo Ground

Polo Ground in Ipoh, is a popular park where many people, irrespective of race, age or religion, go for early morning exercise. This can be easily seen by anyone who passes by the park daily. Among the exercises which involves several groups are: Shaolin Qigong, tai chi, line dancing, full body stressing and many others.

Sometime ago many unfortunate incidents have happened. Car windows were smashed and valuable items stolen. A group of young motorcyclists were seen inside the park compound and gathered at an area where street lights were not fully functioning.

Joggers at their normal walk when reaching the dark spot would not dare walk past this group of boys and girls. They were then forced to turn back. This created fear and a sense of insecurity amongst the innocent people.

However, two police personnel (Corporal Chan and Constable Ahmad) were recently assigned and posted at the Polo Ground *pondok*. These two officers really performed their duties without fear or favour.

They would confront any group of young motorcyclists with their partners who drove their vehicles beyond the restricted area to follow them back to the *pondok*. Checked all their identification cards, driving licences, gave them some counselling with a warning, before releasing them. Their strict and firm actions had discouraged the illegal gatherings very much and have at least, reduced them tremendously.

Now I can actually hear the people in Polo Ground singing praises for the two police personnel and sincerely wish that their good deeds to be recognised and taken note by the higher authority. This will also set as a good example for other law enforcement officers to follow in order to give everyone the confidence and peace of mind.

Robert Chai



News

YMCA at Lahat Road?

Ipoites have grown up with the notion that the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Ipoh, which was originally sited at the old Lido Cinema, is located along Jalan Raja Musa Aziz, a stone's throw away from the iconic D.R. Seenivasagam Park.

But how many are aware that there is another YMCA at Jalan Lahat, opposite the Anglo-Chinese School? The Lahat Road YMCA celebrated its 103rd Anniversary recently with a dinner at the Heritage Hotel, Ipoh.

President, Mr Leong Yew Kee, gave a review of the association's activities since its inception in 1910. According to records, the Lahat Road YMCA was founded by Rev. William E. Horley and a certain Rev. Lau Yip Heng to complement the one at Jalan Raja Musa Aziz, which then catered mainly for the English-speaking crowd and the *mat saleh* or foreigners.

From a shop lot, the Lahat Road YMCA eventually moved to a plot of land in Pusing where members operated a holiday campsite in the '80s. However, for reasons of accessibility, the committee decided to relocate back to the city in 2012.

Its new premise, a 3-storey shop lot along Jalan Hussein Nordin opposite the Perak Stadium, is presently under renovation. The building will have a large multi-purpose hall and several function rooms. Activities for both young and old will be incorporated in its expansion programme.

With over 200 members, guests and friends in attendance, the night's event was made more meaningful with the welcoming of Christmas, as well as the announcement of the association's homecoming.

Among those who graced the occasion were Dato' Daniel Tay, Dato' Yeoh Beng San, Datin Rohsee Yap, Datin Liew Whye Hone, Mrs Ng Yok Hing and members of the Silver State Y Service Club and the Y's Men's Club of Ipoh.

The crowd stayed on after dinner singing Christmas carols and jingled late into the night.

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Ipoh City Council's Actions

Ipoh City Council (MBI) has taken heed of issues raised by readers in Ipoh Echo. Here are the Council's responses to two very relevant complaints:

Ipoh Echo Issue 176 – "Datuk Bandar Failure" by Jerry Francis

The Council wishes to thank the writer for highlighting the reasons behind the mayor's failure. It takes cognisance of the recommendations made and will endeavour, herein, to improve rubbish collection. By the same token, the Council hopes that residents will be more conscientious of their surroundings and the need to keep them clean. They should refrain from littering indiscriminately and should work hand in glove with the Council to keep the city clean.

Ipoh Echo Issue 177 – "Leaning Tower" by Baljit Singh Gill

The Council has taken measures to straighten the 'leaning' lamp post. It's no longer a threat to passers-by. Thank you, Baljit Singh for your warning.

Ed

Christmas Decorations with Heart at PHI

Pantai Hospital Ipoh's Christmas decor this time round is unique in the sense that all the material used was recycled. Especially in these 'expensive' and 'hard' times, cost cutting measures can be taken without sacrificing aesthetics.

The hospital team headed by Mr Ganesan Satimuti, Biomedical Engineer, said that many people discard 'stuff' without any thought to reuse. He said, "many companies and organizations have downplayed decorations during their austerity drives. However, the festive season can be just as beautiful and 'lavish' when one dedicates time and effort to the task".

The tableau located at the front entrance to the hospital lobby was all produced from the creativity, commitment and dedication of the staff. Onlookers and children were enraptured by the display especially when they realised that all the material used were recycled items.

Pantai Hospital Chief Operating Officer Ms Kelen Leong said that Christmas is all about the spirit of giving and sharing. "Joy and beauty need not be lavish and when made with love and commitment from the heart, the effect is multiplied a hundredfold."



Upcoming Events

The Depressed Cake Shop Arrives In Ipoh

The city of Ipoh is about to go grey as the Malaysian chapter of *The Depressed Cake Shop* – a concept originally created in the United Kingdom to generate awareness and encourage discussion about mental health issues – sets up shop in January next year.

The Ipoh Depressed Cake Shop will roll into town on Sunday January 12, 2014 at *Burps & Giggles* on Jalan Sultan Yussuf, with grey-coloured cakes, confections and sweet treats going on sale to the general public. This will be the second *Depressed Cake Shop* to open in Malaysia, following its extremely successful September 2013 debut in Kuala Lumpur, during which a total of RM10,500 was raised over the course of a two-day bake sale, which later rose to RM18,000 with the addition of several cash donations.

The bake sale's goal is to end discrimination and prejudice against those living with mental health issues, as well as challenging damaging stigmas and labels attached to mental illness.



"This quirky grey pop-up cake shop provides an informal, non threatening way to bring to light mental health issues," said Datin Sabrinah Morad, who first brought the concept of *The Depressed Cake Shop* to Malaysia. "Depression is more common than people realise, and it's an illness that can be treated with medical help. I hope those affected by mental illness are able to talk about it without shame or embarrassment."

The Ipoh Depressed Cake Shop will once again be run by Datin Sabrinah, who organised the Depressed Cake Shop's Malaysian debut in Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with new committee members and friends Susan Gill,

Maria Lee and Wan Jan Li, dedicated Ipohites seeking to help gather support from keen bakers.

"We're looking to build on the success of The KL 2 Depressed Cake Shop and to truly raise nationwide awareness," were Sabrinah's words. "I thought the concept should travel beyond KL, and Ipoh seemed like an obvious choice, not just due to its proximity to KL, but because of Tanjung Rambutan, a well-known mental institute and perhaps even the first to ever be established in both Ipoh and Malaysia... And with Ipoh being a prominent landmark on the foodie trail, I guessed there would be plenty of enthusiastic bakers and cake lovers!"



Sweet-toothed visitors can even look forward to tasting cakes baked specially for the occasion by Datin Julie Song, the celebrated chef and restaurateur of *Indulgence Restaurant & Living* and *Burps & Giggles*. "Datin Julie has been so enthusiastic and supportive of our charity and has generously given us the space to host our bake sale, besides pledging to make some gloriously grey cakes of her own. Rachel Yeoh, her manager at *Burps & Giggles*, has also been tireless in her support, so we are very grateful to both of them."

Those who choose to contribute grey cakes of their own have the option of entering a competition for the most creative and original Depressed Cake, at a price of RM10 per entry (*Burps & Giggles* is already off to a running start, having pledged to donate 50 mini-cakes for the contest). Children at the bake sale can also take part in the 'Paint a Sad Face' art skills competition, with great prizes to be won for both contests.

All proceeds from the bake sale and contest entry fees will go to the *Perak Palliative Care Society* (PPCS) and the *Ipoh Befrienders*: two organisations that work closely with Malaysians affected by depression and mental health issues on a regular basis.

For more information about *The Ipoh Depressed Cake Shop*, visit facebook.com/IpohDepressedCakeShop.

Strategies for Parenting Children with Special Needs

The news that you and your partner are soon going to be parents creates a lot of excitement. You both look forward to the moment joyfully, and make a lot of choices to ensure everything goes well and you have a healthy happy baby.

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief, when your little bundle of joy arrives, complete with ten fingers, ten toes, a beautiful angelic face and a happy smile.

The initial joy and happiness soon gives way to worry and apprehension as you slowly discover that all is not well with your little one. As your child grows, doctors use medical jargon to describe your child's condition, but the word that sticks out the most is "special needs"!

Joy soon turns to pain, dread, anguish, guilt and an array of other negative emotions as you question where you went wrong and why this is all happening. Understanding that it is not your fault is perhaps the first and most important thing that needs to be addressed, so that you can move on to live a happy and fulfilling life in spite of having to deal and cope with a child with special needs.

Now help is at hand in Ipoh with an upcoming workshop entitled *Strategies for Parenting Children with Special Needs*. Designed to help parents come to terms with their situation through a journey of healing and renewed self-worth, this workshop will provide a much needed respite and help these parents realise that they too need help. Parents will be introduced to a range of options for alleviating stress, dealing with guilt and functioning more effectively in their lives while coping with their special needs child.

Some of the topics covered in the workshop would include:

- The emotional impact of having to cope with a special needs child
- Various methods of healing
- Two parents sharing their personal experiences
- A laughter therapy session

The workshop is designed to help you learn how to live with a special needs child without sacrificing your own personal needs. Parents will learn how to use EFT or *Emotional Freedom Technique* to release



blockages within the energy system of a person, both for themselves as well as for their special needs child.

EFT is a wonderful tool that can be used on yourself and your family to change life for the better. Dr Shan, a local paediatrician who works tirelessly with special needs children and their parents is a passionate advocate of this technique and it is being brought to Ipoh by Jaz Goven an EFT teacher and long-standing practitioner who is flying in specially for the occasion.

Date: **Sunday 22 December**; Time: 10am to 4pm
 Cost: RM60 (including morning, afternoon teas and lunch)
 Venue: 18A Jalan Pasar, Bandar Tambun
 Enquiries: Jaz Goven **0112 369 2781** or Anne Huxtable **012 552 9233**
 Presenters: Dr Shan Narayanan (Paediatrician)
 Jaz Goven (EFT practitioner and trainer)
 Anne Huxtable (sound healer, parent of child with special needs)
 Priya (parent of child with special needs)
 Jeya Jeyaratnam (laughter therapist)
 Jesbeer Kaur (translator into Malay)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements must be sent by fax: **05-2552181**; or email: announcements@ipohecho.com.my, by the 9th or 23rd 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.

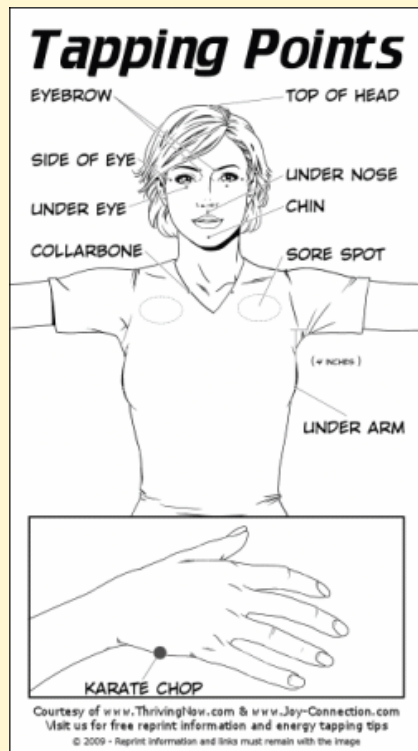
Musical presentation entitled, 'I Want to Tell a Story' organised by Ipoh Christian Chapel, Saturday **December 28**, 8.15pm at 72 Jalan Raja Perempuan Mazwin, Taman Rishah, Ipoh. Admission is free. For further details, contact Mr Chan **019 573 3020** or Mr Low **016 566 9945**. For non-muslims only.

School of Magic Dance Drama & 2013 Year-End Countdown Party organised by d'Artiz Streetdance Studio, Tuesday **December 31**, 8.30pm till late night at MH Hotel Grand Ballroom, Ipoh.

English Language Communication Skills Training Course by Perak Women for Women Society (PWW) **beginning January 2014**. This 3-month course is tailored made for women wishing to improve their command of written and spoken English in order to secure better employment and business opportunities. The course, funded by CIMB Foundation, is free and will be held on Saturdays between 9am to 1pm. Closing date: **Monday December 30**. To apply call PWW at **05 546 9715**.

The Depressed Cake Shop arrives in Ipoh, January 12 (1 day only) at *Burps & Giggles*, 93 & 95 Jalan Sultan Yussuf, Ipoh. A bake sale aiming to raise awareness surrounding mental health issues. (*More about this event on page 14.*)

Business Integrity Seminar for Christian Business Owners/Leaders organised by FCCI Ipoh Chapter, Saturday **January 18**, 2014, 2pm to 5pm, Elim Sport Complex (Elim Gospel Hall), 6 Jalan Chung Thye Phin. Entry by ticket @ RM10. Limited seats. For tickets and enquiries, contact: Anthony **016 557 8889** or Doris **019 556 9510**.



Help the Depressed, Not Taunt Them



My Say
By Jerry Francis

Thank goodness everything ended well. The 12-year-old girl S. Mahalachime had recovered from her bid to take her life, and had been given her MyKad which was the root cause for the attempted suicide.

Are we to be just content with the happy ending? Certainly, there is something we can learn from this near tragic episode. There are various versions of her plight, but it is futile to ascertain who was right or wrong. We should instead examine how a minor had been affected to the extent of her wanting to take her life and how society can help to prevent such cases in future.

According to psychiatrists the causes of teenage suicide, which is reported to be on the increase in the country, can be difficult to pinpoint and may involve several factors. Teens go through a vulnerable period at this stage in their lives. Among the major causes is bully-related suicide. It can be connected to any type of bullying, including physical bullying, emotional bullying, cyber bullying and sexting – or circulating suggestive or nude photos or messages about a person. No matter how small or big their problems, their troubles may feel unbearable or overwhelming.

Studies have shown that noticeable changes in behaviour, such as withdrawal from friends and family or violent and aggressive behaviour, are among the many signs of potential teen suicide, but parents and mental healthcare providers also need to understand the causes of suicide in teens for effective prevention.

It is likely that Mahalachime was suffering from emotional bullying as she was taunted by friends following her failure to get her MyKad approved. She has a birth certificate and was issued with MyKid. Her mother and her had gone to the National Registration Department merely to convert the MyKid to MyKad.

Yet, the NRD had delayed issuing her MyKad for over two months due to a certain technicality in her birth certificate. As a result, she could not register in a school and her hope to acquire a secondary education and be a teacher one day, seemed to her to have shattered.

Her friends should have recognised that she was under depression and help her to overcome it, not taunt her. "Everywhere she went, people teased her saying that she could never get her Identity Card and that her complexion was fairer compared to her parents," said her 28-year-old aunt, M. Logalechumi, who had been taking care of her since she was six months old.

Getting no sympathy from friends, she decided to end her life and swallowed about 10ml of bleach in her aunt's house in Taman Harmoni in Buntong here on November 23. Fortunately, the aunt discovered her writhing in pain and rushed her to the hospital.

If it had ended in tragedy, is society not responsible? The whole matter must be due to misunderstanding and misinformation. Of course the NRD has to follow its standard operating procedure before approving an application, but did its front-liners handle the case with care?

The girl's mother, V. Kamlla, is not a highly educated person. She could have misconstrued the delay in issuing the MyKad to her daughter. So, as a concerned mother she spoke at a press conference. She claimed that the NRD had wanted her daughter to undergo a DNA test before they could issue her a MyKad because her daughter appears to having Chinese-Indian parentage instead of being Indian.



Small Town Big Heart at Plan b, Ipoh

To commemorate celebrated film-maker Yasmin Ahmad, Plan b Ipoh presents **Small Town Big Heart**, an exhibition chronicling meaningful Yasmin philosophies & quips. In conjunction, we are holding free screenings of her well-loved films on the following dates.

DECEMBER

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10th & 17th: Gubra
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12th & 19th: Muallaf (18PL)
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14th & 21st: Rabun

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These claims were denied by the NRD, which stated that the department had not issued MyKad to the girl at the point of application as it needed to ascertain details in her birth certificate and had explained to the mother.

Following the incident, some people had unfairly blamed the mother for having driven her daughter to suicide by publicizing her case while others described the girl's action as dangerous and akin to a threat, holding the NRD to ransom and should not be condoned or encouraged.

Well, at the speed the NRD had approved Mahalachime's MyKad (within three days after her attempted suicide), I'm beginning to wonder if the incident did not get into the limelight, would Mahalachime get her MyKad that fast, or would she have seen more delay?



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Young Perak

Spelling It as a Family

Darren Leong Wei Jin, 14, a Form 2 student from St Michael's Institution, who was Perak's Champion at NST's secondary level Spell-It-Right (SIR) annual competition while at the national level competition he was the runner up.

Darren has been participating in NST's SIR since he was in Standard 5 and was primary level National Champion in 2011. Darren collected a prize money of RM10,000 for the national runner-up and RM5000 for the state championship.

The SIR competition is no easy feat as finalists this year had to spell words like "schlep", "cognoscente" and "anthropopsychism" which is a feat in itself just trying to pronounce it.

Nevertheless, this year's competition saw thousands register themselves to participate with Perak alone over 500 student registration.

Darren is your ordinary student next door who plays football, tennis, badminton, is a Prefect and also the Patrol Leader for his school's 2nd Kinta Scout Troop and joined the school debating team this year.

On the morning when I interviewed him he had just come in from a football game.

He described this year's SIR contest as "nerve wrecking" but added that he was more diligent in his preparation this year. He resorted to using the internet to look up new words and to watch spelling contests such as 'The Scripps National Spelling



Bee' online.

Last year was Darren's first year entering the secondary-level competition. However, he had failed to qualify for the finals.

A further check with his parents Andrew and Yvonne indicated that they too helped a few months before the start of the competition. Mum Yvonne would write new words on the whiteboard, add new words into his spelling scrap book, and as the competition date got closer, spelled together with Darren.

All in, it appeared like a team effort as dad Andrew said if he has the potential "we should try to maximise it for him".

For now life is a regular routine again. New words are still written on the whiteboard but not frequently and when the competition draws near "we will start again lah" said Darren with bright eyes and a natural nonchalant smile.

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News

Maiden Flight Postponed for Runway Upgrade

Flying Fox Airways' maiden flight to Medan, Indonesia which was scheduled for 13 December has been postponed again though this time it is due to maintenance to the runway.

Flying Fox Airways CEO Mr Daniel Lee called a press conference two days before the maiden flight date to announce the postponement. According to Lee he was told to postpone its maiden flight "for the time being as Sultan Azlan Shah Airport can only cater for ATR-72 flights" despite previous approvals from relevant authorities allowing Flying Fox Airways to fly in Boeing 737-400 aircraft for the Ipoh-Medan route. It will be re-launched again in June 2014 onwards by which time it would schedule a new route Ipoh-Medan-China.

Describing the delay as "unfortunate and a small set back", Lee reiterated that Flying Fox Airways is an Ipoh born and bred company and it is here to stay. His immediate task was to refund all monies to their ticket purchasers.

Flying Fox flight schedule for December was for twice per week increasing to four times per week in January and daily towards June. The Boeing 737-400 aircraft plying the Ipoh-Medan route has an average seating capacity of 160 passengers. Their return flight for December was 80 per cent sold while 50 per cent of their seats for the January to June period were sold. Lee indicated a contingency plan that by June 2014, if Boeing flights were unable to land, he would bring in smaller aircraft to ensure Perakeans can still fly from Ipoh.



When trying to get statements from the various local authorities such as MAB, Ipoh Echo was instructed to approach the Ministry of Transport (MOT) for a statement. When contacted a spokesman from MOT responded that the runway is being upgraded and the flight has been postponed for safety reasons. The upgrading work tentatively would take four months to complete.

State Exco for Tourism, YB Nolee Ashilin Radzi when contacted said that she was obviously disappointed about the new development but it could not be avoided as it was a directive from MOT. Nolee added that the Mineral and Geoscience Department was currently doing studies on the runway.

Senior Business Manager for Pantai Hospital Mr Nicholas Chan who has been keenly promoting medical tourism, when contacted about the postponement said their plans were all in place and would prefer to see operations running smoothly before going to the next level of promotions.

A check with hotel and tour agents also received a similar response, which was to promote more aggressively when the operation was running smoothly. For now, all parties, as disappointing as it is, will have just to take a break.

Interestingly, due to the efforts done by Flying Fox and Lee, close to 200 interested parties comprising of tour agents, hoteliers and hospitals at both Indonesia and Malaysia will share in this disappointing postponement.

JAG



Tourism

Awareness Campaign

An awareness campaign to educate and encourage locals to keep Pangkor Island and adjoining Pulau Sembilan clean, crisp and green was successfully organised and executed by Perak Tourism recently.

The three-day event named, "My Perak Green and Clean Underwater and Island Clean-Up" was held on both the islands, as part of an initiative to prepare the state for the upcoming Visit Malaysia Year 2014 (VMY 2014). The name complemented Ministry of Tourism's theme for VMY 2014, "1Malaysia Green Tourism, 1Malaysia Clean".

Leading the campaign was Nolee Ashikin Dato' Mohamad Radzi, the Executive Councillor for Health, Tourism and Culture. She officiated at the launching ceremony held at Teluk Nipah, a popular tourist destination on Pangkor Island.

The awareness campaign was divided into two phases. The first phase had two segments. One was an underwater clean up and the other an island clean up. "The underwater clean up incorporates the rehabilitation and replanting of corals around Pulau Lalang and Pulau Sembilan. This is being conducted by two diving companies. Thirty divers from Australia, USA, Germany and Malaysia are involved in clearing the waters around the islands of rubbish and debris," Nolee told reporters.

The campaign saw the participation of over 300 students from local schools and institutes of higher learning, staff of a nearby resort and workers from the Manjung Municipal Council. "Besides the clean-up campaign, works to improve public toilets, signage, tourism police beats, rubbish collection and replanting of trees are on-going,"



said Nolee.

A concerted effort in improving both the islands' image and perception is necessary, as a prelude to VMY 2014.

RM

Four Million Visitors Anticipated



Visit Malaysia Year 2014 is the fourth in the series after its inception in 1990 and the subsequent two in 1994 and 2007. In view of this momentous event, Perak Tourism has taken a number of initiatives to complement the country's efforts in wooing tourists not only to the country but to Perak too.

High on the agency's agenda is to intensify promotional campaigns with the assistance of Tourism Malaysia (Perak) to showcase the many attractions Perak has to offer to visitors. To further enhance these on-going efforts, the support of the media, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and the state tourism industrial players are also sought.

Travel pamphlets, magazines, brochures, banners, flyers, videos, posters, etc., have a significant role to play in relaying the right kind of message to travellers. Realising the importance of such materials, the Executive Councillor for Health, Tourism and Culture, Nolee Ashikin Dato' Mohamad Radzi made a point to distribute them during a specially organised event held at MH Hotel, Ipoh recently.

The recipients were those mentioned above, as they play a pivotal role in making Visit Malaysia Year 2014 a success. Included in the distribution list were homestay operators and inbound travel agencies.

Ahmad Kamaruddin Yusof, Director of Tourism Malaysia (Perak), anticipated some 28 million visitors to the country. "This will translate to over RM76 billion in tourism earnings for the nation's coffers," he told Ipoh Echo. The rippling effect will definitely have an impact on Perak which is anticipating 4 million visitors.

"Therefore, the cooperation of all tourism players in the state is imperative to realise this objective," said Kamaruddin.

RM

Community

Ipoh Soroptimists Raise RM65,000

Approximately RM65,000 was raised following a charity dinner show organised by Soroptimist International (SI) Ipoh recently.

The show was attended by over 500 well-wishers with the Executive Councillor for Women's Development, Family, Social Welfare and National Integration, Dato' Hajjah Rusnah Kassim, as the guest of honour. Rusnah pledged to donate, as well.



Funds raised will be used to expand the organisation's flagship project, Edufun Centre. The centre currently accommodates some 25 children from deprived backgrounds, aged between 6 to 12 years. The kids attend classes and participate in extracurricular activities from 2pm to 6pm daily.

SI Ipoh hopes a larger centre will enable them to take in ten more children on the waiting list. Funds permitting, a second teacher will also be employed on a full-time basis. "Saloma, our dedicated and selfless retired teacher, can't handle so many children effectively without being over strained; thus, the urgency to employ another," said Mrs Lanka Devi Sinniah, SI Ipoh President.

This fund-raising dinner was the first by SI Ipoh for Edufun Centre, which was established in November 2012. After a year, and seeing marked improvements in the children and the spillover effects on their families and the community, the non-governmental organisation is more than determined to nurture these children and to help them realise their dreams, despite the odds.

At the dinner, guests were entertained by an interesting line-up of performances, from zumba dancing and songs from Irene Lim to stand-up comedy by Patrick Teoh and a satirical play by Jo Kukathas of Instant Café Theatre Company.

Emily

A Cross Cultural Wedding



The marriage of Yuko Ushima and Jeevan Jayakumar was not only filled with joy and happiness but achieved a harmonious blending of cultures. Yuko, who went to Tenby School till the age of 10, is the daughter of one of the longest staying expatriates in Ipoh, Dato' Tomiyasu Ushima and his wife Datin Mina. She met her husband Jeevan who is of Sri Lankan descent, when she started working in Dentsu, a Japanese Advertising Agency in Kuala Lumpur 6 years ago. It was a long courtship which saw them tying the knot in November. Jeevan is Business Director of a British advertising company, Iris, based in Singapore and the couple will be living there.

The wedding ceremonies included 'Gold Melting Ceremony' at the groom's house in KL on November 15 and another one at the Kalamandapam Hall in KL five days later. The wedding reception in Ipoh was held at Tropicana on the 30th with a violin performance by Mrs Keiko Shiraishi and her son, Yoichi, with keyboard



by Mrs Megumi Tigges. There was a Japanese song by Mrs Fong Foong Beng and a Chinese song by Datin Janet Yeoh. All in all a series of memorable cross-cultural events.

SFCK

A Time for Giving

Ipoh Parade, one of the city's more prominent shopping malls, has embarked on a programme to encourage shoppers to donate money and gifts for the underprivileged now that Christmas is around the corner.

A huge box has been placed next to the information counter on the mall's ground floor for shoppers to donate items and money for a noble cause. Money collected will be used to buy gifts, apart from those received.

On Boxing Day, Thursday, December 26, over 200 children from eight orphanages and welfare homes, in and around Ipoh, will be invited to the mall to unwrap the gifts. It will be a joyous occasion to celebrate, as a number of supporting events are on the cards to entertain the kids.

"We want to make Christmas a meaningful occasion for all, especially for the orphans. And what better way than to celebrate it together," said Ipoh Parade manager, Chan Yu Yin to Ipoh Echo during a media conference recently.

Chan implored the public, especially those who frequented Ipoh Parade, to be on the look out for the open donation box on the ground floor. "Please do the needful. Donate whatever you can, money or in kind, to make the coming Christmas an occasion to remember for the children." A huge soft board with children's wishes for Christmas, written on pieces of paper, is on display behind the donation box.

Ipoh Parade has set the ball rolling. Let us all chip in to make the event a success.

Ed



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Health

By Serena Mui

Stepping Out With Confidence

Lately every step you take seems to be accompanied with pain. Bending down to pick up objects is no longer an action done with ease. Doing the twist is out of the question. Even an evening stroll takes its toll. The quality of life you once enjoyed and often took for granted is now slowly becoming something you often reminisce about.

I understand only too well, some of the above, and lately, as my body tells me, I am not sweet sixteen anymore, I have taken a keener interest in orthopaedic-related information. This in turn brought me to Hospital Fatimah, where I had the pleasure of spending sometime in the company of Dr Suresh Siva, an orthopaedic surgeon.



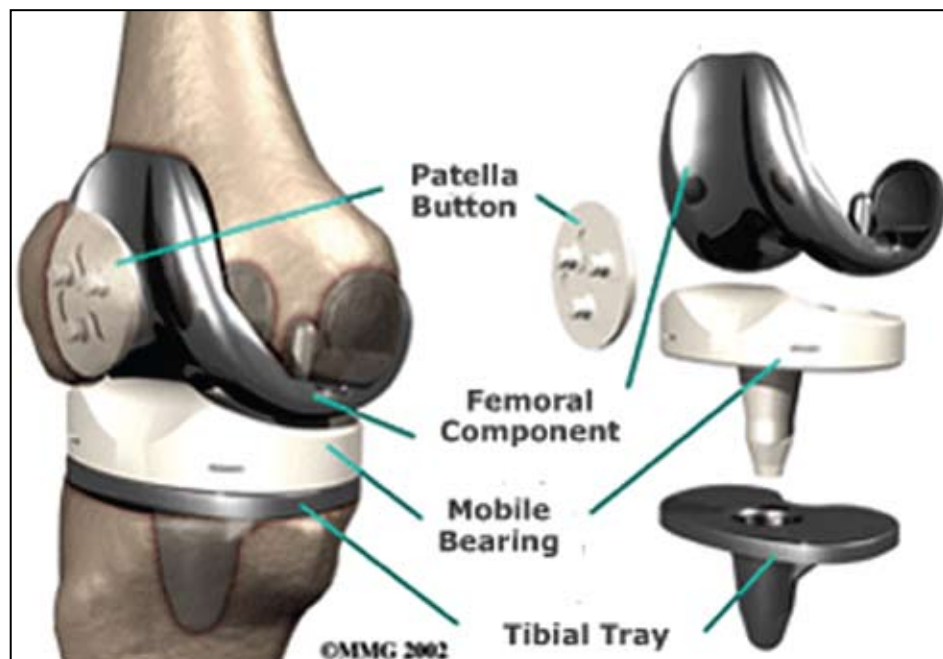
Enhanced Recovery Protocol

Dr Suresh took the time to explain a process called the *Enhanced Recovery Surgery for Total Knee and Hip Replacement* (ERP). According to Dr Suresh, a good percentage of people going through replacement surgery subconsciously feel they can no longer do the things they once used to do for fear of damaging these new replacements. This is the worst mindset to have, as joint replacement surgery is meant to help you live a fuller and more comfortable life and not curtail you from enjoying yourself.

Like the old boxing adage that says “winning is 90% mental and 10% physical”, recovery from hip and knee surgery is very similar. In cognizance of this, ERP takes on a holistic approach focusing not only on the success of the physical aspect of recovery but also the mental and emotional aspects, right from pre-operative through to intra-operative, post-operative and discharge. It also addresses the importance of involving family members throughout the entire process.

In the past, patients often felt confusion and stress, which often led to less than optimal recovery. Dr Suresh stresses that with ERP, a patient can feel more at ease with the procedures right from the very beginning until the end. The healing process is just as important as the actual surgical procedures.

Dr Suresh is absolutely the right person to proselytize the message of ERP. An Ipoh boy, Dr Suresh has spent more than 20 years studying and working in the UK, after finishing his Standard 6 in ACS Ipoh. He also worked in the US at the world famous Stanford University Hospital and Clinics as an assistant professor in the department of orthopaedic surgery. He holds the license to practise medicine in the United States, United Kingdom, European Union and Malaysia with Board Certification as a specialist orthopaedic surgeon by the UK General Medical Council. He is also on the Malaysian National Specialist Register.



“My sub specialty is in the area of arthritis and joint replacement surgery. My research interests lie in tissue engineering, stem cell therapy and new medical imaging technologies and I continue to pursue these interests in collaboration with universities in the US” he said. “I came to work in Ipoh because my famous dad Dato’ Dr Siva asked me to come help him in Hospital Fatimah and I have been a resident consultant here for some time,” he added.

No Need To Suffer

On his return, he discovered that many people had a very poor idea of what joint replacement surgery was all about. Most people either feared the procedures or didn’t think they would enjoy a full life, even after a successful procedure was done. Due to his vast experience in this field, Dr Suresh is passionate about making people understand that there is no need to suffer in pain, when replacement surgery is available and very much a simple procedure that need not be something to fear. Being keenly aware that reducing a patient’s discomfort and pain, allowing early mobilization and improving patient outcome following a total joint replacement is priority, he confidently offers ERP as the complete solution.

How it Works

Total knee replacement might be a misnomer as the entire knee isn’t cut out. In fact, many of the parts are kept in including the ligaments, the lateral and medial collateral ligaments as well as the patella bone and its own ligament. This procedure is commonly recommended in people whose knee cartilage has been destroyed by arthritis.

In fact, these people have three main options to treat their pain. First they could try painkilling tablets which only offer temporary relief and have potentially serious side effects including gastric bleeding. Secondly they could go for steroid or glucosamine injections, which offer pain relief for a maximum of six months. Also steroid injections predispose to infections in the joint and should not be repeated more than two or three times. The third option would be total joint replacement which, with the latest advancements, lasts approximately 25 years in most people.

In total knee replacement, the bones of the knee are shaved down to make way for the implant which resurfaces the bones. Most implants have a metal tray that holds a plastic platform that stands in for the meniscus. The covering on the femur is made of super-strong metal and when the knee bends the pieces glide on top of one another.

The demand for knee replacement surgery is increasing all over the world and Malaysia is no exception. People are not willing to give up their active lifestyles without a fight. Life expectancy keeps increasing, of course, but there is also a greater awareness of how quickly health can decline if immobility leaves an elderly person homebound and isolated. At the other end of the spectrum, it is now not unusual to see patients in their 40s and 50s with end stage arthritis who need surgery.

New Implant Designs

Ten years ago, doctors used to be reluctant to replace these joints as they were afraid that the implants would not last very long. Now, with the new generation of designs and materials these implants can last 20 to 30 years.

Several companies have come out with revised knee systems this year. At an annual meeting of orthopaedic surgeons in Chicago earlier this year, there was so much buzz about the new versions of knee implants on display that the trade magazine Orthopaedic Design & Technology dubbed 2013 “the year of the knee”.

New rollouts include the Persona by Zimmer, the Journey II by Smith and Nephew and the Attune by DePuy, a Johnson and Johnson subsidiary. The Attune knee took six years and approximately USD\$200 million to develop and promises to be one of the best knee replacement designs. Researchers around the world studied how people move and what deficiencies had hampered previous designs.

Although knee replacement had historically been a very successful procedure, some patients had complained that their implants felt unstable as they tried to climb stairs or play sports. The goal of the Attune knee designers was to make the knee feel invisible or as natural as possible. This has resulted in a revolutionary knee system which:

- Can match the anatomy of almost any knee found in a person as it is designed to match based on size and shape of the knee as well as their gender and ethnicity.
- Uses a unique polyethylene plastic insert which is believed to help create the longest lasting and strongest insert ever.
- Provides stability over a greater range of motion and greater precision to the surgeon thus allowing for quicker recovery.

Enhanced Recovery Protocol (ERP)

Although some people find medical explanations a little difficult to follow and full of mumbo-jumbo, the following is a little information about ERP in its simplest form:

- Pre-operative – an intervention exercise to optimize the health and medical condition of the patient, through counseling, education and exercises – something Dr Suresh calls “prehab” as opposed to “rehab”! Organization of discharge arrangements is also clearly explained to the patient at this point. This is designed to prepare both the patient and the caregivers.
- Intra-operative – the process encompasses a minimally invasive surgical technique, with regional anesthetic and light sedation. Keeping blood circulation, temperature and oxygenation normal during surgery, is also ensured during this period.
- Post-operative – early physiotherapy sessions to encourage movement, accompanied with regular and effective pain control medication. A wellness model of care where drips and drains are removed early to encourage independent activity. Patients are encouraged to walk around the day after the operation.
- Discharge – speedier recovery, allows the patient to be discharged earlier too. A proper rehabilitation regimen is introduced to ensure progressive improvement is made at home. There are also scheduled physiotherapy sessions to help monitor the progress of the patient.
- Why do people continue to suffer in silence and deprive themselves of a better quality of life? It’s time to make a change and take back your life. Learn more about how joint replacement surgery and ERP can help you regain your mobility.

For more information, call Siva Orthopaedic Clinic at Hospital Fatimah (05 548 6380 or email info@sivaclinic.com).

Arts and Culture

20th World Chinese Opera Lovers Festival in Ipoh

The Perak Nam Hoi Association, which represents members of the various Chinese Opera associations in the state, recently hosted the 20th World Cantonese Opera Lovers Festival. Over 200 members comprising professional actors and musicians from ten countries from around the world were in Ipoh for four days in November for the festival.

The event, held at RTM's auditorium at Taman Cempaka, was a polished and rich affair and was truly an experience for those present. The highlight of the festival was the gathering of the visitors who shared their performances with fellow actors and musicians from around the world.

State Exco for Tourism YB Nolee Ashikin Radzi who had approved RM25,000 for the running of the event was scheduled to officiate at the event but was unable to be present. Nevertheless, Perak Nam Hoi Association Chairman Mr Low Wai Chee thanked Nolee and the state government for their generous support. Notably present at the event was Mr Tan Re Quan, Deputy Secretary of Nanhai Bureau of Civil, Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs of Foshan, China and Mr Banhuy, the Chairman of The Federation Of World Chinese Opera Association based in France.

Low in his address said that although interest in Chinese opera was becoming more popular, the young generation were not coming forward. Hopefully, by staging this event here it would encourage more young members to learn this art. A glimpse of the participants indeed revealed that the majority present were senior citizens, giving credence to Low's speech.

The World Cantonese Opera Lovers Festival for 2014 will be held in Paris, France. The traditional art of Cantonese opera was added to UNESCO's representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanities in 2009.

Besides Malaysia, the associations present included six from China, three from Australia and one each from France, Holland, Denmark, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore.

JAG



UTC Toilet is Spic-and-Span

I avoid using public toilets as they are usually dirty and smelly. Recently, I had to use the toilet in the Urban Transformation Centre (UTC). I was surprised to see that it is spic-and-span. The floor is dry and clean. The wash basin bowls are clean. There was the fragrance of deodoriser. The blower was on operation creating circulation of air. This toilet is very well maintained. It is so clean that one can almost have a meal there without feeling uncomfortable.

In my opinion, the majority of Malaysians are not civic minded in toilets and we hear many complaints about the poor condition of public toilets. I receive regular emails about toilets in other countries where they put up graphical posters on do's and don'ts of using the toilet. I think this type of posters must be put up to educate our public on using the toilet.

The State Library has a branch in UTC and maybe they can conduct programmes on toilet usage as a service to the community. This toilet is for the convenience of the people and it is up to them to keep it clean. The facility is new and the high level of maintenance must be maintained.

A. Jeyaraj

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Sunday, 12 Jan 2014

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at ALDER NEW SHOW HOME

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Date : 22/12/2013 (Sunday)

Time : 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



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- Sand Art
- Nail Art
- Photo Booth
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Developer Licence : 8454-29/04-2013/0239(1) Advertising Permit : 8456-29/04-2013/0239(P) Validity Period : 23/04/2013 - 24/04/2015 Approved Plan No. : OSC221-A3U/8/1/46/740/12
Land Encumbrances : Malayan Banking Berhad Total Units : 100 Exp. Completion Date : Oct 2015 Land Tenure : Freehold Price : Min RM 844,210 Max : RM 1,267,800 Approving Authority : M.B.L.

Sport

National Horse Show 2013

The annual event of equestrian sports and competitions was held at the Equestrian Centre in Ipoh recently. Hosted by Perak Turf Club this year, the event is organised on a rotational basis between the turf clubs of Perak, Penang and Selangor. Held over four days beginning December 5, the competitions, from dressage to showjumping and cross country, attracted the participation of equestrian clubs from all over the country.

This National Horse Show was not an all-serious competition because it was a combination of exposition and carnival. Visitors were entertained with man-versus-horse contests, children puppet shows and horse carriage rides. Basically, it was a fun-filled weekend for the family.

This year's horse show also highlighted activities of riding for the disabled. Organising Chairman, Chin Tong Leong said, "This programme is aimed at forging a bond between children with special needs and horses. It's a form of therapy to stimulate the senses of these children and to build up their confidence when riding a horse."



The horse show was officiated by Perak Sports Council Director, Hj Musa bin Dun, who later went on a guided tour of the exposition and the carnival grounds.

Emily

News

Skilled Workers for Automotive Industry



Ipoh-based Polytechnic Ungku Omar is capable of producing skilled workers needed for the country's expanding automotive industry. This is being reflected by the college's success in winning the annual Perodua Eco Challenge three times in a row. The competition is being sponsored and organised by Perusahaan Otomotif Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) and has been around since 2009.

Omar Mohammad Fakrul Razi, a faculty lecturer at the polytechnic, believes that with the right kind of approach and support, the college is able to realise this noble aim. Activities currently implemented under the Polytechnic Ungku Omar Transformational Plan are geared towards producing skilled staff for the automotive industry.

"Industrial players should be mindful of this development, as it'll benefit them in many ways," he told Ipoh Echo during a media conference held at the Perodua Lahat Road office recently. "The students are not only qualified but are very motivated and this is proven by their eagerness to remain competitive," he added.

Omar Mohammad was among students and polytechnic staff present at the launching of Perodua Eco Challenge 2013, which was officiated by Major (Honorary) Dato' Md Nor Yusof, the director of Polytechnic Ungku Omar. Dato' Md Nor was representing Dato' Mohamad Zubir Abdul Khalid, the Executive Councillor for

Industry, Investment and Corridor Development who was away on an official assignment.

The upcoming challenge will be held at the Shah Alam Go-kart Circuit in mid-December. The competition this year revolves around the modification of Perodua's Myvi model. The students have incorporated the FACE (Fashionable, Aerodynamic, Creative and Engineering) concept into their creation and are gunning for the top spot once more.

"I am convinced they're capable of achieving this, as they have put their hearts and souls into the project. The 25-strong team has been hard at work for the last three months," said Dato' Md Nor.

Nine other technical and engineering colleges will partake in the challenge and that includes Universiti Teknologi Petronas.

Perodua Sdn Bhd has increased the cash incentives for winners from RM103,000 to RM127,000 for this year's competition, as part of the company's 20th anniversary celebration.

RM

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14. YMCA, Jln Raja Musa Aziz. Tel: 05-2540809/2539464
15. Ipoh Echo's office or Meru Valley Golf Club members' desk.



RPP RM29

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RM90nett per person
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