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Scrap metal thieves cash-in on dirty deals

Ipoh houses, shops and factories are now being targeted day and night

Read our full report - page 2
Photo by Rosli Mansor

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METAL THIEVES ON THE STREETS OF IPOH

What can be done to halt the plundering?

By Nisha Devina Roy

As international metal prices soar so, too, does the crime rate for scrap metal theft across Perak's main urban centres – particularly Ipoh.

Local thieves specialising in this nefarious "trade" are becoming brazenly indifferent to police countermeasures. Driven by substantially increased returns, they are now directing their raids both day and night.

Working individually, in pairs and in groups of three or four, they are plundering manhole covers, telephone wires, air conditioner coils, sections of metal fencing, segments of power transmission towers, aluminium gutters, copper down-piping and lead roof sheathing. The list goes on.

RECORDS BROKEN

Driven by demand in China, the international prices of copper and lead have broken all records over recent months. What is more, the experts are predicting metal prices across the board will continue to rise in the foreseeable future. As a reflection of this, non-ferrous scrap metal in 2001 fetched RM1.96 a pound. Today this price has shot up to RM11.46 a pound.

Homeowners and business operators, targeted by metal thieves, are now having to meet far steeper replacement costs for stolen gutters, siding, downspouts, septic tank covers and other steel, aluminium or copper items.

SINGLE HEISTS

On industrial sites, thieves are making off with copper coil and wiring worth hundreds of thousands of ringgit in planned, single heists.

While all this creates serious problems for the state. An intensifying pattern for scrap metal thievery is being imposed nationwide.

Clear indications are that such activity is far more rampant in areas experiencing high unemployment and drug use. Herein, of course, lies an important message for Ipoh.

Still, there is reason for long term optimism providing local authorities recognize and act on specific features of the crime. One possible counter-measure is obvious.



A vital fire hydrant, all parts present and correct.

Authorities and the community must put pressure on scrap metal dealers. While unquestionably not all such traders function deviously, this general trading scene still harbours the conduits for stolen property.

The Ipoh Echo managed to get in touch with a former scrap metal thief. He was able to give an insider's view on how this criminal activity has be-



An intact manhole cover that has so far escaped theft.

come so prevalent. Steven (name changed to protect identity) appeared rather nervous at first but, when prodded, justified his previous actions on the grounds of family requirements. "I have a big family, he explained.

"Even with two jobs I could barely meet utility and food payments. Stealing manhole covers and selling them as scrap metal was a good way to make extra money to buy uniforms and shoes for my children. What else was I meant to do?"

The Ipoh Echo pointed out that stealing a manhole cover remained a crime. Steven then maintained his former actions were non-violent and thus not as serious as other crimes. "I was not hurting people. I was helping my family."

This somewhat fatuous "Robin Hood" philosophy seemed pointless

to pursue.

The hopefully reformed criminal confirmed that a significant proportion of Perak's scrap metal thieves were drug addicts looking for their next fix. "They just steal one or two septic tank covers. They sell these and purchase drugs from their earnings. Everyone is desperate for something," he lamented.

One point Steven emphasized was perhaps

worth noting; a segment of the latest scrap metal thieves plying their trade in Perak are decidedly more innovative than their predecessors. In order to get away with bigger and better booty, they now drive get-away lorries while accomplices perform quick grab-and-runs with manhole covers, drain covers and gutters.



Any chunk of metal is a potential target - this time it was fence railing.



Another vital fire hydrant - vandalized by scrap thieves

Others are even more blatant. They masquerade as construction workers to target abandoned or vacant homes. In most instances, neighbours never question why 'construction workers' are fiddling with manhole covers, down piping and such.

At some point metal thieves have to unload their pickings. Currently this is not proving difficult. Numerous scrap metal

There is nothing more to it. No need to fill out paperwork. No requirement to reveal identities by presentation of ID cards. No official records need to be kept.

A significant number of scrap metal dealers are reluctant to badger sellers about where the metal pieces they are offering come from. Scrap metal is just that - stray pieces of metal with no clues to their



A stolen cover replaced by a cement replica

centers in Malaysia and adjacent territories willingly accept metal for cash with few questions asked.

While speaking to a scrap metal dealer in Perak, the Ipoh Echo was told that the process was not a complicated one. People simply pull up, drop off their load, have it weighed, then drive off with cash.

origins.

While researching the issue, the Ipoh Echo spoke to several scrap metal dealers who maintained they never accepted stolen stock. They also maintained they reported to the police any suspicious activity coming their way.

On the other hand police report that approaches of this nature from scrap metal dealers were extremely rare.

WHO REPORTS?

They say most metal thefts are reported by people whose goods have been stolen.

Three months ago Sabah moved against the escalating crime of metal theft by appointing a sole agent to purchase scrap metal. The move triggered considerable opposition from scrap dealers.

They maintained the government PLOY was

nothing more than an excuse to monopolise the RM350 million local scrap metal industry. The dealers argued that metal theft could more effectively be reduced through police cooperation with government departments and agencies rather than via operations of a sole agent.

However, an underlying problem raised by some scrap dealers is how one identifies stolen scrap metal?

One Perak dealer simply stated: "Many people come into our yards and tell us they are renovating their homes, throwing out old air conditioners and such. It is not really our problem to ask, is it?"

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

Possible measures to counter stolen scrap metal trading involves a requirement for dealers to tag and hold items for a specific period of time before resale. As far as the sale of air-conditioning coils are concerned, these should be restricted to licensed companies.

Sellers of scrap metal should also be required to receive payment by cheque or voucher, eliminating all cash payments.

NEW RESTRICTIONS

In the meantime, local governments and councils could reduce the traffic of stolen metals by slapping new restrictions on all points of sale. This could include requiring all traders in scrap metals to produce identification cards.

Making air-conditioning units theft-proof might be another approach.

Meanwhile metal thefts remain a serious problem for everyone concerned - property owners, home builders, public utilities and the community at large.

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IT STARTED OFF QUIETLY ENOUGH, AND THEN . . .

A dangerous relic is discovered . . . a plane is ditched into a garden pond . . . and a former MB loses his cool

June seemed to be lining up as a run-of-the-mill sort of month. The only event of any significance slated for the 30 day period was the first sitting of the Perak State Legislative Assembly. But then things began to

tax payers a few million ringgit.

Which, of course prompts the question: could a 67-year bomb really pose a danger after laying in water for so long?

Five days later, around lunchtime, an Eagle 150B

pick a populated area to train? And finally, was the plane airworthy?

According to a source the trainee pilot was being tested on switch-off and switch-on drill. This involves switching off the engine and allowing the plane

doors there were some decidedly heated exchanges taking place indoors.

At the State Legislative Assembly, Tajol Rosli and his 28 Barisan Nasional assemblymen, in a rather unbecoming show of pique, marched out of the State Assembly. That happened on Thursday, June 26 – day three of the week-long session.

The BN representatives were unhappy because



Tajol Rosli

one of their members was denied the opportunity of speaking first when the day's sitting began.

This prompted Sungei Rapat Assemblywoman, Hamidah Osman, to utter some derogatory remarks to the Speaker, V. Sivakumar. She declared unabashedly: "I didn't agree with the statement but I wanted the Speaker to agree with me."

A total of 24 police reports were made against her throughout the country.

Pete Seeger's "Where have all the flowers gone?" folk song comes to mind at this point. Its closing lines seem most appropriate: "When will they learn? When will they ever learn?"



Remains of an Eagle 150B get inspected in what used to be an immaculate Taman Chempaka garden.

happen . . . with a vengeance!

On Saturday, June 14, 2008 a man found a 1000-lb bomb – believed to be either a Second World War or a Malayan Emergency relic – near a bridge spanning the Sungei Panji in Tambun.

The police, taking no chances, evacuated residents within the area before Police bomb disposal experts prepared to detonate the bomb *in situ*. Inexplicably, though, it took the experts two separate demolition blasts to render the old ordnance "harmless". This, they were able to proclaim on Saturday, June 21. In monetary terms, the whole exercise might well have cost

airplane crashed into the garden of a house in Taman Chempaka injuring a trainee pilot and his instructor.

Both were subsequently warded at the Ipoh General Hospital.

The two-seater Eagle 150B belonged to the Integrated Training and Services Academy based at the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport.

A FEW QUESTIONS

An inquiry is ongoing. It may take months to complete and the findings are unlikely to be made public. Still, a few questions are in order. Foremost, why was the plane flying so low? Secondly, why

to glide before switching on the engine again. Such manoeuvres require flying at a minimum height of 1000 feet.

Indeed, such training is only permissible over the open sea and above beaches or low-density population areas.

It is going to cost the company a sizable sum in compensations and replacements.

The locally built Eagle 150B markets at about RM600,000 new.

Third-party claims will take years to settle. There is one outstanding claim and it is still in the court after more than six years.

And while all this excitement was going on out-

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EDITORIAL

LEGACY OF INCOMPETENCE

Speculation about the new mayor for Ipoh ended when Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin, announced on Friday, July 4, that the vacant post would be filled by Roshidi Hashim.

Roshidi has been Ipoh City Hall's Secretary since July 2006. Prior to this he was private secretary to the former MB, Dato' Seri Tajol Rosli. He has also served with the Anti-Corruption Agency for over 15 years as a prosecuting officer.

The man may have the credentials but is he the right person for the job? This is the burning question on the lips of Ipohites.

Since acquiring city status in 1988, Ipoh has witnessed seven individuals taking on the mayor's post. Their performance has been mediocre, at best. Being civil servants, their loyalty is not to ratepayers but to their superiors. In this case, the superiors are the State Secretary, the Menteri Besar and to a lesser extent, the Sultan; but not necessarily in that order.

Only one person stood out in that crowd and he was Dato' Ismail Shah Bodin. Ismail was the second mayor of Ipoh from 1993 to 1994.

A disciplinarian, Ismail would walk the streets to check on cleanliness, especially the city's public parks, food courts and wet markets. He would check on house owners making extensions and would demolish those

structures lacking the required approvals. Officers of Ismail's ability, however, are few and far between.

Appointing civil servants to a hot seat inevitably defeats the purpose of making a vibrant city like Ipoh tick. Pakatan Rakyat has failed to fulfill its pre-election promise to take the administering of local councils a notch higher.

Although it has appointed members of the public to sit on the state's 15 local councils, this is far from enough.

Ideally, the posts of council presidents and mayors should be elected. But since this is not possible for constitutional reasons, the next best thing is to appoint someone outside the civil service circle. That someone should carry no excess baggage that might impair his performance. Without the "extras" he could then focus on micro-managing the town or city, with which he is entrusted.

Ipoh needs someone of high calibre to right the wrongs of the past. Someone who calls a spade a spade, someone who has the interest of residents at heart and someone who is beholden, not to his many "bosses" but to Ipohites *per se*.

Is the legacy of incompetence to continue unhindered? Has nothing changed?

The Ipoh Echo pledges to observe and report fairly and objectively as the scenario evolves.

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Ramesh Kumar**

THINKING ALOUD

By G. Sivapragasam

PARLIAMENT NEEDS DEMOCRACY

And a free, fair and objective press remains a vital ingredient

Ostensibly Malaysia is rapidly becoming a dangerous place. The latest evidence of this notion was demonstrated by the introduction of two restrictions in none other than the very symbol of sanctuary – Parliament House.

Literally, the 'corridors' of this august house were declared off limits to news reporters and each media house given a maximum quota of five personnel to cover parliamentary sessions.

The reason for this move, supposedly, was security. "How do we know whether those showing the press tag are indeed journalists?" was the quote reported.

Purportedly, this was the first time in the history of independent Malaysia that such regulations had been imposed – a measure thought quite unnecessary even during the nation's most troubled periods.

The media reacted to the restrictions by boycotting all press conferences and denying publication of press statements by both the members of the Government and opposition.

The backlash resulted in the hasty removal of these restrictions. The rules survived only one day.

Autocracy?

Apparently the ruling was the result of a decision taken independently by the Speaker of the House, Tan Sri Pandikar Amin

Mulia, together with one Deputy Speaker. No one else, including the Minister in charge of Parliament Affairs, Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz, appears to have had an inkling of this decision. The rule caught not only the newspapers by surprise but backbenchers as well, some of whom were incensed enough to remove the barricades.

Surely the whole unhappy episode, with all its acrimony and embarrassment, could have been avoided. Prior to the decision the potential consequences of such a step should have been considered. Consultation with those likely to be affected by such a ruling should have been undertaken.

The Press in Democracy

There needs to be recognition that the press is an integral part of the democratic process. The consequence of limiting access to information affects its quality and, consequently, its value. Democracy functions successfully by delicately balancing the various institutions that make the system possible. A seemingly insignificant act can affect this balance and have far reaching consequences.

The media have historically been a critical component of democracy. It is an institution as important as the legislature, judiciary and the executive. It is for good reason that mass media are referred to as "The Fourth Estate".

Nineteenth century

necessarily out of writing is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power; a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite."

These words have never been more meaningful than in today's internet age.

Evolution needs time

It can be argued that the Speaker's action was partly justified. The pandemonium often witnessed in our Parliament's precincts is, admittedly, very different from the decorous atmosphere that prevails in similar institutions in first world countries.

But, whereas the countries that the Speaker refers to have had long histories of two party systems, our parliament has just emerged, for the first time, with a meaningful opposition.

With time it will evolve and achieve maturity.

The process cannot be hastened by top down imposition of rules and regulations. Indeed it may

retard natural growth.

Delivery Form and News credibility

Ironically, as a consequence of the dispute, the official launch of the government web log by the Information Minister, Ahmad Shabery Cheek, scheduled for July 25, had to be postponed. The intent of this website is avowedly to counter false and inaccurate information being published in the numerous blogs and websites ruling cyberspace.

Our government's approach is puzzling as information is information whether it is provided in electronic form or by other means such as radio, television or newsprint.

The perception that information in electronic media can only be successfully countered with electronic media is questionable. The reason people are turning to blogs and websites is that they are wary of the credibility of information contained in traditional media.

One obvious approach would be to work towards constructing source credibility. This way public perception of the trustworthiness of traditional media may change. Another vital step would be to effect liberalisation of the overall national press. To a degree the government has already begun this process by allowing PAS to publish its party newspaper Harakah fortnightly and awarding Parti Keadilan a printing permit.



Its august corridors must remain open to scrutiny

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ISSUES TO WATCH

A DEMOCRATIC EXERCISE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Finally, the villagers at RPT Tasek vote for their ketua kampung

Kampung Tersusun Tasek or Rancangan Perakampongan Tempatan (RPT) Tasek, as it is officially known, is a 120-acre enclave off the Tasek-Tanjong Rambutan trunk road. Kampung Tersusun, as the name suggests, is a planned village with the necessary infrastructure built specifically for the rakyat living on the fringes of major towns in Malaysia. Those who qualify are each given a plot of land. They are required to build their own houses within a stipulated time frame.

RPT Tasek is one of them. It comprises 300 plots of which 245 are occupied. The kampung has a population of about 2000 – mainly retired Malay government servants.

RPT Tasek was carved out of disused mining land in 1984 and over time the kampung has assumed

its own identity. Like all other villages in the country, life revolves around the mosque where people congregate for prayers and religious functions.

The mosque committee, therefore, plays an important role in the daily lives of the dwellers.

CHANGED SITUATION

Ketua kampung (village heads) in the country are nominated by the respective state governments. The nominees are normally influential people with links to the ruling party. The objective is to have policies disseminated to the grassroots through these chosen proxies.

However, things have changed since *Pakatan Rakyat* won control of Perak and four other states in the March 8 elections. True to their election manifestoes, *Pakatan Rakyat* has given villagers the opportunity to elect their own leaders.

In Perak, elections for 874 *ketua kampungs* were conducted over a period stretching more than a week beginning Thursday, June 19.

The RPT Tasek election was held on Saturday, June 21 between 10 am and 2.30 pm. Only a single polling station was established for the purpose – the *Kemas (Kemajuan Masyarakat)* kindergar-



Cik Gu Hashim, the newly elected ketua kampung vows to unite the residents of RPT Tasek.



The only polling station

ten building beside the mosque.

Three men contested for the post of village head: Abidin Jali Hijazi bin Mat Jiri, 57, Ahmad bin Sutan, 53, and Hashim bin Mohd Ali, 67. All had served on the mosque committee and are, therefore, familiar with the residents.

A total of 496 voters had cast their votes when polling ended at 2.30 pm. The figure represented only 48 per cent of the eligible voters. The poor turnout could be attributed to poor publicity.

THE WINNER

Hashim bin Mohd Ali obtained 213 votes and was declared the winner. He was a teacher at Sam Tet Secondary School Ipoh. Hashim and his wife, Sharifah Zenaidah, are well-liked by the villagers who cite them for their pleasant dispositions.

In an interview with *Ipoh Echo*, Hashim outlined his plans for RPT

Tasek. "Unity is my primary concern," he said. "The kampung folks are divided along political lines and this is bad. I'll bring them together so we can agree to disagree in a more civilised way."

Some of the lingering problems that require attention in the kampung are related to drainage, public transport and mosquitoes. "The scarcity of buses going to schools in the city centre is problematic. Parents are finding it difficult to send their kids to schools," he lamented. Hashim intends to raise these issues with City Hall and the state government. He told the *Echo* that he would soon call for a residents' meeting to get feedback and a clearer picture of fellow villagers' sentiments.

The less than encouraging voter turnout in the RPT Tasek election should be addressed.

VALUE OF INFORMATION

Publicity is required. In future, the print and electronic media should be roped in to help along with the Information Department which itself appears dormant.

There is an added complication. The former nominated village heads are still being bankrolled by the Federal Government. So, in practice, there are two village heads in a kampung.

This could jeopardise attempts by *Pakatan Rakyat* at streamlining administration in states it controls. But at RPT Tasek, Hashim is optimistic.

"There is no clash of interests," he told the *Echo*. "I know how to deal with the situation and turn it in my favour."

**FATHOL ZAMAN
BUKHARI**

OUR CONCERNS

THE CONTINUING DESTRUCTION OF OUR FORESTS MUST BE STOPPED

Our state holds the dubious honour of having incurred the biggest loss of permanent forest in a period of four short years

Photographs by Rosli Mansor



The once breathtaking view from the fifth floor of the Tun Razak library is now marred by proofs of destruction



On the road to Menglembu, sightseers are greeted by patches of denuded areas. Old timers speak of a time when these places were all a lovely green

Perak lost, according to official statistics, some 11,869 hectares of permanent forest – the biggest loss in Malaysia – between 2001 and 2005. This is a dubious honour.

In his keynote address at the recent seminar on "Be Green, Be Responsible" held in conjunction with Environment Day 2008, Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin, remarked that since taking office shortly after the March 8 election, he had not approved the felling of even a single tree. He stressed that the *Pakatan Rakyat* government is committed to preserving the forest.

PAST EXCESSES

It has been pointed out that the loss of permanent forest was due in part to the excesses of the previous administration.

A forest reserve near

Taiping and another near Parit have been cleared for goat breeding. There were reports of illegal logging in the Belum forest. The extent of the destruction is unknown as no information has been forthcoming ever since.

ALARMING

Trees at the foot of the Keledang Range were being destroyed at an alarming rate. The damage can be seen clearly from the fifth floor of Tun Razak Library.

Ipoh city is fast becoming a concrete jungle. Trees must be planted in the city – let us do away with the plastic ones that were used previously. A former mayor said that City Hall would follow China's example of planting fruit trees along the road. What happened to that proposal?

Executive Councillor

Nga Kor Meng, in his opening remarks at the same Environment Day seminar, announced that the government would launch a campaign to plant trees throughout the state. In the past, school children were normally involved in projects of this nature. However, since they are now being barred by the Education Ministry from participating in state functions, the state government will need to get NGOs and religious groups to help with its greening campaign.

The present government has promised to adopt a more prudent approach to forest utilisation.

About time. We ought to preserve trees not just for our benefit but for that of future generations. Time is running out. We have to start respecting the environment and the time to start is NOW.

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FROM MY ALBUM

The surcharge – (as in overprint) – frenzy of the late 1800s
When falling postal rates dominated colonial mail

By Quicksilver

If you read my previous column you might recall my reference to the flurry of overprinting activity that took place on Straits Settlements stamps in the final decade of the 1800's.

There was, in fact, so much alteration work on stamp values going on during this period that even today collectors have difficulty keeping track of details.

Complicating matters further for current stamp enthusiasts is the fact that the colonials in control 110 years ago described what they were doing as "surcharging". That was an unfortunate misnomer as most of the changes they made to stamp values during those years resulted in devaluations.

A far more accurate description would be "overprinting".

So, why did it become necessary to switch stamp values so frequently at this time?

Colonial powers were opening and establishing new international sea routes with alarming regularity. With this went expanded merchant shipping activity – particularly throughout South East Asia. Along with the ships went mail for traders, travellers and colonised people alike. It must be appreciated that all letters for international addresses in those days went by sea. There was certainly no airmail available. Flying machines had yet to be invented.

A good example of this early sea mail is the envelope I am displaying at the top of my column.

Inevitably, increased mail enterprise saw postal rates in free fall. In order to cope with all the changing stamp values, overprinting of surplus and outdated values became essential if terrible wastage was to be avoided. Here are some examples of



All Correspondences went by ship, the sample above shows a cover from Singapore to Cambridge, England by SS Verona 1886



Sample of Straits Settlement Stamps used in Perak including a cover posted in Taiping.

Pahang - used stamps of the Straits Settlements for local postage.

There was even a case of the Government having to reprint a stamp surcharge TWICE!

tive surcharge reprint consisted of a huge figure 8 smack in the middle of the stamp – and in red!

Today's collectors feel this all resulted from a less than subtle demonstration



THE FAMOUS DOUBLE OVERPRINT

The sample from my album shows the first overprint on the left and the second overprint on the right. Talk about a can't miss remedy!

This occurred as early as 1884 when the assistant postmaster general in Penang, a Mr Noel Trotter, complained that the 8 cents

of pique by some official in the Singapore printing office who thought his first attempt at altering the stamp's value was more than adequate.

Extraordinarily, the most celebrated overprint was one that, in fact, NEVER WAS!

It stands a classic local stamp collecting tale!

The year was 1894 and a 3 cent stamp was urgently required in the colony. The printers in London, De La Rue, did not have a 3 cent plate available so the problem was left to the Singapore printing office to solve. They used a 32 cent stamp and overprinted a 3 cents surcharge. An eagle-eyed stamp



From left to right, the 1891 surcharge, 10 cents on 24 cents and the 1892 thirty cents on 32 cents.

reprints which I have taken from my album.

To complicate matters even further, the native states of Malaya, Sungei Ujung, Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and

surcharge on a particular stamp issue was indistinct and almost unreadable.

Down in Singapore, the reprinting centre, his complaint had an immediate reaction. The alterna-

vendor spotted an error. There had been a fault in the overprinting process. Seven stamps on the top left of the printing block failed to show the 3 cent alteration. The stamp was immediately removed from circulation.

This sheet of 3 cents overprinted on 32 cents – save the seven stamps that failed to show the alteration – was subsequently acquired by a prominent postal official in Singapore.

He used one of the stamps on a registered cover and kept the remaining 6 stamps - one of which ended in the royal collection. The other 5 misprinted stamps remain for sale at £18,000 (Sterling) a piece! – or around MR126,000 each - as listed in a Stanley Gibbons catalogue.

Another classic tale during the early days of our postal system goes like this.

The postmaster of Nebong Tebal, who happened to lose or damage his obliterater, did not wish to report it to the head office in Penang. He thought he could get a new one made locally.

It was put together to his instructions. But there was a mistake in the spelling of the town. Tebal became "Tabal". The secret was out and I am not sure what happened to the postmaster.



I shall end this column highlighting the fact that to stamp collectors this was a wonderful period to collect and add to ones Straits collection as there were so many varieties to spot and discover. It was quite a boon period for the avid collector.

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Ipoh Facts and Fancies

By Ho Tak Ming

Kinta's proud horse racing past

Where race didn't determine club membership

At one time there were three Gymkhana Clubs – or turf clubs – in Kinta: at Gopeng, Batu Gajah and Ipoh.

Their existence attested not only to the equestrian skills of the early British administrators and non-officials, but equally to the gambling proclivities of the local Chinese. As far as the Chinese were concerned they saw horse racing as providing a welcome divergence for betting away from the humdrum gambling farms.

The earliest of the three courses listed above was the Gopeng Gymkhana Club, founded in the late 1880s; Gopeng being the oldest station.

One of its staunchest supporters was Eu Kong, the principal miner in the town and holder of the opium monopoly. He always hosted a lavish lunch at his house before each meeting. When Eu Kong died in 1890, his brothers, Eu Tat and Eu Chun, carried on the horse racing tradition.

When the Kinta Gymkhana Club was founded at Batu Gajah in 1890, the Gopeng Club was relegated to something of an ulu concern. Batu Gajah was the district headquarters and its race meetings were always graced by the District Magistrate, the Resident, or even the Resident-General when the Federated Malay States was formed in 1896.

The racecourse on the high, cool plateau of Changkat was a splendid one, indubitably one of the finest in the FMS. The best racehorses were entered making the gymkhana meetings exciting events and the ladies had a chance to show off their finery.

At Gopeng, on the other hand, the only European lady present (besides the native ladies) was Mrs. Douglas Osborne, wife of the Secretary of the Club, who gave away the prizes. The Kinta Gymkhana Club made Batu Gajah famous throughout the Malay States and Colony in the 1890's. The Perak Pioneer described one such meeting in 1895:

"Visitors are commencing to flock in to Batu Gajah for the races from Singapore, Selangor and elsewhere, and it is said that the meeting will attract more visitors than any held throughout the colony or native states".

One reason why the turf clubs were so popular was that, unlike many



At the turn of the century colonial ladies came out in their finery on race day.

British institutions, membership was open to the locals. Among the office-bearers of the Batu Gajah club were Chinese stewards, who included many of the district's leading towkays. There were also Malay stewards including the Dato' Panglima Kinta, the Dato' Sri Adika Raja and the Penghulu of the town, Dato' Pandak Akhat.

However, tiny Batu Gajah was just an official town. It had neither the commercial enterprise nor the vigour of its neighbour, Ipoh. As a result he racecourse at Batu Gajah had all the look of an abandoned mine between race meetings. Regrettably, it often lacked a Clerk of Course, a Secretary – and funds.

When the Ipoh Gymkhana Club was founded in 1903, the racing fraternity naturally gravitated to the more exciting new happening. The Gopeng Gymkhana Club closed its doors in 1906, and reverted to a social club catering for pigeon shooting, tennis, etc. The Kinta Gymkhana Club at Batu Gajah ceased to function in 1910, and became the Kinta Golf Club. The old racing stables were sold and the racecourse was turned into a golf course.

The Ipoh Gymkhana Club, on the other hand, was a brilliant success from the start. Considerable credit for this must go to the leadership provided by the club's Founder President, Eric Maxwell, the Ipoh partner of the legal firm of Presgrave, Matthews and Maxwell.

Everybody agreed that the racecourse was most prettily situated and bid fair to become the most popular in the State. The race meetings were important social events, attended by all of Ipoh and its neighbours, including a bevy of ladies.

The fashion scene was magnificent, reminiscent of Ascot. The tin miners entered their thoroughbreds, which made for exciting betting. The bookies waxed fat. The plush Grand Hotel had full occupancy on race weekends. It added a motor garage for the use of the well-heeled connoisseurs of horseflesh who came from outstation. The FMS Hotel made up a special menu.

THE IPOH RACES
 IF YOU WIN, DINE AT THE F.M.S. HOTEL
 IF YOU LOSE, COME AND ENJOY AN EXTRA GOOD DINNER and be cheered up!
 SPECIAL TIFFINS AND DINNERS on the RACE DAYS 18th and 19th February

The town's newspaper described one race meeting in 1913 thus:

IPOH RACECOURSE A SCENE OF BRILLIANCE

The Ipoh Spring Meeting not only excelled itself at the opening day yesterday, but also made a bold bid for a winning place among all the race meetings of the country.

If the number of book-makers plying their trade on the field is a criterion of success, then Ipoh goes right on top. There were five of them. And the fact that they did exceedingly good business shows that the crowd was large, sport was good, and there was plenty of money about. All excellent signs.

Of a certainty, the Ipoh Spring Meeting is Kinta's Ascot. The costumes of the ladies on the lawn and the grandstand yesterday were the dominant note of a scene of brilliance well able to hold its own with



As the years went by, race day became a far more male dominated occasion.


similar gatherings anywhere.

Race meetings in Malaya, and indeed everywhere in the East, are given an added brightness by the gay and fantastic colourings of the native costumes which afford an

effective setoff to the more sombre and less daring designs of the European folk. This feature was not lacking yesterday. The course round about the neighbourhood of the starting post was fringed by lines of vivid colour, rivaling

the rainbow in its admixture of hues.

This meeting was the most largely attended and most successful that had been held in Ipoh, and well able to claim the leading place among the race meetings of the FMS.



Perak Pioneer
 Established in 1894
 'The oldest and most widely circulated newspaper in the F.M.S'

THE WAY IT WAS . . . 100 YEARS AGO

Local & General

Mr Cowan, the Protector of Chinese, Perak, passed through this afternoon on his way to Europe on a well-earned holiday.

* * * * *

The Legislative Council of Hongkong has rejected by eight votes to five a motion protesting against the Imperial Government opium order.

* * * * *

Mr H.C.Ridges has arrived at Ipoh and assumed duties as Protector of Chinese, Perak. The Malay Mail in noticing his departure from Kuala Lumpur says:— 'The whole of Mr Ridges long and valuable service has so far been in Selangor, where he has made many friends. It is the general opinion that this gentleman's undoubted abilities have never received due recognition since Sir William Maxwell's time. Sir William was a keen judge, we might almost say a hard judge, of the capabilities of his officers, and it is well known that he had a high opinion of Mr Ridges.'

Local & General

Mr Long, the new Superintendent of Government Plantations, Perak, comes from Kew, where he has been an active member of the gardening staff.

* * * * *

'The Spectator' bitterly opposes the Government's proposed concession of votes to women. It argues that a woman is not a man, or, in other words, that nature has placed in male hands the ultimate ratio of physical force.

* * * * *

Captain Graham, the new Commander of the Guides Battery arrived from Hazara, India, yesterday, and assumed command of the local guns.

* * * * *

A Straits contemporary has the following:—

It is rumoured that 'His Majesty's Government has signified its willingness,

in the event of the abolition of opium and the consequent loss of revenue to the Colony, to forego the military contribution for a period of five years.

Should the above be true, it is indeed good news; good for the Colony, but what is most important to us is what will be done in the case of the F.M.S. Will H.M. Government make good the loss of revenue that will cease from total prohibition of Opium, or will they in place take over the Guides and thus free the Local Government from the expense of their upkeep during the next five years as in the case of the Colony?

The military contribution of Singapore is one fifth of the revenue, but the cost of the maintenance of the Guides falls far short of the revenues derived from opium in the F.M.S. Under these circumstances, in what way will the F.M.S. be recouped for the loss incurred?

To make this good, will H.M. Government also undertake the upkeep of the Civil Service staff, in addition to the Guides.



See Foon

Musings by See Foon Chan-Koppen

Tips for a Better Life

Let us review the daily patterns we live by and alter the ones that drag us down

I received a lovely mail from a friend recently entitled "40 Tips for a Better Life". While I won't repeat verbatim all 40 of these tips, I felt that some of them are worth reflection.

For starters, I'll share the following tips:

"Life isn't fair but it's still good. You can make it better by doing whatever makes you happy."

While we're all up in arms about the fuel and food price hikes and people at every Kopitiam gathering are worrying about how hard it will be to make ends meet, it might be helpful for us to stop moaning and apply our minds to finding cost saving solutions. We're all familiar with the usual admonitions about car-pooling, putting in natural gas tanks, etc but it looks as if the days of gas-guzzling SUVs, MPVs, and deluxe saloons are numbered except for the very rich. It's not the end of the world if

we have to travel in smaller cars, go on fewer holidays, eat out more infrequently. Instead of feeling deprived, we can rejoice in more family time, planning more economically healthful meals or making friends with your neighbours so you don't have to drive to friends' houses. And the list is as long as your creative mind will allow.

"What other people think of you is none of your business."

Everyone has filters through which they see the world and these are all dependent on their conditioning and values. When someone tells you they don't like your hair, your tie, your friends or your spouse, thank them for sharing and move on. Or if you don't particularly wish to see the person again, say, "I don't believe I asked for your opinion."

Don't waste your precious energy on gossip, energy vampires, issues of the past, negative thoughts or things you cannot control. Instead invest your energy in the positive present moment.

"Spend time with people over the age of 70 and under the age of 6."

Older people have lived their lives and are usually bursting with wisdom. Older folks



don't have time to worry about "keeping up with the Joneses" and nor do they care whether you're dressed in the latest fashion or what car you drive. They do have great stories to tell and a storehouse of knowledge on what works and what doesn't. If only we'd listen.

And young kids are glowing balls of energy. Notice how everything is an adventure for them? They are full of excitement and discovery. Ever watched in horror as you

find crayon scribbling on your newly whitewashed walls while your youngster grins in delight at his masterpiece?!

Their views on life and love are equally uplifting.

"Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken."

And on how to make someone fall in love with you:

"Tell them that you own a whole bunch of candy stores."

When we spend time with little kids, we have a chance to recapture some of that innocence and naivete that somehow, somewhere along the line, most of us

have lost.

"Frame every so-called disaster with these words: 'In five years, will this matter?'"

It may be a cliché but time really is a great healer. That broken relationship will mend and the business deal gone sour if not rectified, will turn into new opportunities. Your rebellious teenager will mature and grow to respect you and every little molehill from which we create mountains, will disappear.

"Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful."

This is not just about clearing out the junk we've accumulated in cupboards. You know, the stuff we keep thinking, "Oh I'm sure I'll find a need for it sometime in the future". Which also applies to clothing and accessories, kitchen utensils and gadgets, and any other paraphernalia which were "must have's" at one time in the past.

It is also a reference to the accumulation in our

minds, the grudges, resentments, the "might have beens", the "if onlys", the "it's their faults", or the "cup is half-empty". Why not half-full?

A friend of mine who is one of the most positive people I know has this amusing habit of saying to herself:

"Cancel, cancel, cancel" every time she finds herself saying or thinking a negative thought about someone or something. I couldn't agree more.

No one is in charge of your happiness except you.

You are the only one who can make a decision for your life, so make it in the way which makes you happier.

And while you're at it:

Dream more while you are awake.

And:

Try to make at least three people smile each day.

Those readers who would like to have the full version of the 40 Tips for a Better Life, plus the bonus 50 Success Tips, you may email the writer at: sfkipohecho@gmail.com



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INGREDIENTS

2 large (1 kg) eggplants
¼ cup (60ml) plain yogurt
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 clove garlic, crushed
¼ cup (60ml) tahini
2 teaspoons ground cumin
½ cup fresh coriander leaves
(Makes about 2 ¼ cups (560ml).



Kafe Paprika's
Syrian Baba Ghanoush

skewer. Place whole eggplants on oven tray. Bake, uncovered, in hot oven about 1 hour or until soft; cool 15 minutes.

2. Peel eggplants, chop flesh roughly; discard skins.

3. Blend or process eggplant flesh with remaining ingredients until combined. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve with pita bread, if desired.

- Recipe can be made 2 days ahead.
- Storage: Covered, in refrigerator.
- Freeze: Not suitable.
- Microwave: Not suitable.

COME ONE, COME ALL!

FOOD FAIR & JUMBLE SALE

DATE:
Saturday, July 19, 2008

VENUE:
No. 28 Tiger Lane
(Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah)
31400, Ipoh

Time: from 10 am




NO-FRILLS COOKING, part 1

Cheng Sun Mooi is out to fashion the busy person into a frugal gourmet

The recipes that appear here have been created in response to repeated requests from numerous readers – many of them single working girls – who lead busy lives. Combining duties at work and the demands of home life can be daunting. No frills cooking should lessen the daily stress. This is a series that will feature easy-to-follow cooking methods that result in tasty dishes.

Chicken comes to mind whenever a housewife finds that fish is too expensive for her budget. But what can we do with fowl apart from white steamed chicken? Here is an age-old recipe which is very popular in almost every Cantonese household: Chicken and Potato Braise. But this recipe has wafts of salivating spice. The aroma is very subtle.

Claypot Chicken and Potato Braise



Ingredients:

½ kampung chicken, cut into bite-size. Mix with marinade and set aside.
3 potatoes, chunked
1 big onion, sliced (as for omelette)

2 pips garlic, minced
1 slice ginger, minced
1 tsp. preserved soya beans (towcheong)
Spices to fry whole:
3 petals star of anise (pat kok)
1 thin sliver of cinnamon
1 small cardamom, slightly opened

Marinade for chicken:

1 tsp. sesame oil
1 tsp. cornflour
2 tsp. wine (Hua Thiew)
3 tsp. light soya sauce.

Method:

In a clay pot, over medium heat, dry roast the spices till aromatic. Add in 1 ½ tablespoons oil and brown the sliced onions and fragrant the minced garlic and ginger, together with the towcheong.

Put in chicken and potato pieces. Stir fry till chicken changes colour and potato browns at edges, adding water to moisten. When content is aromatic, top up with water to braise till chicken is cooked and potato yields softly to a fork. Gravy should be thick and just cover the chicken mixture.

Season for taste - just a splash of wine, a few drops of sesame oil and a few shakes of soya sauce, to taste.

Note: This main dish can be accompanied by two other simple dishes like a plain wok-tossed watercress vegetable dish and an eggplant dish. Use

½ eggplant (terong), and keep the other half for another day. Wrap it in tissue and place in a plastic bag. It can be kept 2-3 days refrigerated and can be used for bulking up a fish curry for another meal.

Eggplant - Wok-



seared and steamed

Half an aubergine (eggplant, terong), cut into 2 inches thin slices (about 2cm width)
2 minced shallots
1 tbsp. Dried prawns, coarsely chopped
Soya sauce
1 tsp. Sesame oil

Method:

In smoking wok, spoon in 2 tablespoons oil to heat.

Throw in eggplant pieces and lightly sear on both sides. Push aside. Mix minced shallots and dried prawns, stir until fragrant. Add oil if mixture gets too dry.

Serve eggplant topped up with the shallot and dried prawn crisps.

Put in 2 tsp. soya sauce and the sesame oil.

Steam over the rice just before it is cooked (to save on fuel energy).

STAY BUSY . . . ALSO, BE ACTIVE

A blitz through 20 shopping malls nationwide aims to encourage the public to stretch, move and play for better health

Perakians had the opportunity to participate in the 100PLUS Live Active Challenge mall road show when it came to the Ipoh's Greentown Shopping Mall, as part of a nationwide tour recently.

Participants chose from various events that included vertical wall climbing, skateboarding, basketball 3-on-3 challenge, football juggling, tyre challenge, cross trainer treadmill challenge and zig-zag dribbling or running variation according to limitation of locations. The various challenges are designed to suit everybody, regardless of age, gender and fitness level.

Scheduled to be held at 20 designated major shopping centres across Malaysia, 100PLUS Live Active Campaign's main objective is to motivate the public to adopt an active lifestyle.

The programme aims to focus on a number of salient points, among them:

- Better health can be achieved if people incorporate simple and enjoyable physical activities that take up little time or effort in their daily lives.

- People don't have to compromise their busy "must-do" existences.

- Promote an active



Radio personality JJ attempting to prove he is up to the vertical wall climbing challenge.

lifestyle through simple, fun and exciting physical activities that can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere, individually and or with family and friends.

Chris Ng, Country Marketing Head at the Regional Office of Fraser & Neave (Singapore) Pte Ltd inaugurated the Live Active Campaign.

At the launch, the media were coaxed to participate in the events. A number obliged, among them hitz.fm radio deejay, JJ.

As part of the activi-

ties, 100PLUS is organising the LRT Challenge which encourages commuters to take the stairs instead of the escalators or lifts, then presenting them with a bottle of 100PLUS.

There is also the Bus Stop Challenge in Penang and Kelantan that invites the public to participate in stretching exercises while waiting for the bus.

For more information, on the Live Challenge, please log on to 100PLUS.com.my.

PETER KHIEW

A TASTE OF PREMIUM WINES

Special vintages delight lucky guests at exclusive Ipoh wine tasting event

Malaysians are more familiar with the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale regions of South Australia than any other wine producing area Down Under.

Thus the Adelaide Hills come as a relatively new "find" for most of us.

Located about 40 kilometers south-east of Adelaide and 500 meters above sea-level, temperatures, topography and soil there are most suited to cool-climate wines. It is precisely these wine-types for which the region is becoming internationally famous.

One boutique winery in the Adelaide Hills is Bird in Hand, named after the disused Bird in Hand goldmine nearby.

Viticulturalist turned winemaker, Andrew Nugent, started this family-owned business in 2000. It has gained much prominence in the



Justine Nugent pours a prize winning wine for a guest

Australian wine industry winning a number of national accolades.

The company's Bird in Hand Shiraz won Australia's Winestate Magazine's "Shiraz of the Year" and the "Wine of the Year" awards in 2005. Its other label, Bird in Hand Merlot, was judged "Merlot of the Year" in 2005 and the following year won a Gold Medal

at the Australian Cool Climate Wine Show.

As it happened, these very wines were among the premium Bird in Hand labels offered to some 60 fortunate guests who recently gathered at Clearwater Sanctuary Golf Resort's Lakeside Terrace. Unlike in Australia where wine tasting is often part of a public gourmet festival, this event at the golf

resort was a closed-door affair. Attendance was by invitation only. It was the first ever wine tasting occasion organised by the Clearwater Sanctuary. According to Mr. Kenny Yap who is Clearwater's Executive Director, the tasting was a prelude to introducing fine dining at the resort's restaurant.

In an exciting departure from the norm, the wine tasting was done ala cocktail party fashion. Finger foods were served along with the winning labels.

The wines were dispensed personally by 39 year-old Justine Nugent, younger brother of the winery's founder. Justine took pains to introduce his family's special brands and explain their innate qualities and taste characteristics to the guests.

As for chilling red wine, Justine had this to

say, "Red wine in the tropics needs to be chilled, as drinking it at room temperature may not be the wisest thing to do."

He was, however, silent on young Malaysians' wine-drinking habits. Adding Sprite, Coca Cola and Seven Up to wine

- red and white

- seems

a bit

odd!

Bird in Hand labels can be purchased at all

Denise Wine Shop outlets. Bird in Hand Pinot Rose, Bird in Hand Shiraz and Bird in Hand Merlot are retailed at RM96.80 each.

Its premium brand, Nest Egg Cabernet Sauvignon, costs RM288 a bottle.

They are available at Clearwater's Lakeside Terrace.

FZB



Nugent with a bottle of Pinot Rose

YOUNG PERAK

Students from participating schools are invited to write about or photograph things/events outside their respective institutions of learning. E-mail articles to: editorial@ipohecho.com.my attn: Peter Khiew

DEBATERS GET TO DO SOME COMMUNITY SERVICE

Human values are the core of this annual competition



Debaters would spend a day with some of these children who live in the Home featured in the top photo.

Another intellectual exercise that highlights a noble objective is part of this month's calendar in a number of the premier schools in Perak.

Yes, the 9th Annual Sathya Sai Baba Annual Human Values Debate, organised by the Sathya Sai Baba Centres of Perak is back.

The participants did not have to pay a sen with their entry submissions which closed on July 14. All educational institutions in the state were invited to participate.

The organisers imposed only two conditions. Firstly, all participating team members have to take part in a one-day service project at the Handicapped Children's Home in Batu Gajah on July 19. Through this activity, the organisers hope to foster the blossoming of human values, inculcate nobility of purpose early in life and nurture the habit of service among youths.

Secondly, each debating team must represent at least two of the major races in the country.

The competition is open to all university, college and Sixth Form Perakian students between the ages of 17 and 25.

Publicity Secretary S.Saminathan said the debate would be conducted in English and would be using the Australia-Asian format. He added that the topics to be debated would carry a lot of relevance to the daily lives of today's youths.

Participating teams are to be briefed before the preliminary rounds on July 21 and 23.

The semi-finals are scheduled for July 25. All these will be held at Olympia College.

Saminathan said the grand finals would be held on August 2 at the C.M.E. Hall at the Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, Ipoh.

Top debaters will walk home with the first prize of RM600.00 and a Challenge Shield. The 2nd prize is RM300.00 and the 3rd is RM150.00.

The Best Speaker will receive RM100.00. Certificates will be given to all the participating teams and their teacher-advisers.

For more enquiries, call 019-5730618 (Datin Dr. Ramani Subramaniam), 016-5998437 (Dr. Prem Adheesh Lekhi) or 012-3115858 (S. Saminathan).

PK

MY 'EXCHANGE YEAR' IS OVER

Kristin Hartlich is about to do her own 'balik kampung' and shares her sad-happy thoughts

Nearly a year has passed. Flown is the word I'd rather use. Now I know the meaning of the word fleeting. My stay as an exchange student in Malaysia has come to an end and I find myself saying, it's been too brief and the months have gone too fast.

I had no idea how my stay in Malaysia was going to be. Apart from tourist information I had found online and the preparation - camps on the exchange organisation's side - I had very little knowledge of what awaited me. I decided to take things as they came, to travel with an open mind.

It was going to be my year abroad - far away from my home, Germany. A number of my friends were not quite supportive about my choice of Malaysia as destination. Some of them had no idea where the country was: "Where is Malaysia?" they asked. "What would you do there?" You should have seen their astonished and puzzled faces. They really thought I wasn't brave enough!

I thought, but why should I follow what the rest were doing - go to England, the US or Australia? I thought that was boring. I wanted something different so I chose Malaysia for my "exchange year".

My arrival here feels just like yesterday. When I landed at KLIA after a 15-hour flight from Frankfurt and passed through the immigration, I remember staring at the signboards that spelt out 'Selamat Datang'. I will always have the memory of coming out of the air-conditioned airport and experiencing an overwhelming wall of humidity and heat on my body. My first thought was: "Wow, I am in Malaysia now!"

My stay had begun. I noticed that every single day made me discover something new. I started gaining more and more insights into my host country.

In the beginning, I counted - I have been here one month... then two... After a while I got immersed in more



A true cultural experience for Kristin during one of her school's festivities

activities and stopped counting. I made new friends, went to a girls' school for the very first time in my life and experienced Malaysia's festivities and religions. Hari Raja, Deepavali, Thaipusam and Chinese New Year - you name it. I am proud to have experienced these occasions. Many exciting, adventurous, happy and sad moments were very much a part of my stay. All the people around me were supportive and caring. I never felt homesick. Malaysia became my home.

Have you ever had the feeling that time



Kristin learning the art of preparing and making 'Lemang'

flying away? Again, the count-down is running - and it's not stopping. It says that after nearly 365 days living in Malaysia, I am leaving. Departure time in a few weeks, then a couple of weeks, then next week it is my turn to do a balik kampung - to my kampung in Germany.

The worst thing is people keep reminding me about my return. Trip. It makes me feel sad. My grandparents from Germany called me a few weeks ago to tell me that they had already booked a table for dinner to welcome me back upon my arrival.

They are also counting the days. I was speechless. To be polite and to avoid an argument on the phone I said, "Thank you and I am also looking forward to it". When I review the conversation, I realise my reaction was so Asian. Why couldn't I tell them that I am not really up to a dinner? I know they are very happy to see their oldest grandchild and I am happy to see them too. But do they really have to plan and decide everything, without having asked what I might feel about it?

With

soon. Maybe something has changed!? I guess I will notice, for the most part, what hasn't changed. I told my parents that I prefer them to pick me up from the airport.

I don't want big welcoming-parties or a bunch of relatives and friends waiting at the airport - only my immediate family. Then slowly I have to adjust myself to my 'old life'. To be honest, this scares me.

I just had my End-of-Stay camp and all the returnees from many different countries predicted it would be hard for us to adjust and that sometimes we'd get homesick for our host country.

Well, I guess I have to face reality. My plans are to continue my studies and get my driving licence. I will turn eighteen this August.

I will have heaps of work to do - which definitely will keep me busy for quite sometime.



Kristin... moving on

I feel I need to move on. No doubt Malaysia, my family and friends here will always be in my heart - forever.

I will be back 'home' some day.

TRIBUTE

FAREWELL TO A REMARKABLE MAN

A moment to remember someone we admired

Through his writings, peppered with colourful anecdotes and tasteful innuendoes, Dato' Seri Yang Rashdi gave readers an insight into life as it was back in the 30s and 40s.

His vivid recollections of time spent growing up in idyllic Kuala Kangsar were most poignant. Yang Rashdi's latest story (IpoH Echo Issue 53) about his maternal grandmother and her jinrikisha puller friends - Panjang and Pendek - made for truly insightful reading.

Sadly, we will be unable to read more of

Yang Rashdi's youthful innocence.

Yang Rashdi passed away on Thursday, July 2 one day short of his 83rd birthday. He had been looking forward to seeing his latest work in print.

Dato Seri Yang Rashdi was a product of Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. He taught English at a secondary school in Kuala Trengganu in 1948 and was co-opted into the Malayan Civil Service in 1956.

He served in various capacities, starting out as assistant district officer. When he retired in 1980, he was Director of Lands

and Mines Perak.

In 1994, the Sultan of Perak bestowed on Dato Seri Yang Rashdi the title "Toh Maharaja Indera" and made him "Orang Besar 16" of Perak.

He leaves behind six grieving children and eight grand children.

We at IpoH Echo have lost a resourceful contributor whose singular objective was to impart his rich experiences to all and sundry. We share his family's sorrow.

May Allah bless his soul.

Al-Fatihah.

Editor



Dato' Seri Yang Rashdi bin Maasom(1925-2008)

A view from Singapore

TIN REVIVAL IN THE KINTA VALLEY?

Tin built the city of Ipoh. Could it bring on its renaissance?

By Andrew Symon

As humble as it may seem today against all the wonders of computers and the digital revolution, the tin plated steel can was one of the great technological leaps forward.

In 1809, Napoleon's France gave the world a process to package and preserve food in steel cans. Like many other breakthroughs, the technology was developed to meet defence needs - in this case, feeding the Emperor's armies. But its application quickly became universal and remains so today.

Food could be exported cheaply over long distances and kept safely for long periods. This opened up large new markets for producers, and made often hard to get foods cheaply and safely available.

From Ipoh's standpoint, the tin can has contributed mightily to the city's history with its development being built on the wealth from the rich alluvial Kinta Valley deposits. By the early twentieth century the region had become one of the world's most important sources of the mineral.

Even today, the tin plated steel can remains a key application for tin, despite the inroads of aluminium and plastics.

STATISTICS

According to the UK based International Tin Research Institute (ITRI), tin plate demand makes up about 20 percent of the tin market. Most steel cans are made from tinplate, which is flat-rolled steel with a thin layer of tin. The layer helps prevent rusting and



Disused tin mining areas are part of Perak's dramatic landscape

protects food and beverage flavours. In fact, steel cans account for more than 90 percent of the food cans sold worldwide.

There are many other uses for tin. Most important is its application in solders, about 45 percent of the market - and a very large part of this demand comes from the electronics industry. Other important uses include chemicals and paints, in glass making, and various alloys.

Geographically, demand for tin is concentrated in Asia, and, as with much else, driving demand is China's seemingly insatiable appetite for minerals, coal and petroleum.

Asia consumed 64 percent or 228,600 tonnes of the world total of refined tin in 2007. Of this, China's share was 131,500 tonnes. Today, the combination of Asian demand and slow expansion of new production sees the tin market booming.

Prices of refined tin on the London Metals Exchange (LME) have risen six-fold since 2001, reaching a high of \$25,000 a tonne in mid May. At the end of June the price was around \$23,000 a tonne. The low prices of the late 1980s and 1990s, which virtually put an end to tin mining in Malaysia, seem far away.

Malaysia had been one of the world's great tin producers. But plummeting world prices, exhaustion of high grade deposits and rising operating costs saw mining dwindle. Last year, Malaysian mines produced less than one percent of the world's mine production - about 3,000 tonnes.

But the Kuala Lumpur listed Malaysia Smelting Corp (MSC) does continue to be one of the world's largest producers (the fourth largest) of refined tin through its local smelters. MSC is also the main tin miner in Malaysia as well

as having stakes in mining ventures in Indonesia and Australia.

Now, not surprisingly, given world tin prices, people in Malaysia - including

the business in 2006 when a large new refinery was opened by Singapore Tin Industries (STI); a joint venture between China's Yunnan Tin and the domestic KJP International. STI also runs a smelter on Indonesia's Bangka Island.

The big question remains: how long are prices likely to remain at these levels? It's worth recalling the price crash in the mid 1980s. At that time, the world's tin producers and buyers attempted to regulate the market through the International Tin Agreement.

But the ITA collapsed in 1985 when it could no longer raise funds to support the tin price on the LME.

Today, there is also some market vulnerability due to speculative investment.

As the ITRI's senior

analyst, Peter Kettle, told me, high prices are in part the result of the entrance into the market of hedge and investment funds, especially from the US, in the wake of the sub prime mortgage crisis. Tin and

other metals markets become safer places to park funds. But Kettle also stresses that fundamental supply and demand factors should sustain price levels at least out to 2012.

INCREASING RESTRICTIONS

Up until the late 1990s, the tin market had been over supplied as a result of successive booms in small scale and often illegal mining.

But Kettle says that increasing restrictions on these operations and strong consumption growth have transformed the picture.

"Two countries, China and Indonesia, now account for over 70pc of global mine production. But China is on the verge of becoming a net importer and small scale production in Indonesia has started to decline."

"Looking ahead there is now a pressing need for increased investment in sustainable mining projects around the world.

"Outside the two major producing countries, production in the rest of the world needs to double by 2012 in order to keep up with forecast global requirements."

"There is no shortage of tin today and the world's tin resource base is adequate to maintain long term supplies. But there could be supply problems in between - from around 2010 to 2012," Kettle says.

So, considering this outlook, we may again hear the grating of dredges in the Kinta Valley.



Life is just beginning to surface from abandoned ponds

Perak - are talking of a local tin mining renaissance.

This could also attract investment from Singapore. Once a site for tin smelting in the early twentieth century, Singapore again entered

Sport

THE ENTERTAINING and THE WORRISOME

Steve Darby on EURO 2008 and the truths about the economic state of Perak FA

In the last few weeks many football fans in Ipoh have approached me about two very disparate issues in the sport. The first is my opinions of Euro 2008 and the second being the economic state of Perak FA.

The first question is a lot easier to write about as it's a lot more enjoyable! I commentated for TV3 Malaysia on the games and wrote columns for Vietnamese media. In these columns I was asked to make predictions. I managed to get seven out of the eight quarter finalists right. Only France let me down. I got the final 2 right but the pragmatist in me went for Germany and, happily for football's sake, I was wrong. The exercise proves it's impossible to predict football and hence its enduring appeal.

EURO 2008

Football evolution moves so quickly that what works today is redundant tomorrow, and the difference between Euro 2008 and its predecessor could hardly be greater.

Euro 2008 has been a fantastic spectacle, the best for many years because it has been all about attack, or more correctly counter-attack, an approach seized upon in response to the stifling, negative tactical approach of Greek national coach Otto Rehhagel four years ago.

Those nations who haven't adapted to modern football trends have been left behind. Reputations have meant nothing with France and Italy, the two finalists in the 2006 World Cup, both counting the cost of an overly cautious approach in the first



The victor: striker Fernando Torres gave Spain its Euro 2008 championship goal.



The vanquished. Germany's goalkeeper Jens Lehmann

few games, leaving their run too late in the case of France or reverting, in Italy's case, to caution and defence against Spain, who deserved to progress by virtue of trying to play attacking football in the quarter-final.

With the homogenisation of tactics and transportation of coaches across borders, the small can become big, and with the inexperience of Italy's Donadoni and Holland's Marco van Basten against Spain's Luis Aragones and

Russia's Guus Hiddink, and the reliance of France's Raymond Domenech on ageing veterans rather than the new "Wenger" Arsenal generation of Flamini, Clichy and Sagna and company, the big can very quickly become small. Fabregas of Spain showed his ability to jump the gap of youth to experience. Could Malaysia produce a batch of quality young players of this ability? That is a whole column on its own!

Today's football is

about speed of play, lightning-fast ball circulation, the ability to adapt between a fast and slow build-up and counter-attack, and predominantly one and two-touch play to beat pressing defences, or to move a defence to create an opening against teams intent on placing large numbers behind the ball.

The winning teams also adapted to their rivals' strengths - Germany defended deep against Portugal when leading and chased the game against Turkey when behind, and Spain have the technical and tactical flexibility to press or absorb, and to change their game as the game changes.

If the footballing gods are really to make a statement about the beauty of the world game, then the Spanish deserved the title for their enduring expression of how the simplest of games can be about both art and outcome.

The best team did win, and that doesn't always happen in football.

ECONOMIC WOES

The Perak FA's economic problems have been presented in both the print and electronic media. However, there have been vast disparities in the stories portrayed. Due to print deadlines it is impossible to give an "up to date" status report as things are happening every day. However, the following facts can be verified.

The budget for the present season was drawn up with income based on FAM grant, gate receipts approximation and funding from the State Government.



Ready for an away game. The team travels without frills.



Brainstorming before a meal.

The budget was kept to, and in fact reduced from previous years by over a million ringgit through cuts in salary component and travel costs. Perak FA were operating on one of the smallest budgets in the league, 50% smaller than some teams and smaller than at least 4 teams in the second division.

Despite this, Perak still qualified for the AFC Cup Quarter Finals and were continuously in the top few places in the league.

After the March 8 general election, the funding from the State Government ceased. Reserves from gate receipts were drained and, huge bills from as far back as 1998 emerged.

The successful attempt at running the team as a business failed due to the unexpected cessation of the largest revenue stream and the sudden emergence of unknown bills.

The players and staff have not been paid for a long period of time.

The Perak FA has written formally to the State government and the FAM for assistance. It is also actively seeking sponsorship. Additionally, the Perak FA land assets are currently in the process of being liquidated.

These are the facts, hopefully by the time this hits print many of these facts will have been altered in a positive manner.

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