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IPOH'S ROBUST PROPERTY MARKET

By Angain Kumar

Housing and commercial estates have been mushrooming around Ipoh, especially in areas such as Meru, Jelapang, Klebang and Lahat of late. What is behind the growth of this once nascent property market? Has this erstwhile lethargic town finally woken up or is it just a flash in the pan? Ipoh Echo attempts to unravel the phenomenon by eliciting answers from experienced realtors in the city.

The views of some of the industry's prominent players are sought. The scribe began by interviewing Kesavan Parthan of Kesavan Realty whose office is located at Jalan Kampong Simee, Ipoh.

Continued on page 2



Tin Valley



Meru Valley



Seri Botani

The absence of legislation to regulate selling, buying and renting of properties is a bane to the local real estate industry

As someone who has been involved in real estate in Ipoh for over three decades, Kesavan described the current trend as “picking up with time”. Residential and commercial properties, he said are being snapped up by buyers from all around the country. “This is the stark reality,” he posited.

Investors from Kuala Lumpur and from across the Causeway flock to Ipoh to capitalise on the relatively cheap prices of property here. “Meru Valley is a fine example. Due to its proximity to the Plus Expressway and easy access to government departments nearby, investors buy houses here and rent them out to individuals who work in the vicinity.”

The demand for properties within the city centre too is high. This is evidenced by purchases in places such as Canning Garden and Ipoh Garden. “Prices of houses in these residential areas have escalated by almost 50 per cent,” he said.

Old properties fall prey to banks which value them disproportionately thus affecting loan dispensation. But this does not deter the diehards from acquiring them knowing well that demand will eventually outstrip supply.

“They’re prepared to cough out more to buy these used houses despite the banking policy, as the returns are good,” added Kesavan. He has acted as intermediary for many of these outstation buyers.

A primary concern of new house buyers, however, is safety. Therefore, the design of housing estates like Bandar Baru Sri Klebang and Meru Desa Park, which incorporates safety and security, is a key selling point for developers.

With the introduction of the Real Property Gains Tax by the government in 2014, the risk of excessive speculation and price manipulation by fly-by-night investors are being significantly reduced.

Government Initiatives

Realtor Gladwin Agilan, from Oriental Realty, welcomes the boom in the Ipoh property market but maintains that the city should not lose its rustic image to over-development. “Thanks to government initiatives and planning, new townships with creative products are much sought after by buyers,” he said.

“Meru Raya, a northern suburb of Ipoh, is a fine example,” said Gladwin. The authorities’ decision to build a state-of-the-art bus terminal, relocating government departments and the establishment of Tenby International School in the area has led to an increase in demand for houses there. This has resulted in developers, such as Kinta Real Estate and Kinta Properties, to move in to cater to the needs of the discerning public.

Innovative products such as gated communities with recreational facilities like club houses and playgrounds are the in-thing today. These amenities are fast becoming part and parcel of the modern society and Ipoh is no exception.

Rapid growth in the area has led to capital appreciation and investors who have purchased properties in that area are reaping the dividends. A fully furnished 2-bedroom apartment (916 sq. ft.) in Golf Vista in Meru Valley now commands a rent rate of between RM1500 to RM1700. Sold in 2003 at RM150 per square foot (psf), the property is now valued at RM300 psf, double the original amount.

Gladwin refers to bungalow units in Canning Garden, especially those along Jalan Keliling and Jalan Lau Pak Kuan, which are being used for non-retail business purposes. These 5100 sq. ft. bungalow lots are rented for about RM2500 per month. They are a much cheaper alternative than buying a business premise in the location which can cost as much as RM1.7 million. This is much favoured by small-time businessmen who do not want overhead costs to burn a huge hole in their pockets.

“Premium properties in Ipoh are far more affordable than in Kuala Lumpur or Penang. Coupled with the low cost of living and a quieter lifestyle, the property market in Ipoh will go up.”

Gladwin has this advice for those seeking to purchase new properties. “Ensure a clean credit record and invest in property at a young age. Make it a priority above your other needs.”

Least Optimistic

Of all the realtors the scribe spoke to, Nicholas Poh seems the least optimistic about the growth of the property market in Ipoh. According to him, rising prices of goods and a ballooning government deficit contribute to the slowdown.

“The pattern of spending amongst the general public has changed over time. Most folks are reluctant to fork out money to purchase properties,” said Nicholas with some remorse. “There has been much speculation in the market because of the previously low interest rates but the new tax policy has placed dampeners on this development.” The reason for buying properties in Ipoh is again divided. The majority do so as a form of investment while the minority buys them for their personal use.

Ipoh’s overabundance of natural attractions, says Nicholas, makes it a preferred choice for buyers. More and more young people are flocking to newly-opened townships that suit their needs for security and safety. However, he feels it is wrong to assume a co-relationship between new townships and a booming property market.

When asked to comment on the recent increase on the minimum cap for foreigners to purchase properties, from RM500,000 to RM1,000,000, he said that it would not have an adverse impact on the market in Ipoh. He attributed this to the strength of the ringgit,



Kesavan Parthan

“The most important factor in buying property is security”
— Jasmine Lee, estate agent



Gladwin Agilan

as compared to the foreign currencies of those wanting to buy properties here.

The policy, he insists, has much to do about protecting the local market. However, development of properties to the south and south-west of Ipoh, covering Batu Gajah, Pusing and Lumut, is slow due to one simple reason – distance from major arterial roadways that connect Ipoh to other parts of the country.

Location, Security and Safety

“The most important factor in buying property is security,” says estate agent Jasmine Lee, also from Kesavan Realty.

Due to the increasing crime rate, it has been a primary concern for most individuals seeking properties in Ipoh. Companies who hire foreigners require them to live in gated community for their safety.

Besides safety, a good location is equally important for property seekers. The trend currently is for young people to buy property closer to where they work. They prefer new townships to seasoned housing estates. One of the reasons being loans for older houses are much harder to obtain than houses in new townships.

Youthful buyers prefer contemporary homes where they are able to obtain a higher loan margin, up to 90 per cent of the house’s price. These buyers

normally look at the aesthetics of their homes and the prestige attached to the houses’ addresses. “Thompson Road, Tiger Lane and Jalan Golf Club may be pricey but because of their chic address, we have youthful buyers here,” said Jasmine.

On the mushrooming of housing projects around Ipoh, she insisted that these projects are being built based on demands. “The demands are being fuelled by trendy and savvy thirty-somethings who want an upgrade from a link to a semi-detached structure, and so on.”

Location, according to Jasmine, is of utmost importance. She cites Meru Valley as an example of a prime property area which was previously viewed as “too far” by many. Now, due to its location, relative to the growth of Meru Raya, it has become highly desirable. Soon supply will outstrip demand, prompting an artificial rise in property prices.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, is managing a real estate agency a worthy vocation in Ipoh? There are many views, some for and some against. Those who have been long in the profession, like Kesavan Realty, are in for the long haul and are, therefore, unperturbed by seasonal developments. They are better equipped to ride the storm than those who are in for short-term gains.

Malaysia, unlike countries in the West, still practices a rudimentary form of selling and buying of properties. In Australia, it is mandatory that house sales and rentals be made through an approved agent. Commissions are fixed and everything is done above board. In short, sales of properties are ensured notwithstanding the time frame and the interests of both buyer and seller are protected.

Over here it is something else. Selling of properties can be an onerous effort, as owners prefer to do the selling, and renting, themselves rather than through an intermediary. The question of trust is uppermost in the minds of the sellers. The absence of legislation to regulate selling, buying and renting of properties is a bane to the local real estate industry.

Kesavan Realty

Kesavan – 019 555 8100 Office: 05 515 5555

Jasmine Lee – 016 523 2899 Office: 05 515 5555

Oriental Realty

Gladwin Agilan – 012 526 1000 Office: 05 546 6600

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IPOHecho

From the Editor's Desk

By G. Sivapragasam

FROM DEFERENCE TO DISRESPECT

The relationship between authority and its citizens has changed. No longer is Authority allowed absolute freedom to do what they feel is right...

During his recent visit to Malaysia President Barack Obama predicted that societies that respect civil rights will be more successful in the 21st Century. It was a message to Malaysia and the statement could not be truer, nor could it have come at a more opportune time.

Malaysia today is at the crossroads on its path towards achieving developed nation status. The direction it takes at this juncture will determine if it will succeed in this mission.

The process of nation building began with the declaration of independence and has been going on for more than half a century. During this period there have been significant changes in demographics, literacy, knowledge, political awareness, living standards, communication and most significantly, attitude. All these have transformed Malaysia into a different world from what it was at the time of its independence.

The changes have also created a new generation of citizens. It is in the hands of this generation that lies the fate of future Malaysia. If we are to be a truly developed nation capable of competing in today's borderless world, this generation needs to be bold, ambitious, confident, informed, educated and articulate. For this to happen, space needs to be allowed for them to grow.

The relationship between authority and its citizens has changed. No longer is Authority allowed absolute freedom to do what they feel is right. Actions are challenged and criticised. Decisions perceived as irresponsible are quickly shared and censured in the public domain. In essence the nation has moved from an age of deference to one of disrespect.

How authority responds to this new phenomenon will determine the nation's future. Authority could react by structuring and applying restraints limiting civil liberties. Undoubtedly, it will be effective and serves its purpose for a period of time. But the consequence will be the curbing of people's development and widening the divide between the elite and the masses, a situation not beneficial for society in the long term. More notably, Malaysians will be ill equipped to deal with their peers in the international forum.

Inevitably, this will affect progress and, in time, open conflict may emerge between



authority and the masses. Leaving aside the damage that will result from such a conflict the consequence may be chaos or the arrival of despotic rule.

An alternative response, which may be more prudent, would be to build a strong civil society. This process would require recognising and respecting civil rights and marshalling citizens to take an active role in the affairs of the nation. In developed countries it is the strength of civil societies that have been largely responsible for not only ensuring that authority does not abuse its power but defending the nation's integrity. This has translated into progress.

Similarly in this nation, only a strong and enlightened civil society would have the ability to help it to progress, defend its sovereignty and bring it pride,

dignity and respect from the international community.

A kind of two-party system has emerged in the last few years. A two-party system, however, is not an automatic formula for the function of true democracy if both parties share the same philosophy grounded on ignoring the rights of civil society and intolerant of criticism from them.

Attempts to empower civil society by the creation of a third force etc. have not found too much success. This failure may lie in the fact that the attempts have been focused solely on the political platform.

True civil society empowerment can only emerge from economic, social and political power evolving in tandem. Political force without social and economic strength will not only fail to create a resilient civil society but may very well spell disaster.

Of the three limbs, economic empowerment is primary. In this regard every citizen should have the right to work, earn a decent income, opportunity to progress and live a life of dignity. In the social sphere values of justice, empathy, tolerance, disagreeing without being disagreeable and recognising criticism objectively should be defined as the only acceptable culture. In the political domain steps need to be taken to inculcate in citizens political awareness, granted freedom to express their views and thoughts without fear and to assume responsibility for a fair and just society.

This nation has the resources to achieve all this. All that is needed is the political will to actualise it.

In The Name Of My Father's Estate

Episode 29 • by Peter Lee

After a fist fight between two of Lee Sr's Administrators, namely Michelle (Lee Sr's daughter) and Connie (Lee Sr's second wife), Michelle informed her Co-Administrator brother, John Lee, that she is adamant in immediately transferring their father's shares of 70%, in three of the family companies, to her mum, Mrs Patricia Lee by using some pre-signed share transfer forms which were signed by Lee Sr during his lifetime. She felt that her action will prevent Connie from receiving these shares through Intestacy Law. However, John Lee pointed out that her action could cause problems for their mother. But Michelle told John that is the only way at the moment to protect these shares and she will talk to their mother about this before giving instruction to their Company Secretary to execute the transfer.



Michelle then called her mother and told her what had happened between her and Connie while trying to convince her to renounce her entitlement to the 70% of shares in three of the family companies. Without hesitation, Mrs Patricia Lee said to Michelle "Over my dead body is she going to get these shares. Just execute the transfer." Michelle further asked, "Do I need to explain to the rest of our family members?" In response Mrs Patricia Lee said, "I will tell them myself that this is my wish and this is the time to do it since you have the pre-signed share transfer forms. With her mother's consent, Michelle immediately called her Company Secretary to deal with the transfer to her mum. But her instruction was being questioned by her Company Secretary with regards to the validity of the pre-signed share transfer forms. Michelle then explained to her Company Secretary that this is what her father wanted when he was alive. That's the reason why he signed the share transfer forms. She went on to assure the Company Secretary that all the Directors have given their consent to this.

However, the Company Secretary was not convinced and asked Michelle to produce the Letter Of Administration (L.A.) in which she replied by saying that it's in the process. "In that case I will transfer the shares once the L.A. is obtained," said the Company Secretary. Michelle was very annoyed at that point and said, "You have been our Company Secretary for so long and knowing our position, can't you just help us out on this?" The Company Secretary replied, "Michelle! Your late father and I are old friends but I can't do this transfer since I have news that his second wife has mysteriously appeared and lays claim to his estate. If I do it for you, I will definitely face a lawsuit from your father's second wife. At the same time, your mother is going to be sued for this too. So, I would prefer to see the L.A. first so as to give me a clear direction on how the distribution of your father's estate is going to be." In response, Michelle said, "For your information, my mother is ready for any lawsuit. Anyway, since you have your principles and I have to do what I have to do, I would like you to resign as our Company Secretary with immediate effect. "I have no problem with this," said the Company Secretary.

To be continued...

Peter Lee is an Associate Estate Planning Practitioner (Wills & Trust) with Rockwills International Group. He is also an Islamic Estate Planner providing Wills & Trust services for Muslims. He can be reached at: 012-5078825/ 05-2554853 or excelsccms@gmail.com. Website: <http://www.wills-trust.com.my>. His Book "To Delay is Human but to Will is Divine" (96 pages, RM28) is available at his office: 108 (2nd Floor), Jalan Raja Ekram, 30450 Ipoh; Rashi Mini Market (019-510 6284), 37 Jalan Perajurit, Ipoh Garden East; Ipoh Echo and at all major bookstores.

EYE HEALTH

Hypertension and the Eyes

Ipoh Echo's EYE HEALTH series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. GILL talking to us more about hypertension and the eyes.

Hypertensive Retinopathy is the sequelae of high blood pressure in the eyes. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, affects 40% of people above the age of 25 years by WHO's estimates. Hypertension damages blood vessels and these are easily seen in the eyes. Both duration of hypertension and also the severity of hypertension play a role in determining the extent of damage to blood vessels in the eyes. Other illnesses that play a part in accelerating the damage are diabetes mellitus, hypercholesterolemia (increased cholesterol levels) and smoking.



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

DAMAGE TO THE EYES

There are several serious effects of hypertension that may occur in the eyes. Among them are:

- Retinal Artery Occlusion – blockage of the arteries to the eye (retina).
- Retinal Vein Occlusion – blockage of the veins draining the blood from the retina.
- Ischaemic Optic Neuropathy – poor blood flow to the eye causing optic nerve damage.

When these occur, it just means that it has reached a complication stage of hypertension. It is best to be examined from time to time in order to prevent eye surprises like these.

RETINAL ARTERY OCCLUSION

This is very serious because it results in sudden profound loss of vision in the affected eye. Essentially, this may be summarized as an ocular stroke. It is an eye emergency and any delay in treating this results in permanent loss of vision in the affected eye. Quick treatment improves the chances of recovery but even this is only by about 20 to 25%!

Should this happen to an individual, a thorough cardiovascular assessment will need to be done as this condition is an ominous sign of potential vascular complications to the organs. If the artery involved is the main artery (Central Retinal Artery Occlusion), the vision loss is profound. The retina when examined will show the cherry red spot sign (see pic). If it is the branch that is involved (Branch Retinal Artery Occlusion), the vision loss is less profound.



RETINAL VEIN OCCLUSION

The occlusion or block may affect either the main retinal vein (Central Retinal Vein Occlusion) or one of its branches (Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion). If it is the main vessel, again the visual effects are more serious than if a branch is affected. A vein occlusion is still the lesser of the two evils if it is compared to retina artery occlusion described above.

ISCHAEMIC OPTIC NEUROPATHY

Ischaemia means a decrease in the supply of the blood to an organ. In this case, there is a lack of blood supply to the main nerve of the eye (Optic Nerve), therefore affecting the nerve function and of course in turn affecting the vision.

Should any of the above three conditions occur, it just means that the hypertension is advanced. All the above conditions may cause blurring vision, double vision, blood headaches or even sudden loss of vision. Prompt diagnosis of hypertensive retinopathy is important in order to avoid visual and systemic morbidity such as heart disease, strokes and renal disease. If you suffer from hypertension, it is advisable to get your eyes checked at least once a year before any of these eye conditions occur.

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

PUBLISHER

Ipo Echo Sdn Bhd
(Regd No 687483 T)

A-G-1, No. 1 Persiaran
Greentown 2, Greentown
Business Centre, 30450
Ipoh Perak Darul Ridzuan.
Tel: (605) 249 5936
Fax: (605) 255 2181
Email: editorial@ipohecho.com.my

EDITORIAL

Fathol Zaman Bukhari
G. Sivapragasam

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Rosli Mansor Ahd Razali
Luqman Hakim Radzi

MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Deanna Lim

FREELANCERS

A. Jeyaraj
Emily Lowe
Serena Mui
Susan Ho

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How did we fail them?

Picture the scene: A 7-week-old baby is tightly swaddled and cradled in his mother's arms. He is thin, but so is she. She is pale and wan, and looks much older than her 23-years. She does not appear well, and as we later discover, she is indeed ill. She contracted a lung infection soon after she gave birth.

We then begin to wonder; why is a young mother squatting outside a bank, begging for alms to feed her baby? She should be at home, caring for her infant and in the bosom of her family. Motherhood is a time of joy, not a time to go begging in the streets.

This is not a scene from a third world country in Africa, or the slums of India. The sorry plight of the woman and her baby was first reported by a daily newspaper. The woman, whose sad tale we relate, was pictured in Kampar.

The young mother is Noor Asmidah Arzmi, from Air Kuning, near Kampar, and the newborn is her second child. Her baby, Muhammad Khairul Firdaus Baharuddin, was born on March 19 and she described that whilst giving birth to him, she started to get breathless and felt her abdomen hardening. She was later informed that she had caught an infection.

She said, "A day after I gave birth, the doctor confirmed that I contracted a lung infection, and advised me not to breastfeed, to stop the spread of infection. So, I need money to buy milk."

The young mother says that she receives around RM150 per month from the social welfare department (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, JKM), but the sum is not sufficient to fulfil the needs of her family. Although her husband is employed in the village, she said that he did not bring in a steady income. Initially, she used his earnings to make the milk purchases, but their money had run out.

Having used all her savings buying infant formula for her newborn, and also for her older son, who is two years old, Noor Asmidah said that she is forced to depend on the mercy of the general public, to obtain money in order to buy milk for her baby whom she is unable to breastfeed because of her illness. She estimates that the baby milk costs about RM50 to RM80 per packet.

She said, "Although I am still in confinement and I

have never begged in my life, I am willing to make this sacrifice, so that my baby can obtain nourishment."

Both Noor Asmidah and her baby take the bus from Air Kuning, to beg for donations from the public. Whilst she is out begging, she leaves her older son in the care of her husband.

Moved by her plight, bank customers and people in the streets have been giving generously to help mother and baby. Several people have also come forward to advise her of organisations which will help her.

One person who read the newspaper report said, "I worry about the health of the mother, her baby and her older child. The poor are especially vulnerable and when the price of food increases, their diet deteriorates. Many of the foodstuffs may not be affordable and the parents may start to make dangerous cuts to their diet and their children's diet."

Another person said, "RM150 from social welfare seems a pitiful figure. I know of a girl who blows double that amount on colouring and treating her hair at the beauty salon. Is that correct, RM150 per month? If it is, shouldn't the figure be revised?"

Her friend then asked, "How do the poor know where to get help? I know of BR1M, but I don't know who the poor should approach for help, on a day to day basis."

A mother of three young children from Ipoh said, "Is this an isolated case or is it something the townsfolk only get to hear, if someone makes a documentary about poverty in the state? It makes me sad to know that this young mother and her children are suffering. Despite the wealth of our nation, I wonder how it is we have failed the people, like this ill mother and her newborn?"

Dr Saravana.K

Consultant Physician,
Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist

Digestive Health

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

It is a common disorder that affects your large intestine (colon).

Symptoms

The signs and symptoms can vary widely from person to person and often resemble those of other diseases. Among the most common are: abdominal pain or cramping; bloating; gas (flatulence); diarrhoea or constipation; mucus in the stool.

Despite these uncomfortable signs and symptoms, IBS doesn't cause permanent damage to your colon. Because symptoms of IBS can occur with other more serious diseases, it's best to discuss these symptoms with your doctor. For most people, IBS is a chronic condition, although there will likely be times when the signs and symptoms are worse and times when they improve or even disappear completely.

Causes

It's not known exactly what causes IBS. The walls of the intestines are lined with layers of muscle that contract and relax in a coordinated rhythm as they move food from your stomach through your intestinal tract to your rectum. If you have IBS, the contractions may be stronger and last longer than normal. Food is forced through your intestines more quickly, causing gas, bloating and diarrhoea.

In some cases, the opposite occurs. Food passage slows, and stools become hard and dry. Abnormalities in your nervous system or colon

also may play a role, causing you to experience greater than normal discomfort when your intestinal wall stretches from gas.

Triggers

If you have IBS you probably react strongly to stimuli that don't bother other people.

- **Foods.** carbonated beverages and some fruits and vegetables may lead to bloating and discomfort in some people with IBS.
- **Stress**
- **Hormones.** Many women find that signs and symptoms are worse during or around their menstrual periods.

Criteria for making a diagnosis

A diagnosis of IBS depends largely on a complete medical history and physical examination. Diagnosis is often a process of elimination. To help in this process, researchers have developed diagnostic criteria in which the bowel appears normal, but doesn't function normally.

The most important symptom is abdominal pain and discomfort lasting at least 12 weeks, though the weeks don't have to occur consecutively.

You also must have at least two of the following: a change in the frequency or consistency of your stool; straining, urgency or a feeling that you can't empty your bowels completely; mucus in your stool; or bloating or abdominal distension.

Your doctor will likely assess how you fit these criteria, as well as whether you have any other signs or symptoms that might suggest another, more-serious condition including: new onset after age 50, weight loss; rectal bleeding; fever; nausea or recurrent vomiting; abdominal pain not completely relieved by a bowel movement; or diarrhoea that is persistent.

If you have these red flag signs or symptoms, you'll need additional testing to further assess your condition.

Additional tests

Your doctor may recommend several tests, including stool studies to check for infection or malabsorption problems. Colonoscopy – a small, flexible tube is used to examine the entire length of the colon or CT scan.

Treatments and drugs

Because it's not clear what causes IBS, treatment focuses on the relief of symptoms so that you can live as normally as possible.

In most cases, you can successfully control mild signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome by learning to manage stress and making changes in your diet and lifestyle. Your doctor may suggest: fibre supplements; anti-diarrhoeal medications; eliminating high-gas foods – cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower; anticholinergic medications – some people need medications that affect certain activities of the autonomic nervous system to relieve painful bowel spasms; antidepressant medications; or counselling.

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

Announcements

Announcements must be sent by fax: 05-255 2181; 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.

Next Meeting of the Ipoh Stamp Group, Sunday May 18, 2pm at Purple Cane Teahouse, Osborne Street (Jalan Dato Tahwil Azar). Free to join and all stamp collectors are welcome. We are hosting the **Perak Stamp Fair and Exhibition June 20-22** and seek volunteers to help at the registration table at the fair and to be general ushers. For enquiries call Bernard 012 329 1747.

Kechara Earth Project organised by Kechara Ipoh Study Group, Sunday May 20, 9.30am to 11.30am at Jalan Dato Lau Pak Khuan, Ipoh Garden (in front of Ipoh Garden Post Office). Recycle to save the environment. Items that can be recycled: metal/aluminium, electronic equipment, plastics, newspaper/carton boxes, paper, old clothes. For more information, contact: Mr So 016 532 8309 or Yee Mun 012 522 3200.

Fatimah Challenge: I FEEL GOOD Programme, Saturday May 24, 2pm at Hospital Fatimah, Conference Room, 4th Floor. Contact Customer Service: 05 545 5777 Ext 214.

Ipoh City Nite Ride, Saturday May 24, 7pm to 12am. Register via: www.mica.com.my.

Effects of Domestic Violence on the Health of Women, seminar organised by the Perak Women and Health Bureau sub-committee and Perak Women for Women Society (PWW), Saturday, May 24 between 2pm to 5 pm at Kinta Riverfront Hotel and Suites, Ipoh. For registration and details call Rachel of PWW 05-546 9715.

2-Day Customised GST Workshop organised by MICCI (Perak Branch) May 26 & 27 at the Impiana Hotel. Aimed at specific industries as well as facilitating a special GST consultation. For further enquiries, call the MICCI office at 05 253 2233.

Fatimah Kids' Club Health Workshop – Learn Through Play, Saturday May 31, 9am at Hospital Fatimah, Conference Room, 4th Floor. A fun health workshop in English for kids aged 7-12 years during the forthcoming school holidays. With lots of exciting activities lined up for kids which are both educational and fun. Contact Customer Service 05 545 5777 Ext 214.

1st Ipoh Company, The Girls' Brigade Malaysia (GBM) 55th Anniversary Thanksgiving Banquet, Saturday June 7, 7pm at the Grand Valley Ballroom of Kinta Riverfront Hotel & Suites, Jalan Lim Boo Seng, Ipoh. In conjunction with the 57th Annual General Meeting of GBM and the National Officers' Retreat 2014 from 6-8 June. Former members of the company are invited to join in this momentous event. Facebook: 1st Ipoh Girls' Brigade 55th Anniversary Dinner or email: ipohgb55@yahoo.com.

MUSINGS ON FOOD



By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen

Food pics by Bruno Delamare

SeeFoon Savours a Whiff of Normandy in Ipoh.

When you have your own private Polo ground as a backyard, and the most extensive chain of laboratories and diagnostic clinics in the country, you may be excused for wanting your own private kitchen as well. No not your ordinary private home kitchen. Rather a French Fine Dining kitchen helmed by an authentic French Chef who has worked in Michelin-starred restaurants and who is keen to introduce his brand of creative cuisine to Ipohites with deep pockets.

I am referring to Dato' Beh Chun Chuan, the founder and Chairman of the BP Healthcare Group of companies who is a polo champion in multiple international tournaments and whose dream to dream bigger is now leading him to venture into the world of 'Haute' cuisine.

The brainchild of his youngest son Garvy who is still in University in the USA, the eponymous restaurant, **Garvy's In The Park**, is raising the bar on fine dining in Ipoh with Chef Bruno Delamare's exquisite compositions. I use the word compositions very deliberately, as each plate delivered to your table is a work of art in itself, pleasing to the eye as well as to the palate. I am almost reluctant to destroy the masterpiece on the plate as I lift fork or spoon to savour the creation in front of me.

The menu changes every three to four days with an average of three items for each course from Appetizers, First Courses, Mains followed by Desserts. Priced at **RM128 for 2 courses** (can be Starter and Main, or Main plus dessert) **RM158 for 3 courses** and **RM238 for 4 courses**, per person, the pricing may appear to be stiff to some but when you compare it to fine dining restaurants internationally, its par for the course.

The menu beckons with drool inducing items, written in plain English so there was no need for a translator to be present. I will only describe here a few of the items which I have had the pleasure to taste on two occasions. Chef Bruno, who has worked in a few Michelin-Star restaurants in Europe, believes in buying organic wherever possible and insists on the freshest of ingredients. When certain items are not available locally, he'll even have them flown in. A case in point are the **Tsakarya oysters** which are flown in from Normandy, Chef Bruno's home territory. This was a first course with an almost raw oyster perched on a poached scallop cocooned by a frothy lime foam and served with an avocado tartare, embellished on the plate with both a red bell pepper and a green herbal couli. Absolutely divine.

Another time I had the **Escargots BonBon**, escargots (French snails) encased in a ball of potato mash, and complemented by cress and featherlight beetroot foam.



Of special note is the extraordinary garnish which was a square of chicken skin, dried in a dehydrator and fried to a crisp. A brilliant and delicious touch from Chef Bruno.

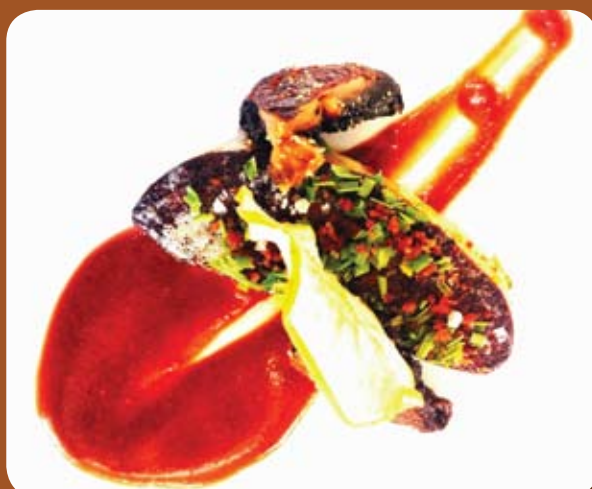
Garvy's is probably the only restaurant in Ipoh to have a '**Sous Vide**' machine in its kitchen. This allows a chef to cook something in a bag in a water bath for many hours at a controlled low temperature. The result is meat or fish that turns out perfectly every time while retaining all the umami goodness of its juices in the bag. I had the delightful treat of the **Tasmanian Trout** cooked sous vide. This was wild-caught trout, freshly flown in from Tasmania and served with chickpea puree flavoured with turmeric, wheatgerm squid black ink pasta and a lemongrass **Beurre Blanc** (white sauce made with fish stock and cream) with hints of kaffir lime. The trout was velvety smooth, melt-in-mouth tender without being mushy, the pasta perfectly al dente and the Beurre Blanc lending a velvety and umami mouthfeel to the pasta and the fish. I cleaned the plate and wished there was more of the sauce to slurp up with the bread which I had forgotten to mention, is all made on the premises and is delicious.

Not being much of a sweet eater, I wasn't particularly waiting on tenterhooks for dessert but on both occasions, the desserts I sampled were superb. The warm **Raspberry Souffle** with marshmallow and raspberry ice cream was a visual treat and I was loathe to break up the perfectly risen souffle with my spoon but was sure glad I did as each mouthful of that smooth featherlight souffle went down my gullet in rapid succession.

Similarly for the second dessert the **Valrhona Chocolate Douceur**, an irresistible medley of mousse, cake, parfait each with its inimitable flavouring from hazelnut to Grand Marnier; soil (the edible kid that is so much the rage these days) all made from Valrhona Chocolate, a French luxury chocolate coming from Hermitage, a wine-growing district near Lyon in France.

Chef Bruno is a stickler for detail. Not for him any store bought item for the restaurant. Every item on the menu is painstakingly made on the premises from the dehydrated organic flaxseed crackers in the Amuse Bouche, to the homemade marshmallow, to the purees, the coulis, and the foams.

Garvy's is certainly raising the bar on fine dining in Ipoh. Ipohites should be proud to have this high level of cuisine here. Well done Dato' Beh.



Garvy's In the Park French Dining

275 Jalan Permaisuri Bainun, (Kampar Rd) Ipoh 30250.
(Between BP Clinic and Perak Community Specialist Hospital)

Business hours: 12pm-2pm & 6.30pm-10pm. Closed Mondays.

<http://www.garvysmy.com/>

Reservations: +(60)5 255 8082

News

Muhammad Afiq's Signature Dishes

The recently-held cooking competition organised by food magazine, *Saji* and named, "Perghh! Sedapnya" was won by one young participant from Malacca. The winner took home a cash prize of RM300, certificates and hampers.

Muhammad Afiq Abdullah, 27, a bachelor-degree holder in Food Service Management who works as a nutritionist at the Raub District Hospital, Pahang won the coveted title beating 14 other aspirants.

"This is my first time participating in a cooking competition and, surprisingly I won," said Muhammad Afiq to Ipoh Echo. He did not expect to win, as the other contestants were more experienced than him and, moreover, he was the youngest in the crowd.

"I've never tried these recipes before. Maybe, it's my lucky day," exclaimed Muhammad Afiq. He prepared two dishes, one an Arab named, "Nasi Timur Tengah Kambing Kashmir with Acar Nenas Pancar Delima" and the other, Thai-style seafood spaghetti with herbs. His creativity and originality won the judges' hearts.

The competition was held at the concourse of the Aeon Shopping Complex at Station 18, Pasir Pinji recently. Over 500 guests and onlookers watched the animated event, with commentary provided by winner of Celebrity Masterchef Season 2, Zuraida Badron better known as Syura.

Ameira



An Exciting Education Benchmark

Fairview sets the stage for a new wave of educational standards

Fairview International School's Mock-Class Weekend held recently, brought a fresh new take on education for Ipoh parents where they had the chance of experiencing for themselves how their children's ability to learn can be dramatically transformed given the right approaches.

For the two days, mock classes were conducted for levels from Crèche to Grade 6 (ages 3 to 11 inclusive) at their Enrolment Office. Globally certified teachers from other established Fairview campuses in Malaysia were present to share the significance of the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes' unique features that unravels the thinking mind.

While the kids were absorbed in the learning for close to an hour, parents were enlightened on Fairview ethos and the widely accepted IB programme, which all other Fairview campuses throughout the country have been certified for by the IBO.

Crèche-level kids easily identified the concept of numbers and grasped the basic principles of addition through play. When the ball was tossed, kids would instinctively catch and in this process learn to count. Something else was happening at the same time – kids were subtly enhancing their motor coordination skills, linking action to cognitive senses and then associating movement with subliminal learning.

The older primary-level kids had their share of fun in a separate classroom. They were going through their multiplication tables but with a big difference. Kids related their multiplications to the 'real world' and quickly discovered for themselves the usefulness of what they were learning.

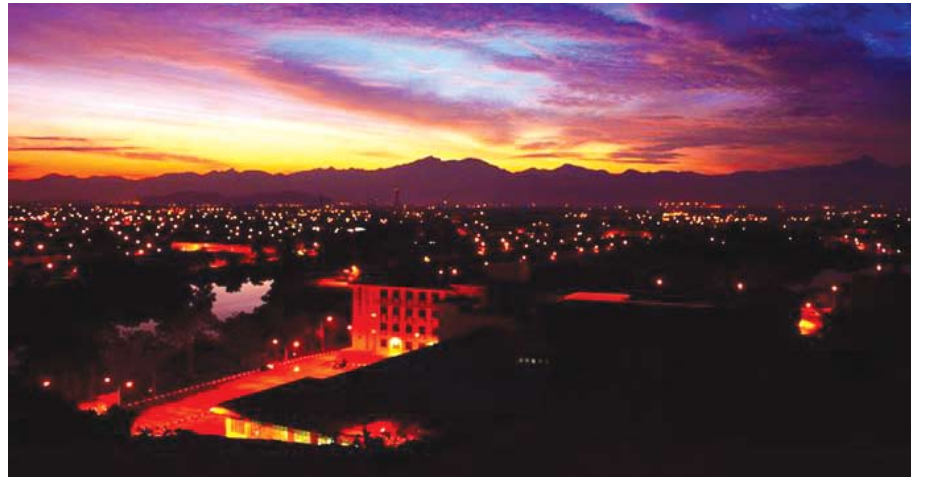
In a reality they could relate to, the children were asked to organise a plan for their own birthday parties. Putting up their own guest list, kids were able to work out the required budget to make it a smashing success. In the process, the students decided

for themselves what was required, what quantities they needed and how much it would cost in total.

The central defining backbone of an IB child is the world-famous Learner Profile. In a space of a little under an hour, these young kids embraced at least a few of the 10 attributes. Notably each of the



Ipoh a Retirement Haven



Ipoh is considered as one of the best places to retire in a recent report by leading American news magazine, U.S. News and World Report. It is ranked third behind Nha Trang, Vietnam and Chiang Rai, Thailand.

In an article published on April 16, Ipoh is said to be an increasingly popular retirement haven among Malaysians, which claims its fresh air, clean water and relaxing lifestyle not only improve the quality of life but also promote longevity. Foreign retirees are beginning to take note.

Ipoh is reported to have the feel of a small town despite a population of over half a million people. Retirees can expect a first-world healthcare service with a modern infrastructure and a city centre devoid of skyscrapers and high-rise buildings. The friendly nature of its people coupled with a high percentage of English speakers make it easy for foreigners to assimilate.

The writer, Kathleen Peddicord, who has had more than 28 years' experience covering this beat under her belt, said that retirees can sustain a comfortable lifestyle in Ipoh with a monthly budget of USD897 (RM2,960). Lenient immigration policies also make Malaysia an easy country to live full or part time.

City Councillor, Hang Tuah bin Din during the Council's Full Board Meeting recently cited the article as an achievement for the city. Ipohites, he said, should be proud of this acknowledgement and hope the city would grow in its own unique way.

Other cities listed in the report are Dumaguete in the Philippines, Loja, Cayo and Granada in the Americas and Tralee and Carcassonne in Europe.

Angain

Bane of Factory Owners

The increase in the annual assessment rate from 10 to 16 per cent is beginning to affect businesses in Ipoh and causing factory owners to delay setting up their premises in the city.

Councillor Muniandy Sellamuthu raised this during the Ipoh City Council's Full-board meeting on Wednesday, April 30. He said that it was difficult for factory owners to pay the additional 6 per cent in assessment rate, as their business had not grown in tandem with the hike. He suggested that the Council review the new rate and come up with a more effective solution to resolve the matter.

Councillor Low Leong Sin suggested that the Council explain to Ipohites as to why the rates were raised and how the Council plans to spend the additional revenue collected.

During the media conference, Mayor Dato' Harun Rawi brushed aside the matter explaining that it was irrelevant. Almost 80 per cent of ratepayers, he said, had settled their dues. "This is the price one has to pay for better services. The dissatisfied few can raise the issue with the Council," he remarked.

Angain



children espoused the values of being inquisitive (ability to question), communicative (to understand and be understood), reflective (to be insightful), thoughtful (to think things through) and the willingness to take risks (in order to explore and discover).

Quite possibly the best part of the weekend was when the kids took turns to stage their presentations. If ever there was compelling evidence of their manner of learning, this was the decisive moment. In the presence of their parents, these kids spoke about their own plans for their birthday parties. They not only demonstrated how they did their calculations but rationalised them too.

Much to the surprise of their parents, these kids basically defined the cutting edge of the IB methodology, laying proof that their potential can now be easily tapped and wonderfully maximised. As the kids were successful in showcasing their capabilities, the parents were equally overwhelmed by the outcome.

Fairview International School's Ipoh Campus is scheduled to commence classes on August 4. For more information on the next mock class, contact Michele Lum at lummmichele.ip@fairview.edu.my or call 05 313 6887 during office hours. Alternatively visit the school's website at <http://www.fairview.edu.my> or come for a chat at the Enrolment Office at 32B Jalan Lapangan Suria, Medan Lapangan Suria, 31350 Ipoh.

Khen Lim

Business

A Nationwide Roadshow

How do you apply franchise system in your business for non-franchise business? How to expand your business with Maxis? How to leverage social media for your business? How to manage your business based on "VA Fastest" model? How will GST affect your business?

These five pertinent issues were addressed at the SME Business Conference held recently at Impiana Hotel, Ipoh.

Sponsored by Maxis Berhad, the conference in Ipoh, the first stop of a nationwide roadshow beginning this year, was attended by some 200 business owners, or potential owners, hoping to take their business to the next level.

The first speaker, Sahar Sahad of Smart Franchise Partner, talked about the use of information technology in the franchise system, brand development, business communication, the application of franchise technology solutions such as business reporting and Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

The second topic, "Grow Your Business With Maxis" was presented by Afni Ediantie, Head of Product Marketing SME Enterprise Solution for Maxis Berhad. She dwelt on the differences and effectiveness in internet and mobile marketing, particularly response time for text messaging which is 90 seconds and email which takes over 2 days.

The talk by Johanqz Ooi of HeppiFace on leveraging social media for business was one of the more interesting topics for the Y Generation. While it is now very common for businesses to run social media campaigns, Ooi cautioned that owners must first know the objective of the campaign. Is it to boost brand awareness? Capture lead information? Boost page likes? Bring walk-in customers? The type of campaign can only be worked on once the objective is identified.

On the subject "Business Management Made Simple" based on "VA Fastest" model, Well Kam of VA Learning shared the importance of having a vision for the company. "VA Fastest" is an acronym for Vision, Action, Finance/Financial Management, Accounting & Accountability, Sales/Marketing/Branding, Technology, Environment, Systems and Team.

The final presentation was on how Goods and Services Tax (GST) will affect businesses. Presented by Nor Ismail Sabian from the Royal Malaysian Customs of Perak, attendees were able to get first-hand information on GST, which will be implemented on April 1, 2015, replacing the current Sales and Service Tax (SST). Most were interested to find out how GST is computed.

The taxation rate will be fixed at 6 per cent while the threshold for businesses is RM500,000. Businesses that do not reach this figure in annual turnover are not required to be a GST-registered company. However, voluntary registration is encouraged.

For socio-economic benefits, certain products and services are not subjected to GST. They include basic groceries such as rice, flour, sugar and cooking oil, education, public transportation and health care services.

This half-day conference was an education of sorts for all. Other cities that Maxis Berhad will cover this year are Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Penang.

Emily



Advertorial

From One Parent to Another: Clarity in the Chaos



“Chaos”; I’m a father of a 1 year old boy and like all responsible parents, my wife and I started the conversation about how we should educate our child. Looking at all the options, schools and systems I thought one word, “Chaos”. Where and how do we begin to start thinking of how our children should be educated? Advertisements these days are full of schools with extravagant facilities and pretty pictures. But do big football fields and Olympic-size swimming pools educate children? The veneer looks good but isn’t there more? How about fancy hardware like tablets and laptops? No. That can’t be it either.

How about teachers and where they come from? Superficially that held promise but does that mean that the ability to educate my son is restricted to individuals from certain countries? Surely not! I’ve observed that the best teachers and mentors hail from all walks of life; from humble “Kampung” beginnings to fancy foreign private schools. Interestingly, their most valuable lessons did not rely on their knowledge of the subject(s) taught but from the wisdom and skills they imparted; Skills like teamwork or organization; Wisdom which will allow my son to integrate knowledge, experience and a deep understanding that incorporates tolerance for the uncertainties of life including its ups and downs. Not to rush to conclusions, to calmly approach any situation knowing that everything plays out over time, to see the bigger picture.

What would I pay for my son to grow into an educated man, brimming with skills and wisdom?

Now, educational systems; How different are all these systems, really? They typically vary by what is taught, whether we teach one aspect of history or leave out another. Do I want my son to learn the Malaysian, British or Australian history? Surely that cannot be the answer. How do schools vary? Often from aligning themselves along geographical affiliations, the differences are typically the size of the school, teacher nationalities, student nationalities, extra-curricular activities and of course, swimming pool sizes. Isn’t there more?

Almost every educational system pays lip service to skills and value education but when we look at how they demonstrate value in their assessments, exams and certificates, there is little mention.

Enter the International Baccalaureate (IB); a revolutionary system that has changed the way we look at education forever. Finally, a programme that does not affiliate itself with ever-changing national agendas but rather one that focuses on the “how” of learning. Skills and values are paid equal importance in their assessment as knowledge acquisition. An IB student is assessed (examined) on not just their history facts but how to analyze the situational context, work in a team and their ability to consider the ethical perspectives. What would you pay for that kind of education?

This article is the first of a 6-part series on education. More exciting articles to come!

Dr Vincent Chian is currently the IB Diploma Director of Fairview International School. A former medical doctor working in psychiatry he now spends his time championing emotional and effective development in education.

Fairview International School’s Ipoh Campus is scheduled to commence classes on August 4, 2014. For more information, call **05 313 6888** or email to: enquiries_ipoh@fairview.edu.my.

Tourism

The Lucerne School of Tourism

A group consisting of 74 students, lecturers and hospitality professionals from the Lucerne School of Tourism of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland was in Ipoh recently as part of a 9-day visit to Malaysia.

The students are pursuing a part-time postgraduate degree in Tourism Management and part of their curriculum is to travel abroad and learn about the tourism industry of a particular country.

They were greeted at a welcoming ceremony graced by Dato’ Nolee Ashilin bt Mohamed Radzi, the Executive Councilor for Health, Tourism and Heritage, at Impiana Hotel, Ipoh where they were staying. Nolee expressed her happiness that efforts by the state tourism agency during the ITB-Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin) tourism fair last year had paid dividends with the visit of these Swiss students to Ipoh.

“The follow-up on our promotion at the Berlin tourism fair is a starting point to attract more visitors to the state. We have had many European tourists to Perak but very few from Switzerland. Hopefully, this will help create awareness of Perak as a tourist destination in Switzerland,” she added.

The principal of the School of Tourism, Manfred

Ritschard, was appreciative of the hospitality shown during their visit to Ipoh. He felt that Ipoh had plenty of potential for development in tourism. Focus, he said, must be given to ecotourism and measures taken to ensure sustainability of such touristic spots.

When asked for her impression of Ipoh, Lara Sterchi, a final year student, said that it was easy to assimilate with the locals because they speak good English. What was most impressive, however, was the fact that Malaysians were very friendly and helpful.

“We had trouble getting back to the hotel, as it was late and there were no busses. We sought the help of an Indian gentleman and his wife. The couple was kind enough to guide us to a taxi stand but when we got there, there were no taxis. The man asked around and soon managed to get us a taxi. It was very kind of him and he didn’t ask for anything in return”, she said, recounting an incident that happened when visiting Little India with a fellow student.

Copies of the Foodie’s Guide to the Best Eats in Ipoh, an Ipoh Echo publication written by the Echo’s food columnist SeeFoon Chan-Koppen was given to Manfred at the event.

The group headed for the Royal Belum State Park before ending their visit in Kuala Lumpur.

Angain



Community

Vaisakhi Open House



Over 2,000 Sikhs converged at the Ipoh City Council Square (Dataran MBI) to partake in the Vaisakhi state-level celebration recently. Other races were also seen at the open house mingling with the rest.

Gracing the occasion was Menteri Besar Dato' Seri DiRaja Zambry Abd Kadir who later launched the annual festivity. Present to lend their support were the Executive Councillor for Women, Family and Community Development, Social Welfare and National Integration, Dato' Rusnah Kassim and State Secretary, Dato' Seri Abdul Puhat bin Nayan.

Zambry, in his welcoming remarks, said that the open house exemplified the unity among the various races in the state. He thanked the Punjabi community for continuously supporting the Perak government in developing the state.

"The level of unity we achieved today is a reflection of the tolerance, understanding and respect we have for one another," he said. He thanked all those involved in making the open house a success. The MB gave donations to selected orphanages in the state, as part of the celebration programme.

Stealing the limelight was well-known TV3 personality, Datuk Karam Singh Walia who emceed at the open house. Besides feasting on local delicacies, guests were entertained to dances, songs, martial arts display and drumming.

Vaisakhi is one of the major celebrations on the Sikh calendar. Its objective is to commemorate the inauguration of the *Khalsa* (a collective body of all initiated Sikhs) on March 30, 1699. It is celebrated worldwide on April 14 each year.

Luqman

The Importance of Registering

"Register your marriage and keep all your documents in proper order," said Buntong Assemblyman Sivasubramaniam when relating the case of Shamala Muniandy, 21, who never attended a day of schooling because she did not have a birth certificate.

"The delay in her parents registering her at birth had caused her to miss school totally. The result is she only speaks Tamil and no other language," said Sivasubramaniam who was instrumental in helping her obtain her birth certificate and identity card. "Shamala has three children, ages 2 and 4 years and a nine-month-old baby. With her legal documents in hand she can now apply for welfare."

Her problems are still not over. Shamala had a traditional marriage which was not registered. Currently, her husband is in jail and is due for release in November. "She does not want her children to have the same problem. Upon his release she will register her marriage."

"As she could not produce a marriage certificate her children's birth certificates did not indicate the status of their citizenship. This will be a problem again when it is time to register them for school. I will again assist the family to formalise their documents when the time comes," added Sivasubramaniam.

The case for Shamala is most unfortunate. She is the last of five children where all her siblings were registered by her parents. According to the mother Elizabeth a/p Anthonysamy they kept putting off registering her birth. When her husband Muniandy passed away all effort stopped.

Elizabeth approached Sivasubramaniam for help when her efforts had failed. Sivasubramaniam approached the National Registration Department and provided all the family's documents to convince them Shamala was eligible for a birth certificate. Upon acknowledging that all documents were in order Shamala was granted her birth certificate and MyKad was issued to her a month ago.

Sivasubramaniam is willing to assist any family with similar problems.

AP



SII Community Project Wins International Award

A community project for marginalized children in Buntong, Ipoh was adjudged the Overall Winner of the Uniqueness in Diversity Award by *Soroptimist International South West Pacific* (SISWP). The project called Edufun is the brainchild of the Soroptimist International Club of Ipoh. It beat other winners from Fiji, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Townsville to win the Overall Best Project Prize.

The award was the highlight of the 29th Conference of Clubs of SISWP that was attended by more than 350 delegates from 13 countries in South West Pacific, from Malaysia to Papua New Guinea, Australia to Cambodia.

The conference theme: Uniqueness in Diversity is based on SISWP President Puan Sri Siew Yong Gnanalingam's manifesto to leverage on the diversity of cultures and thought leadership in South West Pacific countries to forge Women's Leadership and Empowerment, the central focus of the 3-day conference. Siew Yong is only the second Malaysian to helm SISWP in its 43-year history.

According to SI Ipoh President Lanka Sinniah, "The uniqueness and diversity of our project lies in its constituents and content. It addresses the needs of disadvantaged children from multi ethnic and multi religious backgrounds. They are raised in poverty, even violence, by parents who are drug addicts, alcoholics or single mothers."

"It was surprising that in prosperous Malaysia, there are many pockets of hardcore urban poor. As professional women of a service organisation such as Soroptimist International, our club felt it was its duty to help a community in need. It was also a community at risk, because neglect and poverty breeds crime and other social ills.

"To get our project off the ground, we focused on winning the trust and confidence of this community. We did it by organising medical camps for women and children. We also conducted hip hop dancing lessons for the children, and it helped break the ice. On December 1, 2012, we opened our Edufun Centre in Buntong, close to where the community lived."

"Our centre is open weekdays, from 2pm-6pm, and we hired a minder to care for the children after school. Our members conduct remedial classes because the children are weak students. We are pleased to see their grades improving, from Fs and Es last year to Cs and Bs this year. We also offer English lessons and hired a dance instructor to conduct hip hop classes."

"We had children who had never attended school because they were stateless.



We succeeded in obtaining birth certificates for some of them, where they are now attending national schools," said Lanka.

Almost 15 months into the project, Edufun has recorded a marked improvement in the children's self confidence, morale and academic grades. It has also attracted many well-wishers, who have started to contribute towards this cause.

Encouraged by the success of this project, SI Ipoh is embarking on another Edufun in Taman Mas, for another community of urban hardcore poor.

For further information on SI Ipoh's Edufun Centre, contact the club's President Lanka Sinniah at **012 519 0189** or President-Elect Jean Chai at **012 588 2313**.

Readers wishing to make monetary donations to support SI Ipoh's Edufun Project can do so by depositing their money to the club's **Public Bank account: 3151382533**.

Community

Not Your Ordinary Cafe



Ray of Hope, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) located in Bercham, is lauded for providing hospitality training and a career platform to those with learning difficulties. At the official opening of *Cafe Ray of Hope* recently, Dato' Chong Phaik Kee, Director of the Perak Welfare Department and the guest of honour, complimented the NGO for their altruistic efforts.

Ray of Hope has been in existence since 2001. In 2007, it opened its one-stop centre at Taman Sri Kurau in Bercham. An extension of the centre is *Cafe Ray of Hope*.

The eatery serves as a fully operational non-profit cafe, which gives job opportunities to people with learning difficulties. It aims to be financially self-sufficient although being generously aided by donations from well-wishers.

Those that partake in the running of the cafe go through the routine of learning the various skills required in managing an efficient establishment. A curriculum has been drawn up to assist the trainees in developing a sense of dignity, pride and self-worthiness so they can integrate with society.

The cafe too provides training for students who have completed their secondary education at special schools. The objective is to help prepare them for employment in normal cafes and restaurants upon completion.

Currently, some 27,299 individuals in Perak are registered as people with special needs. Of this number, 9644 (35 per cent) are those with learning disabilities.

Cafe Ray of Hope, located at 26 Persiaran Bercham Selatan 31, Taman Sri Kurau, Ipoh (GPS: N 04° 37.464' E 101 7.454'), is open from 9am to 5pm daily. It is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

Angain

Instilling the Reading Habit

Students and individuals thronged the Perak state library recently to support the government's call to instil the reading habit in the public. The 3000-odd crowd was part of the "Jom Baca Bersama Untuk 10 Minit" (Let's read together for 10 minutes) programme organised by Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Perak recently.

The programme was aimed at making the library a convenient education facility for students in a bid to create a better skilled and knowledgeable generation.

Present to launch the event was Dato' Nolee Ashilin binti Dato' Mohammed Radzi, the Executive Councillor for Health, Tourism and Heritage. Nolee praised the timing of the event, which coincided with the World Book and Copyright Day on Wednesday, April 23. She proposed that a Reading Hour, something similar to Earth Hour, be declared.

During the press conference that followed, she expressed her pleasure that the reading habit amongst Malaysians had increased significantly from two books per person in 2005 to 8 books per person in 2010. The increase in visitors to the Perak State Library from 80,000 in 2012 to 100,000 in 2013 was also a significant development. She complimented the state library for organising activities to inculcate the reading habit in the public and urged the media to provide coverage for these activities.

The "Let's Read Together" programme was being simultaneously launched in other state libraries throughout the country.

Angain



OBITUARY

In Fond Memory

The Venerated Chye Kooi Loong (1929-2014)

It is nearly six weeks since war historian Chye Kooi Loong, 85, passed away; it has taken some time for me to gather my thoughts and put them into words. I was acquainted with the Chye' literary works well before I knew the man. Chye contributed many articles relating to the Second World War and the Malayan Emergency to the New Straits Times over a period of many years.

"Hello good morning, can I speak to Mr Chye please", I said and a friendly voice replied, "This is Chye". It was followed by an invitation to visit him and we became friends. And what ensued was lunch and dinner with the Chyes whenever I could visit them. We were also on a first name basis, he called me, "Thambi" and I called him, "Mr Chye".

Chye was very firm in his beliefs and his ideology. He was raised a Taoist and remained one till the end. He authored the acclaimed book, "The History of the British Battalion in the Malayan Campaign (1941-1942)" which details the grim reality of British soldiers in fending off the Japanese Imperial Army's attacks on three ridges in Kampar, Perak; Thompson, Green and Cemetery. Chye's book is still being used as a reference by military institutions worldwide. The book was written in memory of the soldiers who died in the Battle of Kampar, some of whom he personally knew as a little boy.

He was better known outside Malaysia and was a guest speaker at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst when he was introduced to cadet officers from the Malaysian Army undergoing training there. The Ministry of Defence was surprised that a Malaysian was addressing foreign officers but never their own. This was rectified when the ministry invited Chye to speak at the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College on a regular basis.

The Japanese Occupation and the sufferings endured during the war period made Chye loath the Japanese Imperial Army. He saw the brutality committed by the soldiers of Nippon on the Malayan populace and always reminded Japanese visitors on what he lived through. He never harboured any hatred towards the Japanese people, as it was not in his nature to be vengeful. But he was annoyed that the Japanese government never admitted the atrocities committed in the name of Emperor Hirohito.

During the Emergency, Chye worked as an interpreter for the British Military. His job took him to the outskirts and the new villages to address the population, in their colloquial language, on the assistance and policies being offered by the government. He was once confronted by a Communist terrorist who told him that the only reason why he was spared was because he was not a *chao-kaio* (running dog).

There was one about a Second World War U-Boat Captain from the Kriegsmarine who arrived at his gate in a taxi and gave him a salute. Then there was a time where the small road in front of his house was full of staff cars from high commissions

and embassies and how some of these distinguished guests, in suits and uniforms, were perched on stools in his simple wooden house listening to his stories.

Chye and his wife were among the seven families who met Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at Carcosa Seri Negara in 1998. Prior to the meeting, the British High Commission's protocol officers briefed them how to conduct themselves in the presence of Her Majesty. He told me that the strawberries they had for tea were flown in from Australia.

Sultan Azlan Shah awarded Chye with a *Darjah Kebesaran Mahkota Negeri Perak Yang Amat Mulia Paduka Mahkota Perak* (PMP) while Her Majesty the Queen bestowed him with a MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). The awards were an acknowledgement of Chye's contributions to the history of Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

Chye's passion was the preservation of Green Ridge, the last remaining battleground where British soldiers fought a heroic defensive battle during the war. This hallowed ground, dotted with foxholes, firing and communication trenches, exemplifies the desperate moment once upon a time. Utilising rudimentary tools the positions were constructed within a week. Unfortunately, due to the lack of commitment from the powers-that-be, Chye's dreams remain unfulfilled.

I learned many things though my friendship with Chye. As a retired teacher he had a way in dealing with a sometime hard-headed young man. In my eyes, he was a hero. Chye was never after money. The simple acknowledgement he received through letters and souvenirs from various military establishments made him a happy man.

I sincerely hope that someday, perhaps a decade down the road, somebody somewhere will discover the name Chye Kooi Loong and learn of his good works here on Earth.

Mr Chye, you may be gone but you are never forgotten.

Daniel Prakash James



Upcoming Events

Father's Day Promotion

Hainanese chicken rice, Cantonese fried kuey teow, nasi goreng kampung and clay pot tandoori. These four dishes may seem common but they make up the Chef's Specials menu of Symphony Café, the coffee house of Symphony Suites Hotel.

Said Symphony Suites Hotel General Manager David Tsen, "These are familiar dishes that are available at many eateries in Ipoh. However, we have put together this Chef's Specials menu because our chefs are able to prepare them better. Moreover, this is good for those who are pressed for time and do not want the hassle of going through the many items available on our regular à la carte menu."

This Chef's Specials menu is available for lunch daily, except Wednesdays, from noon to 2.30pm. Priced at RM18 nett each, it comes with a complimentary house mocktail.

Meanwhile, for Father's Day, which will be celebrated on the third Sunday of June (June 15), Symphony Café has planned a mouth-watering BBQ buffet dinner to tease our palates. The main courses in this international buffet spread include ayam masak merah, stir-fried beef with ginger spring onion, pan grilled fish fillet with lemon butter sauce and many more items. The highlight of the menu is the delectable roasted whole lamb with mint sauce served at the barbeque stall.

At a price of RM55 nett per adult, for every five paying adults, the sixth person dines for free. Children below 12 years of age will enjoy a 20 per cent discount off the full price.

Make your reservations now for Chef's Specials or Father's Day BBQ buffet dinner by calling **05 312 2288**.

Emily

Symphony Café (Symphony Suites Hotel)

41 Lapangan Symphony Business Park, Jalan Lapangan Symphony, 31350 Ipoh.
Tel: +605-312 2288.



"a bit of THIS, a bit of THAT" Concert at klpac

This is the event of the year most eagerly-awaited by members of the Kinta Valley Wind Orchestra (KVWO). Established in 2010, this is KVWO's maiden performance in Kuala Lumpur which marks another milestone in their achievements.

On May 30 and 31, klpac Symphonic Band (klpac SB) will collaborate with KVWO to put up a joint concert themed 'a bit of THIS, a bit of THAT'.

Mr Eugene Pook (Music Director of KVWO) and Ms Cheryl Mah (Music Director of klpac SB) will deliver a unique repertoire ranging from Broadway, Bluegrass hymn to modern symphonic overture. The programme includes West Side Story, Highlights from Spirited Away and many more.

While both wind bands are community-based initiatives, the KVWO is based in Ipoh and is the only community wind orchestra in Perak. It is made up mostly of students and young adults who never had a formal music education, simply because their families could not afford it. They learnt their music through taking part in school bands and many of them have always dreamt of "going further". It is a dream come true when they got selected to become a member of the orchestra.

klpac SB (formed in 2009) and KVWO both share similar objectives in the sense that they aim to provide a platform for musicians from all walks of life, to get together to make music and to rehearse on a regular basis.

This joint concert will showcase the uniqueness and talents of both orchestras. It provides a wonderful opportunity for KVWO to perform out of Kinta Valley and it is good exposure for its members to watch and learn from another band of the same nature.



Date: 30 & 31 May 2014

Time: 8.30pm

Venue: Pentas 1, klpac, Jalan Strachan, Sentul Park, off Jalan Ipoh, 51100 KL

Tickets: RM43 & RM23 (students, disabled and DAS members)

For tickets call: 03 4047 9000 (klpac) or 03 7880 7999 (ticketpro)

Online ticketing: klpac.org or ticketpro.com.my

Heritage

Taiping's Old Museum House

About 40 heritage lovers joined in the Taiping Heritage Society's visit to the Old House Museum, located at Market Square recently. The facility is along Jalan Taming Sari near the old Taiping wet market, where the town's iconic clock tower stands.

The museum, the latest tourist and history buff attraction in town, was 'adapted' in 2013 into a 130-year-old three-storey heritage shophouse belonging to the late Lim Zi You. The house-museum opened its doors during Chinese New Year this year. It records and recollects the history of the Lim family dynasty after their move to Malaya from China over a century ago. Lim started business making charcoal stoves and later alcoholic drinks for the immigrant population in old Taiping.

Former Perak Heritage Society president, Law Siak Hong, who was in the group, said that the museum is Taiping's pride. "It's a unique icon, as old stuff from the original owner are still kept intact in the house", he said.

The house has all the trimmings of a bygone era like turn-of-the-century furniture and fittings, a large dining room, ancestral hall, sitting area, large bedrooms with a Qing dynasty bed and old toilet baths, all built from old construction materials, joints, techniques and carved wood. Many impressive antiques and rare objects are displayed for the appreciation of keen history enthusiasts.



Taiping Heritage Society's honorary secretary, P. Kesavan, said that there is an urgent need for the preservation and protection of old buildings and shophouses in Taiping. "I believe Taiping's heritage status is merely a declaration, which has no protection status. What is really needed is to gazette the old parts of the town to be totally protected under the law, like is done in Penang and Malacca."

Kesavan added that there had to be a permanent solution to protecting Taiping's heritage, which was fast disappearing, and a proper mechanism to stop the cutting of old trees in the town, which were symbiotic with its heritage feel.

The house museum's chief caretaker, Tan Kok Siew or Kapitan, as he is fondly called, said that most of the original fittings and designs are well preserved and he took the liberty of adding his own collection of antiques and artifacts for display.

"By housing a museum in this old building, I can help to preserve the antiquity of the entire structure and at the same time open it for public viewing to inculcate a passion for saving things of the past. These buildings have great value for everyone to appreciate," he said.

Tan hoped the museum would encourage the conservation of heritage buildings and icons in Taiping and stop them from being destroyed forever.

Nirmal Ariyapala

Arts & Culture

A Musical Tribute to P. Ramlee

Legendary star, Teuku Zakaria Teuku Nyak Puteh or P. Ramlee is without doubt Malaysia's icon and one-time film idol. Although it has been four decades since the star's demise, P. Ramlee's movies and songs are still a huge draw with Malaysians.

As a fitting tribute to the legend's artistic works, a musical play by *Persatuan Kebudayaan Daerah Kinta* (Kinta District Cultural Society) is in the pipeline.

"Muzika Ramlee" will be staged at the auditorium of the Perak Department of Arts and Culture along Jalan Caldwell, Ipoh on May 23 and 24. It will showcase a new cast line-up following an audition for fresh talents held at the auditorium on Saturday, April 26.

The objective of the audition was two-fold, to find the right people for the musical and also the crew. Besides that, those who came for the selection would have the opportunity to participate in upcoming plays scheduled in June and September.

Director and script writer, Ard Omar, said the play is centred around three young men who worked at a *joget* joint in an entertainment park. The trio is always in some kind of trouble with the management. Their antics and the hilarious ways in which they go about resolving their problems would be the main theme of the musical.

"I am really excited about the play, as the songs bring fond memories of my past," said producer Yusof Najmi. "P. Ramlee's songs are true classics," he enjoined.

Tickets for the musical are priced at RM3 for students and RM5 for adults. They are available at the auditorium on performance days.

Ameira



Young Perak

Poi Lam Shines in Debate

Poi Lam High School, Pengkalan, Lahat emerged the champion in the 49th Rotary Club Group B English Debate held recently. Poi Lam's Koid Yi Jiek, a Senior One student also won the best speaker award.

This is an achievement for students from a Chinese educated background to excel in an English language debate. All four students are from the Senior One (Form 4) classes.

Mr Chan Yoong Tat, an ex-debater himself, helped train the students. All four students underwent three weeks of intensive training to get themselves in shape. Mr Chan said they still had a long way to go. The school will be entering these students for the Chinese Schools Debates organised by HELP University sometime in July 2014. But first they have to make the cut in the Northern Zone Debate.

The school places great emphasis on its language learning programmes especially Bahasa Malaysia, English and Chinese and encourages students to participate in debates and other contests like spelling-bees, forums and speeches. It is hoped that by doing so, students' interests and performance will be enhanced.



Sport

Windfall for Hockey Team

Tasek Corporation Berhad has extended its Corporate Social Responsibility programme to beyond educational activities by fully sponsoring the Anderson School's hockey team.

The amount earmarked by the Ipoh-based cement factory is RM58,360, covering a period of three years beginning 2014 till 2016. The sponsorship includes the building of a gymnasium, provision of jerseys and equipment and stadium fees.

During the mock cheque handing-over ceremony, held at the school hall on Tuesday, April 23, Lian Ka Siew, Group Chief Operating Officer of Tasek Corporation Berhad, said that Anderson School's hockey team was chosen because of its stellar performance and consistency. The team's prowess has engendered itself to sport-loving Malaysians of all ages.

Principal Mohamd Guffri, thanked Tasek Corporation Berhad for its benevolence. With financial support from a well-meaning corporate entity in town, Anderson School Ipoh will continue to produce excellent hockey players for the state and the country.

The school is a formidable force when it comes to hockey for it has produced many hockey greats in the past. The hockey team has been an active participant in the Malaysian Junior Hockey League and has won many accolades.

Angain



Malaysian Amateur Golf Open 2014



The Royal Perak Golf Club (RPGC) will host the 112th edition of the Malaysian Amateur Golf Open which will be held from **May 22 to 25**. The 4-day tournament will feature top amateur players from Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific region, including the winner of last year's edition, Kevin Marquees from Australia.

The Malaysian Golf Association (MGA) has confirmed that 13 countries will take part in this year's tournament. They are Australia, Bahrain, Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Philippines and Thailand.

A total of 156 golfers have registered for the competition, out of which 44 are Malaysians. The number is expected to rise, as the tournament approaches. Amateur golfers who take part need to have a handicap of 4 and less.

MGA President, Tan Sri Mohd Anwar Mohd Nor thanked RPGC for agreeing to organise this blue ribbon amateur event. He hoped a younger and more formidable golfing talent would emerge from this year's outing.

The Malaysian Amateur Open, which started in 1894, is one of the most popular tournaments in the region. Many golf clubs around the country have made their bids to host the event. For RPGC it is indeed an honour to play host to Malaysia's oldest golf championship.

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Land Encumbrances	Charged To Malaysian Banking Berhad		Charged To Malaysian Banking Berhad		Nil
Total units	100		96		176
Exp. Completion date	Oct 2015		Oct 2014		July 2015
Land tenure	Freehold		Freehold		Freehold
Price	Min RM 866,210 Max RM 1,267,800		Min RM 580,260 Max RM 738,800		Min RM 358,160 Max RM 477,800
Appraising Authority	Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh		Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh		Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh