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30 SEN FOR DELIVERY TO YOUR DOORSTEP -
ASK YOUR NEWSVENDOR

ISSUE **321**

What's so Special about BELUM?

• By Vivien Lian

Only two hours north of Ipoh lies one of Peninsular Malaysia's natural treasures, a hotspot for biodiversity in Malaysia hosting diverse ecosystems and habitats for the many species of flora and fauna of which many of them are endemic, rare, vulnerable or otherwise threatened in Malaysia and the region.

FULL STORY ON PAGES **2 & 6**



Blooming Rafflesia



Wild civet



Enormous old tree in Temenggor



Khong Island

Something for everyone, from the intrepid to the laid back



Jahai tribe of Orang Asli

Royal Belum is famous for its state park which was gazetted as a protected area on May 3, 2007, under the Perak State Parks Corporation Enactment 2001. The 130-million-year-old rainforest covering 117,500 hectares is amongst the oldest in the world, vying for seniority with the forests of the Amazon, Congo, and others.

Consisting mainly of primary forests, it boasts three species of the largest flowering plant in the world, the Rafflesia (*Rafflesia cantleyi*, *Rafflesia kerrii* and *Rafflesia azlanii*); 310 species of birds including all 10 of Malaysia's hornbill species; the Malayan tiger, white-handed gibbon, Malaysian sun bear, tapir, elephant and other animals with some of these species unique to Belum.



'A' chalet inspired by Orang Asli architecture



Chalets on Khong Island

With a variety of waterfalls, indigenous villages, salt-licks, interesting plants, animals and insects, there is much to do and it is this rich biodiversity that attracts local and foreign visitors who flock to Royal Belum.

Salt licks are natural salt deposits which animals regularly lick to get their much-needed mineral sustenance. Wild animals often leave their faeces around the place to mark their territory.

Access into the Royal Belum is through the Banding Island Public Jetty at Temengor Lake. It is the second-largest man-made lake in Peninsular Malaysia after Tasik Kenyir.

Anyone wanting to enter the State Park MUST have a permit from Perak State Parks Corporation (PSPC), which can be obtained through the local guides or tour operators.

Royal Belum is managed by the Perak State Parks Corporation (PSPC) formed in 2003 under the Perak State Parks Corporation Enactment 2001, specifically for the protection of the natural heritage of the state and their values associated with geology, history, ethnobotany, education, recreation, eco-tourism and science in areas designated as state parks.

Currently, the headquarters and information centre of PSPC is in Gerik, some 45km away from Banding, with PSPC staff responsible for managing the park including issuing visitor permits, conducting anti-poaching patrols, infrastructure development and tourism management.

The usual boat cruise itinerary includes Rafflesia-spotting, a visit to the waterfalls, experiencing the culture of indigenous tribes and treks to the salt licks with the chance to spot wildlife. However, many of the endangered species such as the Asian elephant, Malayan gaur, mainland serow, sambar deer, pangolin and Malaysian tiger are being poached. The number of tigers in Belum-Temengor Forest Reserve has declined from 60 to 23 as of 2019. The poachers also cut down agarwood trees (gaharu) which can be sold at high prices.

For those who want to stay within Royal Belum, PSPC provides accommodation and some basic facilities. There are four basecamps and campsites. The list of tour and boat operators can be accessed through Royal Belum's website at www.royalbelum.my.

They will make arrangements for permits, boats, and meals (depending on the trip packages) and offer activities like camping, recreational fishing, night-hikes into Royal Belum and house boat trips.

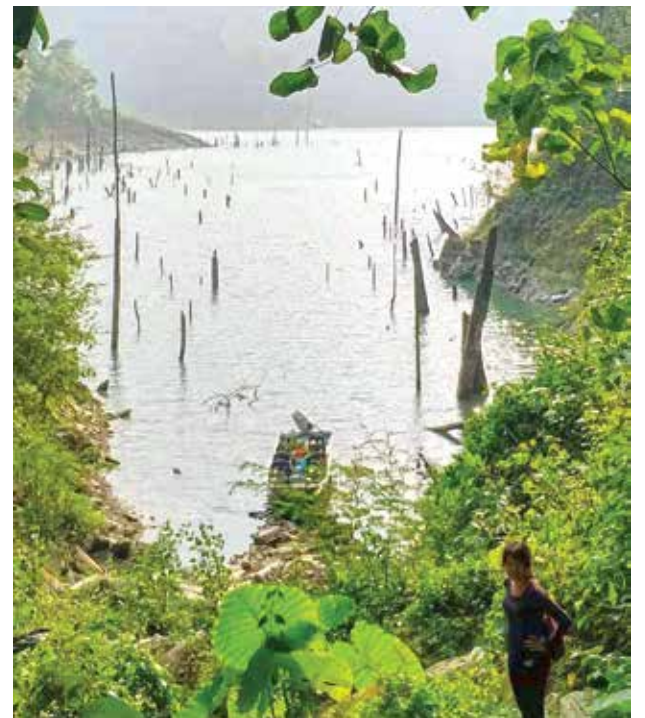
The Only Island Resort in Belum-Temengor

Another option for visitors looking for a more laid-back option to explore this fascinating destination is to stay at Steve Khong's island resort.

Steve Khong started eco-tourism in Belum-Temengor 15 years ago when he would take his friends around the Belum-Temengor forest complex to spot Rafflesia, do some bird watching and fishing. As demand grew, he acquired a few boathouses to handle larger



Pillbox



Tree trunks protruding from the lake surface

crowds. The positive word-of-mouth reached the state government and they asked Steve to host their guests.

His efforts and capability in promoting Belum-Temengor's ecotourism have proven him to be the leader in the field. In 2007, the government granted his purchase of the island so that he could cater to the growing tourist crowd and also to provide better accommodations. The resort named Belum Eco Resort in Khong Island has since opened its doors to local and foreign tourists for the past 15 years.

What sets the resort apart from the rest is that Steve, who is now past 60, conducts the tour around the untouched world of nature in Temengor himself. A **permit is not required** to explore Temengor as it is not gazetted. Contrary to the fixed itinerary of the Belum tour which includes having to pay a fee for permit and camera, the Temengor tour includes all of that but away from the "touristy areas" minus permit and camera fee. The forest here is denser, greener and the water is cleaner, clearer, where hornbills dance and ant soldiers march in broad daylight, a place which is livelier and richer in biodiversity. The resort itself is guarded by four furry guardians – Obama, Gordon, Donut and Hillary, the only cats on the island. Apart from having your arrival greeted by furry assistants, a list of activities awaits. Kayaking, swimming, sunbathing, fishing (strictly catch and release as the resort stipulates sustainable tourism), karaoke, watching documentaries, card games, mahjong, darts and for dinner, ask Steve for barbeque, steamboat or even firewood pizza. Speaking of **sustainable tourism**, the island resort itself is proud evidence. It is completely hand-built without the use of heavy machinery, plus the island sewage is managed and maintained at the resort's cost.

Visit www.belumecoresort.com.my or contact Steve at 012 524 9184 for more information.

A Wee Bit of History

Belum-Temengor is the home to the second-largest lake, Temengor Lake in Peninsular Malaysia. The man-made lake was made for the dam to provide hydroelectricity. On the security part, it deterred the communist insurgents from using the route along the main range to infiltrate into Malaya.

Continued on page 6

STOP OFFERING DISCOUNTS

Discounts should never be given as it would only encourage offenders to continue breaking the rules. Even municipal councils have jumped on the bandwagon.

Operasi Selamat 16/2020 launched on January 18 and ended on February 1, in view of the Chinese New Year festivity, recorded 230 fatalities. The highest number being motorcyclists and pillion riders with 147 deaths.

Some 23,200 road accidents were recorded throughout the 14-day period a jump of 11 per cent compared to a similar operation held in 2019. Incidentally, almost 295,000 summons were issued by the Police to motorists and motorcyclists for various traffic offences committed over the said period.

Road accidents cost the nation an estimated RM9 billion annually. It is a huge loss to the country as those killed and maimed are mainly adolescents within the 16 to 40 age group. They still have plenty to give to the country in terms of service but their lives are being abruptly curtailed while still in their prime. The authorities should, therefore, act to tighten the laws, enforce and apply them appropriately without fear or favour.

The festive season also saw many accidents caused by drink driving, especially in major cities like Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Bahru. Ipoh is not spared either.

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is worrisome as drivers have poor control of their reflexes. The resulting accidents may cause lives and damages to public properties such as lampposts, water pipes and road signs. There have been instances where the motorists would bulldoze into shops and roadside stalls killing innocent bystanders in the process.

Perhaps the authorities should take a closer look at Sweden. Over there, driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol is considered a detestable crime. This is regardless of whether the driver is involved in an accident or not.

It was a Swedish tradition those days to drink until you are completely out. Today, however, things have changed. Sweden has the lowest rate of alcohol abuse and drink-driving in Europe. Anyone who has consumed alcohol, no matter how little, does not drive.

Fines are based upon the amount of money the offender has in his bank account. The more money he has, the bigger the fine. Vehicles of repeat offenders are impounded and scrapped. If this is done here in Ipoh, scrap metal dealers on Lahat Road will be the major benefactors. They will be laughing all the way to the bank.

Government-owned motor vehicles in Sweden are fitted with an alcohol ignition interlock device which prevents the vehicle from being started if traces of alcohol are detected on the driver.

In Malaysia, our laws need tightening and, more importantly, the authorities need to ensure that they are implemented fairly without regard for the status of a person.

I have known of many who were let off with just a slap on the wrist for driving under the influence of alcohol. This is in spite of obvious signs like slurring while talking and not being able to walk straight. The absence of breathalyzers compounds the problem further.

One of the major drawbacks in creating awareness among Malaysian motorists on the importance of road safety is the practice of offering discounts for unpaid summonses. It has become a ritual almost and is not doing any good to the country. The practice should stop immediately.

Discounts would only encourage offenders to continue breaking the rules. Even municipal councils have jumped on the bandwagon. They too are offering discounts to ratepayers to settle their fines and compounds. So all one needs to do is to wait till it is past the deadline.

Discounts of 50 per cent are normally given. A "one-off" offer is the bait to draw in the crowd. Well, people are no fools. They will wait for the opportunity to pay less no matter what. And since the councils need the money they will gladly accede, no matter what.

During festivities, Police should keep tabs on bars and eateries where drinking is permitted. They should then check the drivers leaving the premises. Malaysians, generally, are not in the habit of foregoing driving when they are "high". It will embolden them instead.

According to statistics, motorcyclists comprise about 60 per cent of road fatalities. Unfortunately, the most vulnerable are those within 16 to 30 years of age.

Therefore, the government must encourage the use of public transport by making it affordable and convenient to use. But this seldom happens in our towns. Ipoh's unpredictable public transport has no defined routes and timetables to follow. It is non-existent after 10pm.

Make it mandatory for public transport vehicles and private cars to be installed with alcohol sensing devices that will prevent a drunk driver from starting his vehicle and stop tempting ratepayers with discounts however generous they may be. This will only lull

them into a state of complacency which is bad for the country.

For a change why not offer discounts for those who pay their dues early or on time.



EYE HEALTH – EAT SMART

Ipoh Echo's EYE HEALTH series continues with Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. GILL talking to us on NOURISHMENT for the eyes – PART 2



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

Eating smart is surely the best way to nourish your body and of course your eyes too. Our eyes need vitamins and minerals to function normally. Reparative processes and growth in children depend on good nutrition with adequate vitamins and minerals. Two vitamins that are essential in a person's diet are Vitamins A and C.

Vitamin A deficiency causes a condition called **Night Blindness**. Our diet has two kinds of vitamin A, that is, retinol which is also referred to as Preformed Vitamin A. The other vitamin A is known as Provitamin A of which beta carotene is the most common type. Vitamin A produces the pigments in the retina (nerve) of the eye which is responsible for promoting good vision, especially vision in low light levels.

Vitamin A deficiency can also cause serious eye problems like **Xerophthalmia**. This is a common cause of childhood blindness in developing countries especially in Africa and Latin America. It is caused by lack of Vitamin A simply because the poor child does not get to eat fresh green leafy vegetables and proteins in the form of **meat, eggs, cheese, fish, poultry, milk, yoghurt, dairy products, nuts and grains**.

Vitamin A helps the surface of the eye form an effective barrier to bacteria and viruses, thereby reducing the risk of eye infections. Xerophthalmia occurs when there is a **lack of vitamin A** resulting in the cornea becoming very dry, leading to clouding of the front of the eye, corneal ulcers and finally vision loss.

Vitamin C is good for our whole body and particularly good for your eyes. In the eyes, vitamin C maintains connective tissue and the collagen found in the front part of the eye called the cornea.

The aqueous humour is the watery fluid that fills the space between the cornea and the iris. This aqueous humour fluid nourishes and protects the cornea and lens. This aqueous humour has very high levels of Vitamin C, in fact much higher levels of Vitamin C than in our blood. So, make sure you eat diets rich in Vitamin C like **citrus fruits, capsicum, broccoli and strawberries** to maintain good eye health.

Generally, a well-balanced diet that includes sufficient **fresh fruits and vegetables** should be adequate in providing all the vitamins and minerals that the eyes need in order to be healthy and function well. The problem lies in the fact that in these fast-food times, diets may lack the ingredients of a healthy meal. This is where vitamin supplements may help.



POINTERS:

- Eat a balanced diet with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Educate yourself with information on proper diet and nutrition.
- Avoid cigarette smoking and preserved foods.

For more information, call Gill Eye Specialist Centre at Hospital Fatimah (05-5455582) or email gilleyecentre@dr.com



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Kamila Kamaruddin: Award-winning doctor, role model and voice of the discriminated

Stories and news reports about transgenders in Malaysia are normally about the abuse they have suffered and the violence inflicted on them; however, once in a while, we are inspired by trans people who have triumphed over adversity and left a positive impact on society.

Dr Kamila Kamaruddin is a transgender general practitioner (GP) who works in the National Health Service (NHS) in England, and has won many awards for her work in the community; Finalist GP of the year 2018, Pulse Magazine UK, Diversity and Inclusivity Award, Tower Hamlets 2018 and the Royal College of GPs, Inspire Award 2019.

Kamila grew up in Ipoh and is the youngest in a family of seven children. Her mother was a teacher, whilst her father was a civil servant in the Education department. The young Kamila yearned to travel and said that a medical degree would be her passport to see the world, with the freedom to work anywhere.

After one year of studying medicine at University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), she continued her studies in Belgium, at the Catholic University of Leuven, but had to learn Flemish before her enrolment.

She returned to Malaysia in 1987, to complete her horsemanship, but left, three years later, to work in the NHS.

Kamila's story is one of encouragement and adversity, despite the barriers placed by a conservative Malaysian society, depression, prejudice and lack of support.

Her parents valued the importance of education and instilled in their children the qualities of self-respect, self-confidence, and respect for others.

She said, "When my mother discovered that I was bullied in school, and could not fight back, she said that one day I would be better than them. True enough! Today, I have fared better than many of my bullies."

To honour their parents' legacy, Kamila and her siblings opened a library and computer club for a rural school in Ulu Langat, to supplement the needs of schoolchildren.

Anyone meeting Kamila today would see a self-confident, bubbly and sporty personality. Few would believe that she was once shy and timid, as a pupil at St Michael's Institution, in Ipoh, and Malay College, in Kuala Kangsar.

She said, "I lacked confidence and was bad at sports, but I excelled in my studies, as reading was an escape from my misery at school."

She remains good friends with her schoolmates from MCKK, who are supportive of her transition, although she joked that she still lacked the courage to attend any of the MCKK Old Boys' Dinners.

The awards are a measure of her success and an acknowledgement by the medical fraternity, of her contribution to society. She said, "To be trans is hard and you have to negotiate through prejudice and acceptance. My journey has been fraught with depression and bad coping mechanisms."

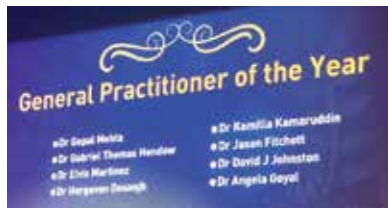
"With resilience and support from many I have managed to channel my pain into advocating a more meaningful life for myself and others. To be recognised for my achievements is a privilege."

She is grateful for the support of her NHS colleagues and the medical care given by the NHS to the minorities and the less privileged trans people.

She said, "Inclusivity is one of the pillars of general practice in England. I am grateful to this country and the NHS for giving me the opportunity to thrive."

As a Malaysian, she expressed sadness that she is deemed unworthy in her own country, and said, "My success is considered to promote the lifestyle of trans people. Many trans people are killed or assaulted as if they deserved such a fate."

"It's even sadder that the medical community does not stand up and protect the interests of the trans community. Few people realise that access to health care is denied by many in the medical community."



Kamila confessed that she had yearned to be a trans woman ever since she was six, and advises anyone in Malaysia, who has doubts about their own bodies, to obtain support from their circle of friends, family and colleagues.

She said, "Believe in yourself because being true to yourself is perhaps your biggest achievement in life."

She also advised them to make contact with the trans community, Pink Triangle and various NGOs for help.

She urges society, including politicians, religious leaders, individuals to end the violence and hatred against the LGBT community. When asked how Malaysians could promote greater understanding for trans people, she said,

"Stop treating us as lesser people. We do not deserve that."

"There should be better awareness and more positive stories about trans people."

"Trans people are resourceful and hard-working and their success should be celebrated, as well. Stop misgendering trans people. Show compassion and protect their rights."

She is furious that the Malaysian medical community is reluctant to help trans people and turns a blind eye to their plight. Kamila said that many trans people die from taking unregulated and contaminated hormones purchased from the internet. She said, "The silence of the Malaysian Medical Committee is disappointing".

Kamila is aware that she would not be allowed to practice in Malaysia; nevertheless, she dreams of opening a gender identity clinic, in Malaysia, to support trans people and give them better access to health care, mental health provisions and hormone treatments.

She said, "First of all, we must remove the barriers. Then we need dialogue to discuss ways forward".

In the new Malaysia, trans people should be given a chance to make valuable contributions to society; instead of being condemned and hounded by the conservative and ultra-religious people amongst us, who beat them up, cheat them at work and humiliate them.

Kamila has proven that they can excel if given the tools to flourish in education and work.

Community. Thaipusam 2020

By Joelyn Jonathan

Lights, music and devotees filled the streets of Ipoh once again as it is that time of the year. It is Thaipusam, a religious festival celebrated by Hindu devotees.

The three-day affair which began on Friday, January 7 ended on Sunday, January 9. The focus of the festivity centred on two major temples in the city namely, the Maha Mariamman Temple at Jalan Sungai Pari and the Kallumalai Murugan Temple at Gunung Cheroh.

The occasion started with the chariot (ratham) procession from the "mother" temple, the Maha Mariamman Temple to the "son" temple, the Kallumalai Murugan Temple. Pre-chariot procession prayers began at 4.30am with the procession starting at 6.15am.

Upon the arrival of the chariot at the Gunung Cheroh temple, Kavadi left the mother temple for the son temple. The Kavadi is a form of offering for Lord Murugan. Although devotees often offer milk and fruits, the Kavadi is the preferred offering. Made of Styrofoam and LED lights, in various shapes and sizes, the Kavadi accentuates the hype and celebration during Thaipusam.

According to Jeyasagaren, secretary of the Ipoh Kallumalai Murugan temple, some 350 to 400 kavadis were on hand to do the honours this year.

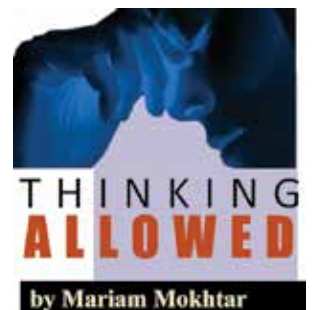
"They included both big and small kavadis. The small ones are the D-shaped wooden frames decorated with peacock feathers and wrapped with a cloth."

"The last kavadi is expected to leave the mother temple before midnight. A larger crowd is expected this year since Thaipusam falls on Saturday," he told Ipoh Echo when met on the eve of Thaipusam.

During a visit to the Murugan temple a few days prior to the event, a number of devotees were seen fulfilling their vows. According to Jeya most devotees tended to fulfil their vows earlier to beat the crowd and avoid the traffic on the actual day.

As expected, this year Ipoh witnessed a larger crowd compared to last year. It comprised of different races with some actively helping the devotees.

The festival concluded with the procession of the chariot from the Kallumalai Murugan temple to the Maha Mariamman temple on Sunday at 6.10pm. The chariot reached its destination at about 10am the following day.



SeeFoon deepens her explorations into Indian Cuisine

Pics by Yugin

Legend goes that the Nizam of Hyderabad had 49 types of Biryani cooked in his kitchen which churned out delicacies that were an amalgamation of Turkish, Mughlai and Arabic influences blended with native Telugu and Maratha culinary traditions.

Hyderabadi cuisine is also known as Deccani cuisine, and at the newly-opened eatery, **Hyderabad Recipes**, this addition to the Indian cuisine repertoire in Ipoh is a welcome one. For not only is the culinary experience a pleasant one but the decor is pleasing and elegant; a far cry from the sweaty, barely fan-cooled places that abound.

Here in Hyderabad Recipes, BBQ or Tandoori items coupled with their wide assortment of Biryani are the stars on their menu with one page devoted to each. **Mirchi-ka-salan**, a thick brinjal (eggplant) paste cum sauce and vegetable raita (fresh yoghurt mixed with chopped raw vegetables) is served with most of the Biryani in a choice of chicken, lamb, egg and vegetables and styles.

Traditionally, **cooking of biryani** employs two **different methods**. Hyderabadi biryani is the most popular. Believed to have originated from the times of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Hyderabadi biryani can employ both cooking methods. The Pakki Hyderabadi Biryani involves cooking basmati rice and meat separately and then layering them together. While the Katchi Hyderabadi Biryani uses raw marinated meat (chicken or lamb) placed between the layers of basmati rice infused with saffron, onions and dried fruits. Both types utilise a slow-cooking method using dough-sealed earthen pot called a Dum Biryani.

There is one Dum Biryani at Hyderabad Recipes which is listed as **Chicken Dum Biryani** and consists of layers of chicken and basmati rice cooked in layers, and flavoured with saffron. The one we had was fragrant, the rice fluffy and complemented beautifully by the brinjal sauce that was slightly tart, smooth and well-spiced, **RM18.40**. The **Mutton Biryani** was equally delectable at **RM21.90**.

The BBQ items of Kebabs and Tandoori, surprisingly listed primarily Chicken items although two fish and one prawn dish were included which we didn't sample. We had a mixture of kebabs with subtle nuances in the flavouring of each, some more bland than others but the accompanying chutney provided some necessary fire. They offer a **Tandoori Platter 5 types of 3 each at RM60.50 and 5 types of 4 each at RM82.60**.

We then tried a selection of their various breads and ate them with a delectable **Butter Chicken**, deboned morsels of tender chicken marinated in yoghurt and spices, cooked in tomato and cream was not overly spicy and gentle on the tongue, **RM 18.40** (a must-have).

There was also the very creamy **Palak Paneer** (cottage cheese cooked in spinach puree) which we mopped up with the different breads, **RM17.60**.

I am not usually a fan of sweets, especially Indian ones as they are often sweet, cloyingly so. However, to my delight, I actually enjoyed some of the ones I tasted here as the sweetness was controlled and toned down.

The **Qubani Ka Meetha**, stewed apricots garnished with ice cream was refreshing, **RM12**, while the **Double Ka Meetha**, Indian bread pudding in the form of deep-fried Gardenia bread cooked in milk n cashew nuts with hints of ghee and cardamom was delicious, **RM6.60**, and so was the **Gajar Ka Halwa**, minced carrot tossed in milk and sugar, **RM6**.

We finished our meal with Masala tea.

Hyderabad Recipes is a worthy addition to the Ipoh Indian culinary scene. They also have a delivery service via Food Panda.



Palak Paneer



Naan Basket



Double Ka Meetha



Butter Chicken



Qubani Ka Meetha



Gajar Ka Halwa



Mutton Biryani



By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen
seefoon@ipohhecho.com.my
For more info go to www.ipohfooddiva.my



Chicken Dum Biryani



Tandoori Platter

Restoran Hyderabad Recipes (Halal)
34 Jalan Sultan Abdul Jalil, Kampung Jawa, 30300 Ipoh.
Business hours: 10.30am-11.30pm; 24/7
Ask for Maninder Singh 05 246 0755

What's so Special about Belum? . . . continued from page 2

Mythical Tales and Ghost Stories

Pak Teh, who lived in Belum Lama told a story of a legend about the origin of Belum Lama and its people. The villagers believe that they descended from Datuk Pulang Hari and Puteri Saadon, whose marriage is of human and *orang bunian* or fairy. He added that there is a gold mine which is not quarried but it is still in existence to date. Belum Lama is now a place of the past with no more houses but a home to tombstones. Villagers from Kampung Belum Baru still visit Belum Lama to clean the gravestones at Kg. Sain, Kg. Mekar and Laho (refer to map) annually. According to Iznaz, who visited Kg. Kebeng two years ago, he saw a durian farm, tea farm, paddy field and a coffee shop. Now, one can only reach up to Laho as most of the areas in Belum Lama, now known as Pos Sepor is inaccessible. It has been taken over by the military to patrol the Belum-Thailand border. For those who wish to go further, a permit from Perbadanan Taman Negeri Perak is required, including villagers who wish to visit the graves in Belum Lama.

Underwater Village in Temengor

Another unknown history of Royal Belum is the underwater village named Kampung Temengor which is now at the bottom of Temengor lake. According to a former Nuri pilot, Major Dr Nor Ibrahim bin Sulaiman TUDM, 625 villagers from Kampung Panggas, Kampung Bukit, Kampung Mingkong and Kampung Kertei in Kampung Temengor were evacuated to Ayer Ganda, Gerik, by three

Nuri helicopters on June 24, 1976, to vacate the land for the building of the Temengor dam. This explains the protruding tree trunks from the surface of Temengor lake which once belonged to Kampung Temengor. Boat guides pay extra attention while sailing to avoid getting a hole in their boats.

It is also known among the locals of Royal Belum that there are three fig trees, in a position of a triangle, where locals claim visitors often get disturbed by spirits and some even see apparitions in the area, especially during the night. According to local belief, the fig tree is the home to the *pontianak*, the ghost of a dead pregnant woman; *Langsuir*, a blood-sucking ghost who resembles a pontianak and *Hantu Tinggi*, which is said to be formed from a tree trunk and possessed by spirits. It is believed that people can get sudden blindness if one made eye contact with a *Hantu Tinggi*.



Pokok Ara



Steve as the tour and boat guide



View of Temenggor lake on the boat

My Say

By Jerry Francis



Be Sympathetic to Illegal Parking at General Hospital

Why the double standard? There are many motorists parking their vehicles on a regular basis every day in no-parking areas in the middle of the city, yet no summons is being issued to them.

I don't have to list out the places as I am sure the council's enforcement officers are aware of them.

While those motorists, who park along Jalan Raja Ashman Shah in front of Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital, are being frequently booked.

Unlike the motorists in the city centre, they are there daily not for leisure or on business errands, but to seek treatment or accompanying relatives to the hospital. Majority of them are senior citizens and in the B40 group, who are having great difficulties finding parking spaces nearby.

All available parking spaces within the hospital and its surrounding areas are often full. They are taken up as early as 7am.

Those seeking out-patient treatment at the hospital daily would, therefore, have to park their vehicles at any space available nearby rather than having to walk two or three kilometres to the clinics.

One of them, Encik Mohamed Yassin, 75, said whenever he had an appointment with the cardiologist he would leave for the hospital early.

"Even as early as 7am, I cannot find a parking space nearby and I have no choice but to park along the main road, as it is less than 200m to the Specialists' Clinics," he said. "With my heart condition, I do not want to risk taking a long walk."



An 82-year-old retiree, known only as Mohan, said he had a 10am appointment at the Surgery Clinic and was at the hospital at 8am. Unable to find a place to park, he left his car along the main road and went to the clinic.

"When I returned four hours later, there was a summons on the windscreen," he said. "I remembered that if the summon is paid on the same day, there would be an automatic 50 per cent discount. So, I immediately drove to the city council's complex and paid RM20."

"Well, It was an expensive parking fee. If I were to take a taxi from my house in Bercham, it would probably cost more," added Mohan.

Just like Mohamed and Mohan, many motorists too are parking their vehicles along Jalan Raja Ashman Shah daily in spite of the summons for illegal parking.

It may appear that they are defying the authority of the Ipoh City Council, but they are not. They choose to pay the summons rather than take a long walk to the hospital.

I feel that Ipoh City Council needs to be sympathetic to these motorists and restrain from issuing summonses for illegal parking along Jalan Raja Ashman Shah as long as the vehicles are not obstructing the flow of traffic.

Both sides of the road are wide enough for orderly parking. If it is not possible to be sympathetic to those motorists, then provide parking bays along the road.

Unless the city council considers issuing summons to the motorists along that stretch of road as more "lucrative" as its coffers can be enriched by at least RM1000 daily from the collection of fines.

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Community.

Bookstore with a Difference

By Gisele Soo

The concept at this children's bookstore is rather unique and it may be a one of its kind in Ipoh.

According to the owner, Myn Chern, her intention of establishing "Pod in the Hood" is to share her love of books with fellow Perakeans and to encourage reading, especially among children. Reading skills should be instilled in every child as it is a vital part of a child's academic development.

"I grew up with all kinds of books, and as a mother, I hope to enrich the lives of my children by equipping them with skills that will help them secure a bright future," she told this scribe at her store recently.

She hopes that Pod in the Hood will be a perfect place to nurture children via books and educational toys.

What sets the bookstore apart from the rest is that the books are hand-picked by Myn Chern herself. "I have learned a lot from my children. I travelled around the globe sourcing for books and educational toys that are advantageous to kids," she remarked.

The books are filled with colourful visuals which allow more engagement by utilising their senses of sight, hearing and touch.

Besides that, the toys are organic. Hence, the bookstore offers a much healthier and safer option for children. The stuffed toys are handmade by locals.

Pod in the Hood is located at Unit 6 on the ground floor of WEIL Hotel, Ipoh. It operates daily between 9.30am and 7pm.

Check out its Instagram: @pod.in.the.hood or contact Myn Chern: 012 236 0883.



Connexion

By Joachim Ng

Deploy Old Folks as Change Agents

Good news for Perak. Our state has the largest proportion of aging folks (60 years and above). A high 15.3 percent of Perakians deserve gold medallions for their survival ability. Their ancestors as recently as 1,000 years ago could only hit 40 before expiring.



However, there is also bad news. The economy is decidedly unfriendly towards you. The reason that you are retired at age 60 is so that your job goes to a younger chap whose position is then taken by an even younger person. The chain effect gives fresh job seekers a chance to be employed. It's a Robin Hood scheme: rob the old to pay the young.

Heart-breaking stories are emerging of elderly people unable to pay their bills any more as they have depleted their EPF savings. Sprinkle the pavements with silver coins and aged folks may suddenly appear.

But let's return to the good news. Do you wear bifocal specs? Benjamin Franklin invented them at age 78. Your brain doesn't age at 60; it will go on thinking until it enters the 90-120 range. Don't let youngsters dump you in a retirement corridor to live apart from society. Remain a part of society.

Instead of forcing 60-year-olds into retirement, our Government should have done the smart thing: deploy them into non-executive or executive support roles on half day work at one-third to half pay on performance-based contracts until age 75 or 80. These semi-retirees benefit by maintaining an income and companies benefit by maintaining their experiences.

Aged workers can be powerhouses of change because of their seasoned approach in handling critical issues. The global panic over coronavirus is a model situation for deploying the elderly as change agents. How did coronavirus spread to humans? From the deviant tradition of catching, imprisoning under horrific conditions, selling, and eating wildlife including species that harbour killer viruses.

Related to this commercially exploitative practice is the equally deviant tradition of keeping livestock animals in suffocating quarters that resemble overcrowded jail cells, injecting them with heavy doses of antibiotics when they inevitably fall sick, and fattening them with growth hormones.

Excessive meat eating is a corruption of the Stone Age tradition wherein only selected animals are hunted for the day's meal or the next day, and care is taken to minimise their sufferings. As senior folks prefer less meaty diets, they can be organised to lobby for wildlife conservation and reduction of livestock consumption. Try them out as pacemakers for a new dietary lifestyle of greens and laboratory (lab) meat.



Yik Foong Shopping Complex

By Gisele Soo

Looking for some affordable IT products? Ipoh's iconic Yik Foong Shopping Complex comes to mind.

"The wide choice of relatively cheap electronic gadgets makes it the number one choice," said office worker, Jessie, 24. "I seldom shop at other computer stores as I know things are much cheaper here," she added.



The complex offers a vast array of goods and services such as electrical goods, mobile gadgets, money changing, goldsmiths, tailoring, optical outlets and hair salons.

The complex's popular food court at the basement is well-liked by both locals and foreigners, especially Indonesians. Bakso, Indonesian meatball soup and nasi ayam penyet, Indonesian fried chicken are some of the more popular dishes available.

"I like bakso, it's my all-time favourite," said Anis, a student from Cosmopoint College Ipoh.

Tired of the same outfits? Time to get yourself some well-tailored clothes.

However, many Ipohites are not very fond of visiting the complex as they have the common misconception that cheap goods mean poor quality.

The Chairman of Yik Foong Complex Management and Corporation, Khor Pheng Hwa, stated that the building has a rich history. Initially known as Weng Lok Lam Club in 1915, it was later changed to Yik Foong Shopping Complex in the early 1980s.

The seven-storey building was occupied by tenants from various backgrounds and managing different businesses. But over the last few decades, a number of vendors have moved as the complex is no longer attractive to the business community. The mushrooming of new and more glitzy shopping malls and arcades is the primary reason. Moreover, accessing the complex is not easy.

Pheng Hwa reckons that many Ipohites view Yik Foong as a Plaza Low Yat equivalent as the products are cheap and their authenticity is in doubt.

The management, according to Pheng Hwa, plans to refurbish the entire building. "Hopefully, Yik Foong will once again regain its former glory and the crowd will return once more," he remarked.

Yik Foong operates daily from 10am to 9pm.

A Despicable Act

Ipoh City Council needs to take stern action on those responsible for the recent poisoning of strays at Jalan Lahat Bistari.

Presently, feral cats and dogs caught by the Council are "disposed" at the city's landfill in Papan. This remedial action is ineffective as the strays would move out of the dumpsite to look for a food source. In the process, many are run over by cars on the road.

The lackadaisical attitude of the Council is a cause for concern to Ipohites and animal lovers.

According to Dr Ranjit of Noah's Ark, a better way to resolve the problem is for the Council and responsible parties to designate an area for strays. "Noah's Ark can't simply occupy an empty lot and fence it up as it has an owner," she exclaimed.

"This is not the first time, as it has happened before in Jelapang and Buntong," she lamented.

When asked on possible ways to tackle the problem. The Council, she replied, should encourage pet owners to neuter their pets in order to reduce population growth. Dr Ranjit and her team have conducted numerous campaigns and talks regarding the importance of neutering pets.

In a collaborative effort, Noah's Ark and some animal welfare groups have organised programmes aimed at instilling awareness in the public regarding animal cruelty and how to treat strays.

Those who abuse animals should be punished according to the law. The poisoning of strays is a despicable act committed by people who are either desperate or have no other recourse but to kill. Remember, animals are God's children too.

Feeding strays is not an offence but it has to be done responsibly. There is an old couple in Taman Cempaka who never fail to feed both cats and dogs in the housing estate but they do so at a designated spot and time, not at their whims.

Some of the better-known animal welfare groups in Ipoh are Noah's Ark, ISPCA, Mutts and Mittens as well as Ipoh Animal Welfare Society.

These welfare groups need funding for their day-to-day activity and Noah's Ark is no exception. Assistance is welcome in all forms.

Readers wishing to donate can visit Noah's Ark website at <https://noahsarkipoh.org/>. You may also call 017 575 1556 or 019 556 8292 to enquire.



Five Decades “Better Together”

By Mei Kuan

Throughout 2020, Kinta Properties is celebrating 50 years of building quality homes and developing communities where everybody belongs. Set out to be Perak’s premier lifestyle developer since 1969, it harbours a collaborative culture to go above and beyond. Add “caring” to the mix and Kinta Properties is very much focused on its philosophy of “better together”.

With expertise built on an extensive collection of more than 6000 homes, Kinta Properties seeks to create value for customers beyond bricks and mortar.

“With each home we build, we learn, making the next home even better. The first home launched in First Gardens was a single storey in 1970. As our developments and understanding have evolved, our focus on place shaping has grown,” Dato’ Lim Si Boon, chairman of Kinta Properties explained during the

anniversary dinner in mid-January.

“Despite the ever-challenging economy we have adapted, diversified and innovated. Smaller eco elements of one development have evolved into the first gold-rated GBI (Green Building Index) car showroom in Malaysia for Ban Hoe Seng Auto, with more green ambitions for the community coming soon,” Lim added.

Growing families, first time buyers, solo professionals and older people wanting to be supported to live independently can take their pick from single storey homes to townhomes and a golf resort to masterplanned communities.

Along with homes, schools, shops, and restaurants; green spaces and community hubs are built so people can find social interaction, education, recreation, business and other activities in one place. One such example is the 650-acre masterplanned township of Bandar Baru Sri Klebang

(BBSK) with the latest launch being the collection of new single storey homes in Golden Fields precinct on January 27.

Kinta Properties is also renowned for their community events, with the pop-up experimental light festival, LABpark, one of the most Instagram-worthy displays ever held in the area and soon to be returning with a bang.

To mark this incredible milestone, buyers are in for a treat as they stand a chance of getting rebates of either RM15k, RM30k or RM50k on booking when they purchase selected new homes in Bandar Baru Sri Klebang or Meru Valley EcoVillage, before 29 February.

On top of this, all house purchasers in Bandar Baru Sri Klebang in 2020 will be entered into a lucky draw to win a Honda Jazz, as the developers way of celebrating five decades as a home builder.

All Rise for Single-Storey Living

By Joelyn Jonathan

Located in Golden Fields, the single-storey ‘Cornflower’ is now up for viewing and set to be the new chapter of the master-planned township at Bandar Baru Sri Klebang.

The launching of the new collection of single-storey homes cum Chinese New Year open house was held on Monday, January 27. Approximately 500 people attended the event.

Developed by Kinta Properties, the one-floor linked homes offer three bedrooms and two bathrooms with an open plan living area. Cornflower, 20’x70’, is priced from RM258,800. Built nearby AEON Klebang, schools and an array of restaurants, the Cornflower is an ideal home for many.

According to Karen Wong, Kinta Properties Sales Manager, single-storey homes are in demand among Ipohites as it is rare to be found. Due to its accessibility, these homes are famous among young families and older people.

“Building on one storey reduces the number of homes which can be created on a given piece of land but Kinta Properties has recognised that these homes meet an important need in its diverse communities,” she added.

The launching was graced with a lion dance as a symbol of good luck and prosperity. Besides that, a drum performance followed by the Chinese New Year and God of prosperity mascot walkabout was held.

Guests were further entertained with a Chinese orchestra by Woon’s Music while the children were kept busy with the CNY craft and paper cutting activity.

The ‘Cornflower’ is open for viewing daily from 10am till 6pm. Buyers are entitled to an early bird rebate of RM10,000 with a RM5000 ang pow which will only be available during the CNY period.



Golden Fields 金佳园

Bandar Baru Sri Klebang



Discover Golden Fields, an exciting new chapter in the story of the masterplanned township Bandar Baru Sri Klebang, Ipoh.

Enjoy access to The Centro recreation center and be close to shopping mall, schools and restaurants.

Cornflower



Single Storey Link Home



3



2



Club House



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Exp. Completion Date: December 2021. Total Units: 54. Land Encumbrances: GCRC Bank (Malaysia) Berhad. Land Tenure: Freehold. Price: Min RM258,800. Max RM367,800. Approved Plan No: L8931.0003938/0002/18/K00/P00/L00. Approving Authority: Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh.

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Chinese New Year 2020

Ipoh Echo Team



Former colleagues' reunion dinner

A Reunion of Former Colleagues

A group of former colleagues, some in their 70s, have been gathering for their annual ACNY reunion dinners for the past 35 years. Although the company which they were working in closed down some time ago with some members even leaving before that, spokesperson Tracy Liew always made it a point to organise these reunions without fail every year.

"In spite of all these years, the bond between us is still very close and strong although we are now in different companies and places. We are planning to meet at least twice or more a year if possible," lamented Tracy. "Sadly, we have lost two members through the years but we intend to add more to the group as time goes on, we never know when we will meet again," she added.

Reunion Dinner in PCSH

Perak Community Specialist Hospital (PCSH) prepared a special 'Reunion Dinner' for their patients who were not able to enjoy a reunion dinner with family. One of them was Mr Wong Yow Yeong.

"The soup tastes like home cooking even though it is prepared the halal way," said a delighted Mr Wong.

Many were pleasantly surprised to receive their special meal of lotus soup with additional servings of chicken, fish and vegetable dishes; with mandarin oranges and a special greeting card bearing New Year wishes from the Management and staff.

PCSH Chief Executive Officer Mr Nicholas Chan added: "We wanted to make the place livelier and at the same time bring some Chinese New Year cheer to the patients – a touch of home away from home despite them being warded at the hospital."



PCSH Reunion Dinner

Heritage Appreciation and Prosperity Reunion Dinner at Tin Alley

Kepayang state assemblyman, Dr Ko Chung Sen who was the guest of honour led by Mr Tan Kai Lek and Mr Leong Hing Wah, organisers of the event and other guests, started the night's programme with a drum call and 'lou sang' dish.

A total of 188 tables, signifying "prosperity", surrounding Lorong Bijeh Timah, Market Lane and a stretch of Jalan Bijeh Timah were prepared for the event. More than 1000 Ipohites were treated to a multicultural show and prosperity dinner that night.



Tin Alley Reunion Dinner

PPPJIM

DYMM Raja Permaisuri Perak, Tuanku Zara Salim, paid a visit to the Pertubuhan Pengurusan Pusat Jagaan 1 Malaysia on January 20. Her royal highness spent about an hour visiting the home accompanied by Mr Choong Kam Hong, the Chairman of PPPJIM, Datin Seri Dr Nomee Ashikin Mohammed Radzi, Puan Sri Dato' Sandra Lee



Visit to PPPJIM



Sama-sama Gong Xi

and Ms Wong May Ing. HRH presented CNY ang pows to the children before she bid them farewell.

A troupe of Lion Dancers came a-calling to the home on February 1 and thrilled the children with their performance. An ang pow was given to each of the 35 children present at the home after the dance.

Sama-sama Gong Xi

The Perak State Government organised a Sama-sama Gong Xi Chinese New Year celebration on Thursday, February 6 at Eco Park, Bandar Seri Botani to welcome the Year of the Rat.

Present at the event were Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, Raja Permaisuri Perak, Tuanku Zara Salim, Perak Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu, his wife, Datin Seri Nomee Ashikin Mohammed Radzi and Executive Councillor for Tourism, Arts and Culture Tan Kar Hing and other dignitaries.

Their royal highnesses were welcomed to the event with a lion dance and were entertained to a Chinese opera, Peacock Dance and Fan dance. This event at the Eco Park started as early as 6pm and continued throughout the night with Chinese calligraphy, henna art painting, pottery making and other Chinese cultural activities being held in various parts of the park. Thousands were enthralled by the night's festivities.

Sharing the Joy

Perak Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCCI) celebrated the Chinese New Year together with the underprivileged on the morning of Sunday, January 26 at the ballroom of WEIL Hotel.

"PCCCI has decided to take up the project of building a permanent arch at Jalan Mustapha Al-Bakri with an estimated budget of RM500,000. We will invite professional designers, engineers and architects to participate and tender for the construction as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we will also initiate fundraising events to call on Perakeans especially Ipohites to come forward to raise the RM500,000 needed," Dato' Liew Sew Yee, President of PCCCI explained.

"The objective of building this arch is to signify the struggles of the Chinese back in the last 200 years and their contribution to nation-building. We would like to make this arch the new landmark for Ipoh New Town," he added.

With Nga Kor Ming, Deputy Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat as the guest of honour, present were Dr Lee Boon Chye, the Deputy Minister of Health; Dr Abdul Aziz Bari, Executive Councillor for Education, Science, Environment, Green Technology and Information; Dato' Ngeh Koo Ham, Perak Legislative Assembly Speaker; Dato' Lim Kok Cheong, Life Honorary President of PCCCI; Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian, Honorary President of PCCCI; Haji Amirudin Tan Sri Tajudin, Deputy President of Perak Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Ravi Sanker Balasubramaniam, President of Perak Indian Chamber of Commerce.



PCCCI sharing the joy

Chinese New Year 2020

Chap Goh Meh at Church of St Michael

Have you ever wondered how Chap Goh Meh would be celebrated in a church? Church of St Michael along 24 Church Road celebrated Chap Goh Meh in advance on Friday evening, 7 February.

Father Anthony Liew, Parish Priest of the Church of St Michael expressed, "The Catholic religion is universal. Though we're Catholic, we are also Chinese. That's why we still celebrate Chinese cultural celebrations."

"Today, we come together as one family for this Chap Goh Meh celebration in the house of the Lord (the church) to have our union meal and fellowship. The organising team of this celebration is the Chinese Apostolate of our church, which promotes Chinese cultural celebrations, including Mid-Autumn Festival, Dumpling Festival and more, in our church," Father Anthony explained.

The event was filled with activities, games and performances, such as scooping up mandarin oranges from a water tub, lucky draws with hampers, ang paws, and more as prizes, Chinese orchestra performances, performances about the origin of Chinese New Year and dances.

Kok Chee Kong, Vice President of the Chinese Apostolate expressed, "This year's Chap Goh Meh is special for us as we invite non-members of our church to come to get to know our church and Catholic religion as well as participate in our activities."



One of the lucky draw winners with Father Anthony

"Every mandarin orange in the water tub has the name of one of the 17 groups of our church as well as the contact number. Therefore, if they are interested in getting to know us, they can contact us via the phone number on the mandarin orange," Kok elaborated.

"It is a fresh experience for me," Chichun Chang, a 31-year-old Taiwanese who was brought to the event by her friend, enthused.

"The Chap Goh Meh activities here are very similar to how we celebrate *Weiya* (an annual year-end banquet that is traditionally held before the Lunar New Year in Taiwan) when we will also have lucky draws. In Taiwan, we don't have the tradition of tossing mandarin oranges, we basically celebrate *Yuan Xiao Jie* (Lantern Festival which marks the first full moon and 15th day of the first month of the Lunar New Year) by watching lanterns. We will make lots of lanterns with different designs, and there will be huge

lantern displays. We'll also solve riddles," Chang explained.

"I was invited by my friend to come. As young people, we'll like to enjoy this event as much as we can as it's a once in a year kind of thing and of course, we get to meet up with friends as well," Chin Jing Ru, a 30-year-old non-member of the church told Ipoh Echo.

Arts and Culture

Malaysian Animation Gaining Global Recognition

By Chris Teh

Coinciding with Chap Goh Mei and Thaipusam on Saturday, February 8, the February session of Sharpened Word (SW) was held at 22 Hale Street.

With 'Batik Girl and How It Conquers the Nation' as the theme, panellists for the session were SW regular feature Hassan Muthalib, more known as Pak Hassan and the director of the award-winning animated short film 'Batik Girl', Perak-born Irwan Junaidy.

'Batik Girl' is an art piece centring on Mas, the main character, coping with the loss of her parents and finding herself drawn into the magical 'Batik World', with her grandmother, Tok Ma.

Despite being only nine minutes long, the short film went on to become a fan favourite and was chosen to be screened at several film festivals around the world.

"I wasn't particularly a fan of batik until I did some research on it," Irwan said. "Colour spreads easily on batik cloth and it does not look good. But, if several colours are put together, a magnificent art piece comes out of it. This was part of the inspiration for Batik Girl."

"In the film, Mas is considered the colours, while Tok Ma represents the wax lines," he added. In 'Batik World', the Batik Girl reflects Mas, while the Shadow mirrors protection from Tok Ma.

Produced by The R&D Studio founded by Irwan himself with collaboration from Universiti Teknologi MARA's Faculty of Music, Irwan stated that he did not expect such overwhelming responses toward the film.

"We had fun producing 'Batik Girl', despite all the challenges that came along with it," he expressed.

"Most of us from The R&D Studio aren't majors in art. I was an architect. The concept artist for 'Batik Girl', Atiqah studied mechatronic engineering," Irwan elaborated. "Every animated feature that we direct and produce is a learning curve for us."

"We had to take a few rounds to get the shots right," he further added. "Frankly speaking, I had no idea that a short feature like 'Batik Girl' would succeed and garner interest from all walks of life."

Irwan insisted that music and score are elements that are equally as important as other aspects of the film.

"Music reinforces emotions that are supposed to be experienced at certain scenes of a film," he explained. "Unfortunately, most film directors focus least on that part."

When asked about the future of the animated film industry in Malaysia, both Irwan and Pak Hassan lamented that there is not enough space for animators to flourish.

"Storytelling has always been a problem here in Malaysia," Irwan stated. "Not only that, Malaysia doesn't have much experience in anime-style production, which was used on 'Batik Girl'."

"Short films must have three criterias, which are continuous action, continuous timing and a twist at the end," Pak Hassan stated. "Of course, these are just the basics."

"I've attended several talks in universities which discussed film direction and production. To my shock, most of the students have no idea of what I was asking because the lecturers themselves don't even know!" he lamented.



Tourism



Upgrading Ipoh Airport

By Rosli Mansor

A sum of RM150 million has been allocated to upgrade Ipoh's Sultan Azlan Shah Airport as part of the plan at improving Perak's infrastructure.

According to Executive Councillor for Tourism, Arts and Culture Tan Kar Hing, the project is being spearheaded by the state's Economic Planning Unit with the approval of the Ministry of Transport. The preliminary stage of the planning is now over.

"We're deciding on an appropriate business model for the upgrading exercise," he told reporters during the Year 2020 Meet and Greet session held at Tower Regency Hotel, Ipoh recently.

"The project will be managed by Malaysia Airport Holdings Berhad. It'll involve the lengthening of the existing runway and the upgrading of amenities to ensure comfort for end-users," Tan added.

Tourism Perak will adopt five strategies to spur the state tourism industry for the Year 2020. They are infrastructure development, role model, diverse promotional network, programme regeneration and conservation and research.

On a related matter, the head of Visit Malaysia 2020 Secretariat, Dato' Ammar Abdul Ghafar, said the collaboration between Tourism Malaysia and Tourism Perak in promoting tourism products is ongoing but will be done with much vigour forthwith.

"We've conducted ten familiarisation trips all over the state to kickstart the Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign," he remarked.

"Besides an abundance of interesting tourism products on offer, Perak has a good transportation system to boot," Ammar added. "Hopefully, the airport upgrading works will complement and boost the state tourism industry."

Over 200 guests were present during the session. They included tourism players, tour operators and hoteliers.

"At least Malaysia now has international properties like 'Upin and Ipin' and 'Boboiboy', which makes Malaysian animation known to certain parts of the world," Pak Hassan added.

When asked about his future plans, Irwan said, "There are another short film and feature film coming up. I thank everyone for the tremendous support towards 'Batik Girl'. We will continue improving ourselves."

The short film full of minute details which is up for interpretation can be viewed on The R&D Studio's official YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/RnDChannel.

For more information regarding Sharpened Word events, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/sharpenedword.kinta.

Nosh News

Craving Authentic Teochew Dim Sum?

By Mei Kuan

Hua Chew Restaurant along Jalan Piandang Indah 18 is the one and only spot in Tanjung Piandang to serve a variety of authentic Teochew dim sum especially those less commonly served nowadays. Mostly handmade from scratch using fresh ingredients without the addition of preservatives, the bestsellers are its *kueh* (steamed vegetable dumpling – RM2 per plate with a choice of chive, turnip or yam), *orh nee* (yam paste – RM4 per plate) and crispy shrimp rolls (RM3 per plate).

“I started to craft dim sum to sell about 20 years ago in the same neighbourhood and moved to this new shop seven months ago. It took me years to perfect the recipe. The restaurant’s name is actually formed by a character each from my daughter and son’s names. Spanning two generations, my children are currently running the restaurant,” Lee King, the founder of Hua Chew Restaurant, shared with Ipoh Echo about the labour-intensive cuisine.

Other quintessential dim sum options such as *kwong qiang* (fried vegetarian beancurd roll - RM3 per plate), *xia jiao* (shrimp dumpling - RM3 per plate), *shao mai* (meat dumpling - RM3 per plate), *xiao long bao* (broth-filled steamed pork dumpling – RM2), chicken feet (RM4 per plate), steamed glutinous rice (RM3.50) and *da bao* (large steamed bun – RM3.50) are served too.

For lunch, recommended dishes are its fish in the classic sour plum soup (price ranges from RM15 to RM30 for small portion depending on type of fish), fried salted fish balls (RM10 per plate for small portion), crab noodle soup (RM15 for small portion), stir-fried glass noodle (RM6 for small portion), stir-fried fish with leeks (RM15 for small portion) and seafood porridge (RM15 for small portion).



Variety of dim sum available

“We will create new items to be added to our menu from time to time. Our yam paste is made of just yam without adding any flour. Once you add flour, it would not be authentic anymore,” the amiable Lee added.

Hua Chew Restaurant operates from 7.30am till 12.30pm daily (except Monday). It is located at **12 Jalan Piandang Indah 18, Taman Piandang Indah, 34250 Tanjung Piandang**. Non-halal.



Crab noodle soup

Arts and Culture

Perak Promoting Youth Development through the Arts



Persatuan Seni Tarian Antarabangsa (PSTA), supported by Howard Lee Chuan How, Perak Exco for Youth and Sports & Human Capital Development, will be pioneering the Perak Youth Development Programme 2020 from April 2020.

With the guidance of the Malaysian legend in arts and dance, Datuk Ramli Ibrahim, as the Honorary Patron, this project aims to provide opportunities, a positive environment and connections to create change in the lives of youths. Participants will build global awareness through a creative process to improve physical, mental and social wellbeing through the arts.

Howard Lee says that Perak, in line with the Perak State Government's vision, is proud to be one of the first in Malaysia to utilise arts and dance to promote youth development. The Perak State Government, in their new plan, is working towards promoting the importance of the creative industries and to further explore the possible influences of the arts within the local economy.

The Perak Youth Development Programme will be delivered to students from public schools around Perak and will be run by local professionals and overseas guest speakers from Direct Academia International (DAI), an education platform. The programme will be conducted in various locations in Ipoh every Saturday at 4-6pm from April to September 2020. All students from ages 13-19 are welcome to join.

Datuk Ramli Ibrahim who is acknowledged as UNESCO Living Treasure and conferred the Padma Shri Award (India's top civilian honours) says that the inclusiveness of this project will allow youths in Perak to experience the arts and dance from a different perspective, which will be a starting point to strengthening the country's vision for development through the arts. “I am pleased that Perak has taken this step to lead the way, to

focus on the arts when working on young people”.

Audrey Kwan, President of PSTA said, “I believe arts and dance play a great role in human development. Arts and dance promote healthy and creative lifestyles and can be linked to freedom in education while promoting a decent standard of living”. This programme is open to everyone, including those who have no experience in dance. Participants will definitely benefit from our interactive activities.

Since its establishment, PSTA has been working to provide international exposure to the community

by promoting dance through educational workshops, international exchanges, scholarships and talent scouting. This will be the 3rd initiative for PSTA together with Jawatankuasa Pembangunan Belia dan Sukan. In 2018, through Jawatankuasa Pembangunan Belia dan Sukan, PSTA has successfully secured scholarships for 12 students to experience professional dance training locally and in the UK.

For more information on programmes or scholarships at PSTA, please contact **05 311 9127**.

From Minnesota to Ipoh

By Mei Kuan

Hailing from the Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota, USA, the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra and Jazz Ensemble dropped by Ipoh for a charity performance during their tour of Malaysia and Singapore. All proceeds from the evening performance went towards helping the needy via the Lighthouse Hope Society (LHS) Ipoh. It was held on Friday, January 31 at the ballroom of WEIL Hotel.

“This concert is indeed a rare treat for Ipoh, especially music lovers. We sincerely thank the Symphony Orchestra led by conductor Dr Ruth Lin and the Jazz Ensemble under director Dr Dave Stamps and all the organisers involved in bringing them to our shores,” Ellen Yoong, organising chairperson expressed.

“The Lighthouse Hope Society has come a long way since its humble beginnings 13 years ago. Reaching out to the hungry, homeless and helpless in our society has been such a joy with the provision of free meals, free medical care, haircuts, clothing, shower facilities, counselling and drug rehabilitation assistance,” Dr S.S. Gill, president of the Lighthouse Hope Society explained.

“An expanding part of the Lighthouse Hope Society is the Orang Asli Economic Empowerment Projects in



providing fruit saplings along with chicks for rearing. Additionally, we have embarked on providing free installation of solar panels to kampungs (villages) without electricity under our ‘LightUp Our Kampung’ project,” he added.

Founded in 1888, the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra has a membership of 50 student musicians, of whom less than 20 per cent major in music. Meanwhile,

the premier 21-member concert jazz ensemble is currently celebrating its 50th year of excellence. The two groups combine to form a studio orchestra, a unique collaboration that took the ensembles to Greece and Macedonia in 2016 and to Malaysia and Singapore in 2020.

The Lighthouse Hope Society's soup kitchen is located at 4, Jalan Koo Chong Kong, 30000 Ipoh. The NGO can be reached at **05 5462023** or lighthousehopesociety@gmail.com. Readers who would like to lend a helping hand can do so via cheques and transfers to: LIGHTHOUSE HOPE SOCIETY, IPOH, PERAK PUBLIC BANK BHD 3200 461 024. Kindly send transaction confirmation via WhatsApp to 012 505 7648. Donations in kind such as clothing, footwear, toothpaste, umbrella among others are welcome too.

Lifestyle



Bagas Zakariah Photography Challenge 2020

Pictures by : Yob Dabai & Gejoey

By Rosli Mansor

Bagas Zakariah Orchard and Farm offers the experience of living in a traditional Malay village. However, of late it has become a mecca for photographers keen on capturing a typical kampong lifestyle for posterity.

The unique architecture of the traditional Perak Malay house – Rumah Kutai – has prompted Zamari Muhyi, Chairman of Perak State Bumiputera Tourism Entrepreneurs Association to host the Bagas Zakariah Photography Challenge 2020 on Saturday, February 1.

“We combined the best of Bagas Zakariah with Perak Malay costumes to showcase the uniqueness of Malay heritage and how it could be optimised via a photography competition,” he said.

“The last thing we want to see is the erosion of Malay traditions and culture in time of rapid technological advancement. Hopefully, sufficient publicity will be gained from this competition through social media platforms to bring it to an international level,” Zamari added.

“We also wanted to promote Gopeng’s tourism products, especially its historical heritage left by the British colonials.”

‘Bagas’ is a Mandailing word meaning a house while ‘Zakariah’ is the name of the homestay operator’s late grandfather. He came from an area near Penyambungan, Kabupaten Mandailing-Natal in Sumatera Barat, Indonesia.

Located on a 5-acre site in Gopeng, Bagas Zakariah offers three types of guest houses. They are Rumah Lenggong, Rumah Lawan Kuda (also known as Rumah Merah) and Rumah Kuning. All were built circa 1920.

The other point of interest, according to Zamari, is the beautiful landscape the village offers. This is being optimised by photographers.

“There are over a hundred durian trees in the orchard. They have been here for many decades. Around the orchard is a small river with clean and fresh water,” he added.

“I believe Bagas Zakariah is the place to be for those who pine for a rustic village life away from the madding crowd,” said Zamari.

For his efforts in promoting artistic photography, Zamari has gained a new moniker, “Father Figure Icon of Photography.”

Some 65 professional photographers from all over the country took part in the competition and 130 photos were judged.

Abdul Hafiz Abdul Hamid, 45, from Kuala Selangor emerged champion. He won RM500. Muhammad Hanis Che Ar, 29, from Gerik was second. He received RM300. Ipohite Nazrul Hisan Mohamad Tarmizi, 47, was placed third. He took home RM200.



Book Review

Memoirs of the Malaysian Armed Forces Veterans

By Major Godfrey Chang (Rtd)

We are fortunate that we live in a peaceful country with relative wealth and plentiful resources. We have almost everything and in the midst of plenty, we sometimes squabble over wealth and pride and speak unkindly of our brethren from other communities, just so we portray ourselves as champions of our race.

Unless we look back, we sometimes forget where we come from and we could lose our direction forward. What everybody needs is a proper perspective of the country's history.

This is especially so of the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) where all Malaysians, irrespective of race, fought together alongside the British and the Commonwealth Forces against the communist insurgents. The second Emergency started from 1968 to 1989, where a post-independent Malaysia's multi-ethnic Armed Forces proved their capability to defend the sovereignty of the country.

This part of the recent Malayan and Malaysian history seemed to have been forgotten. One plausible reason is the lack of proper records of this period, where most of the war history is written from the perspective of the British or the Commonwealth forces.

If there is one book that I will recommend to college and high-school students, teachers, armed forces personnel, police and other uniformed bodies, it would be this memoir. This book recorded the contributions of the Malaysian Armed forces personnel during that period, from a local perspective.

This book is well organised and places everything into perspective, in a readable chronological manner. The chapters begin with a brief note of the period in time followed by narratives of veterans who served during the

period. The stories are vivid, lively and enlightening.

The book begins with a chapter introducing the Malaysian Armed Forces before, during and after Independence. This gives us a perspective of what our armed forces were like during that time and how it started. The second chapter dived straight into the First Malayan Emergency, detailing the contribution of the Home Guards, Volunteer Forces, Territorial Army and the set-up of the Templer's Twelve – officers that were groomed to lead the new nation's military after independence.

The chapter on Counter-Insurgency Warfare was especially riveting. It is amazing how the soldiers fought in a jungle terrain which has been described as a 'neutral terrain' by Chapman: Everyone has an advantage or disadvantage, camouflaged and concealed by the dense foliage.

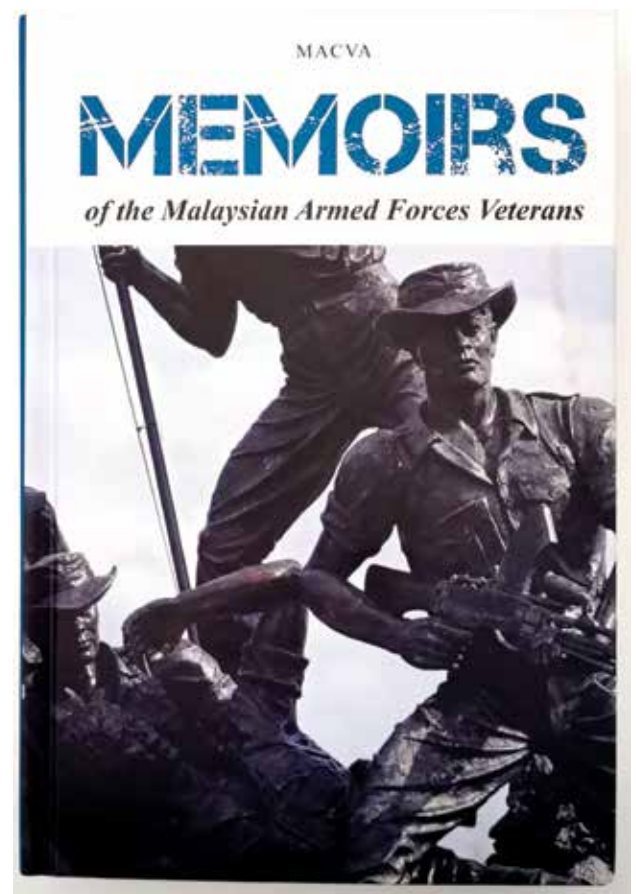
There are also chapters dedicated to the Royal Malaysian Air Force and Royal Malaysian Navy. It is interesting to know the first aircraft and naval vessel deployed and the contribution of RMAF and RMN to counter-insurgency warfare. The helicopter rescue of those injured in the jungle was exciting and admirable.

What charmed me most was the hundreds of invaluable photographs and newspaper clippings of the time. It brings back snapshots of that period.

Before anyone points fingers at who fought for the country and who were the villains, it is necessary that they first read the Memoirs.

I would highly recommend the book to all.

Incidentally, the book launch will be held at the Royale Chulan Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, March 7. For reservations please call **Carol: 012 303 2326** or **Mary: 012 335 6760**.



Pangkor Dialogue 2019 – What Have We Learned?

I have attended all the Pangkor Dialogues (PD) except one. During the first PD, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry, then MB, explained that Perak is sandwiched between Selangor and Penang, the most industrialised states and investors by-pass Perak. We invite potential investors from around the world to attend PD so that they can see what Perak can offer and invest in the State.

Institut Darul Ridzuan (IDR) issued a pamphlet FAQ PANGKOR DIALOGUE 2019 and under What is Pangkor Dialogue?, it says "The PD is an international knowledge exchange which aims to inspire sustainable economic growth in the region in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. It is unique in the sense that it is one of the few dialogues in the world that is promoted by Perak State Government. PD is a platform where inside information is shared to find solutions for universal challenges faced by the region." This sounds very noble. How are the shared ideas going to be translated into action plans and implemented? Who does it?

This year's PD was one of the events at the Perak International Expo 2019 held at Stadium Indera Mulia in November 2019. The theme was Sustainable and Inclusive Development.

The session started with a Keynote address by Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz, former Minister of International Trade and Industries. It was a pity that only about a hundred people were present in a hall meant to seat a thousand people; fewer people were in attendance during other keynote presentations and dialogue sessions.

The main keynote address was by Jeffrey David Sachs, an American economist who is known as one of the world's leading experts on economic development. He gave a gloomy picture of the future. He added all is not lost and requested governments to focus on six key issues for transformation.

Perak government can implement what's within its means. The issues are educating values, promoting health and well-being, moving to a green energy system, sustainable land use, sustainable cities, shared vehicles and public transport and smart digital economy.



The government should organise public forums and get feedback from the people on how these can be implemented.

During the Dialogue session on Technology & Economy, one of the speakers Jacky Tan Eng Seng, founder of Polydamic Group said his company provides environmental services including Air Pollution Control Systems. For the past 10 years, he has been working in China and over the years the country has developed greatly. The salary of the workers has gone up many folds. Nowadays he takes local workers to China because he cannot afford to pay workers there. In contrast, the starting salary of graduates in this country has been stagnant for the past 10 years.

Jacky showed a slide of countries that are getting ready for 5G technology. Malaysia is not one of them and Jacky highlighted this.

The following day during Dialogue Session on IR4.0, one of the speakers, Professor Dr Nurhizam Safie Mohd Satar of UKM said that Malaysia higher education blueprint 2013-2025 aims to produce students equipped with current skills. The country is ready for IR4.

There is a contradictory opinion between an



industrialist and academician on our preparedness to accept new technology. Is our country on the right track to meet the demands of 5G and IR4? Are we training workers with appropriate skills?

Though I am not interested in sports, I attended the second half of the dialogue session on Youth & Sports. One of the speakers, Dean Ratcliffe, Head Coach, MedwayTri, informed how Perak can become the centre of e-sports in the country. He feels Ipoh is an ideal place to develop sports. He gave suggestions which can be implemented immediately to develop e-sports. State Exco for Sports should look into this.

A video clip was shown during the dialogue session on Sustainable Tourism. The narrative was in Malay, Chinese and an Indian dialect which I couldn't identify. In Malaysia, most Indians speak and understand Tamil. It looked like the video was about medical tourism. I don't know who the target audience is.

The programme was not given to the audience and they did not know the details of the presentations. A banner of the programme could have been placed at the entrance of the hall. More people would have attended if they knew the programme.

The public still does not know how much was spent on previous PDs and how Perak benefitted. It is interesting to listen to professional speakers, but what is the end result? The previous government has not given any feedback.

This year, the PH government which championed for transparency, organised Perak International Expo 2019 which included Pangkor Dialogue. The event was held in November 2019 and I suggest that in about three months after that, Dato' Seri Ir Mohammad Nizar Bin Jamaluddin, Executive Councillor for Investment, Industrial and Corridor Development who was Chairman, PIEX Main Committee announce the cost for this event and the outcome. He can have a press meet. "Perak expects to attract RM3 billion in investments" was the heading of a news item in NST November 12, 2019. Can Ir Nizar confirm this?

The public has become more civic-minded and would really like to know how their money is spent.

Health

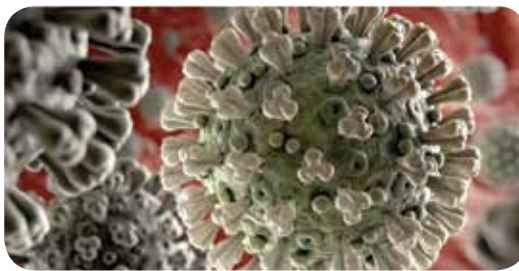
Preventing Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

By Jo Lynn Chong

World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended the following basic measures to protect ourselves against the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that has devastated Hubei province in China.

1. Clean hands between preparing food, before eating, after toilet use, after handling animals, animal waste or animal products and after having contact with sick people or their environments.
2. When hands are visibly dirty, clean them with soap and running water.
3. When hands are not visibly dirty, frequently clean them using alcohol-based hand sanitiser or soap and water.
4. Avoid having contact with stray, sick or dead animals, spoiled meat, fluids and waste in markets and in public.
5. Wear protective clothing, gloves and facial protection when handling animals and animal products.
6. Follow good food safety practices when handling raw meat, milk or animal organs.
7. Use different chopping boards and knives for raw meat and cooked foods.
8. Do not eat sick animals and animals that died of diseases.
9. Avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

10. Avoid travelling and having close contact with other people when you have fever and cough.
11. Avoid close contact with sufferers of fever and cough.
12. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
13. Disinfect working area and equipment at least once a day.
14. Remove protective clothing after work and wash daily.
15. Seek early medical care if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
16. Avoid spitting in public.
17. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough with flexed elbow or tissue, then immediately throw used tissue into a closed bin after use, followed by washing hands.
18. Maintain a distance of at least 1m (3ft) away from other people.
19. Cover your mouth and nose when you wear a mask and avoid touching the mask once it is on.
20. Immediately discard a single-use mask after each use and wash hands after removing the mask.



Are You Sleeping Enough? (Part 2)

By Jo Lynn Chong

In IE 320 we discussed sleep problems with Dr Foo Joo Ee who gave essential tips on the causes and solutions on sleep deprivation. In this issue, Ipoh Echo went out in search of people to discuss their sleep problems.

Most of the interviewees stated watching television, social networking, studying, doing homework, playing games and working as their main late-night activities.

"Ever since I started working, I've been sleeping late due to late-night outings and hanging out with friends after work. I normally sleep between 11pm to 12am. For me, this is not considered late because I wake up at 7am during weekdays, so I am actually having 7 to 8 hours of sleep," a 26-year-old Ipohite expressed. "I also realised it has become a habit, however. Let's say I'm already lying on my bed at 9 pm or 10 pm, but I'm still not ready to sleep early, because I feel like enjoying some me-time, like watching dramas or being on social media after a whole day of working."

Sapna, a 17-year-old Ipoh girl who normally sleeps about 12am told Ipoh Echo, "I started sleeping late since I was 13, either studying or watching television. I don't like sleeping late but I will do it if needed."

Lai Chin Khong, 36, said, "I used to be a late sleeper, usually around 12 am as I had unpredictable working hours and a busy schedule. Now, I sleep before 11pm, as I cannot tolerate sleep deprivation as I grow older."

Chris Teh, a 26-year-old Ipohite journalist said, "I've never had much thought about sleeping late because it was a normal thing to do. Sleeping late, however, had caused a lot of unwanted occurrences in my life, like random doze-offs or extreme fluctuations of my mood."

Another Ipohite, Ginla Chew, who has tried many



ways such as sleeping earlier, reading, yoga, meditation, exercising, only drinking coffee and tea in the morning as well as even taking some Melatonin tablets to help her to relax and sleep, but all to no avail.

"I would try to go to bed early, at about 11pm, but still cannot sleep. I would be rolling and rolling until maybe 1am. Then, about 2 something, my dogs would wake me up and I'd take them to go poo and pee. After that, at 4 something, my dogs would wake me up again, and by then, I'm awake already," she elaborated.

Chew therefore normally sleeps about three hours or four hours, maximum, per day.

Being like this since her twenties, she expresses that she feels upset for not being able to sleep like a normal person. "I don't have worries or stress but I just cannot sleep, even when I feel tired," she lamented.

After consulting a doctor and doing a blood test, Ginla's test results show that she is healthy.

"So the doctor said it is ok, I'm normal. Unless I have headaches in the morning, then he will try putting me on hypnotherapy treatment which does not involve taking drugs, but I don't experience any headaches in the morning so I don't really need it," she explained.

"People say I am very anxious," she told Ipoh Echo. "I eat fast, drive fast, talk fast. Everything is fast for me, super fast."

Doreen Kam, another Ipohite expressed, "I always feel that if I sleep early, it is like wasting my time as I can still do things."

"The brain keeps working and working so like when your brain is working, you can't sleep, isn't it?" she



Sapna



Doreen Kam



Lai Chin Khong

Thumbs Down

Raised Manhole



By Mei Kuan

A raised manhole, at least 10cm (4in) above the road level, is spotted along Tingkat Hock Lee in Ipoh Garden South.

Its height could easily jolt a four-wheel or throw two-wheeler riders out of their seats.

There are three other manholes along the two-way road, this particular one found raised and with a diameter that spans into two sides of the road.



Built-in Speed Breaker with No Warning

By A. Jeyaraj

The railway workshop in Falim was closed some years ago. The redundant railway line running across Connolly Road is still embedded in the road. The line acts as a natural speed breaker without any warning sign; even



motorcycles cannot speed. Heavy vehicles nearly come to a standstill while crossing the tracks. Cars can lose control and meet with accidents.

MBI should remove the redundant rail tracks and resurface the road. I wonder why it was not done earlier. MBI staff could be using this road; are they not aware of this?

explained.

"Sometimes I get disoriented and don't know what is happening like suddenly you just wake up thinking: what day is today? I'm in Ipoh or KL? Where am I? Because I do make trips to Kuala Lumpur, stay a few days then come back to Ipoh," Doreen told Ipoh Echo. "The disorientation affects at least the first part of my day."

"I think I'm a bit of a 'kancheong' (anxious) person. If I've got an early appointment tomorrow, I cannot sleep tonight. I get very worried that the alarm may not ring, I won't get up and I'll not be on time, so I'll have a lot of dreams, keep waking up, checking the time and things like that," she also added.

When asked about the number of hours she sleeps per day, Kam stated, "I think about five to six hours a day."

Here are only a few examples of the many sleeping habits that people have. Nevertheless, regardless of how busy we are, each and every one of us must not sleep on this issue of sleep.

Technology

Gearing Up for ITEX 2020

By Mei Kuan

One major agenda in the Malaysian Invention & Design Society (MINDS) Perak Chapter calendar is the upcoming 31st International Invention, Innovation & Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2020).

"We wish to move members' ideas forward to be presented at ITEX 2020. In the process, we will be recording every step, failure and success so that eventually we can have a road map for anybody who wants to develop an idea in the best and fastest way," Dr Chakr Nagara, vice president of MINDS Perak Chapter told Ipoh Echo.

"The unfortunate part about Malaysians is that people are mostly shy. In day to day life, they have ideas. They can see the ways and means to go across, over, around obstacles or problems. Instead of growing those ideas, they keep it in their heart and forget about it after a while. We are trying to take that hurdle away as MINDS will aid one to grow the idea," he explained during the society's



Chinese New Year fellowship lunch at Marianis @ 7 on Friday, January 31.

"Ideas can come from all ages, from a 3-year-old to a centenarian, as long as it is practical, doable and brings value to the population," Dr Nagara, who has been a member of MINDS Perak Chapter since its inauguration, enthused.

"We go to schools and guide the students to be more inventive. We also encourage inventions that aid the

elderly such as better wheelchairs," added Tan Kim Seng, the chairman of MINDS Perak Chapter.

An invention competition jointly organised by MINDS, ITEX 2020 is endorsed by Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) and supported by the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment & Climate Change Malaysia and Ministry of Education Malaysia, among others. It will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from June 8 to 10. Previously, ITEX 2019 attracted a total of 13,100 visitors from 56 countries with more than 1000 inventions.

ITEX provides the best audience for prototype inventions or products where one can get feedback from investors to fine-tune to achieve successful commercialisation. Besides investors, venture capitalists, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, distributors and the corporate sectors, ITEX 2020 will also see the participation of primary schools, secondary schools and universities.

MINDS Perak Chapter is a state branch of MINDS Malaysia, a non-profit making NGO formed in 1986. MINDS is the largest body in Malaysia representing individuals, universities and companies to encourage creative invention, innovation, industrial design, research and development.

Interested readers can visit its website at minds.net.my.

News

Face Masks in Demand

By Gisele Soo

The outbreak of the deadly Wuhan coronavirus has resulted in an international health emergency. As of today, there are over 40,000 confirmed cases in the world with the majority in the Hubei province of China.

Malaysia and a number of South East Asian countries are also affected. To date, there are 18 confirmed cases in the country involving those who had travelled to Wuhan, China.

This has caused much fear and anxiety among Malaysians resulting in a mad rush for face masks and hand sanitisers. Ipoh Echo visited a number of pharmacies in Ipoh to gauge the situation.

Popular outlets such as Watson, Guardian and Caring are filled with people looking for face masks and hand sanitisers as preparation for the outbreak. The sudden surge in demand for these two items has resulted in their scarcity.

As anticipated the development has been optimised by both retailers and traders. They take advantage of the situation by raising the prices of the products. This is a global phenomenon not only witnessed in this part of the world but in Communist China too.

The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry, however, has sounded the warning to these traders. But will it have any impact on the ground? Profiteering is the name of the game.

The punishments for offenders are rather harsh. Any traders who are found to violate the price regulations may be fined up to RM100,000 or jailed up to three years or both.



Companies may be fined up to RM500,000.

Types of masks that are effective against the deadly virus are surgical and to a lesser extent, the N95 mask.

How does the mask work?

Surgical masks consist of two sides. The coloured side traps bacteria. Misinformation regarding the right side has been spread on the Internet. To avoid air particles from entering the mouth, the coloured side should be worn facing outside.

The one, two, three-layered surgical masks are priced at RM7 or RM10 a box and between 20 and 70 sen apiece.

The N95 mask works as a respirator mainly to filter airborne and dust particles. The disadvantage is that it is difficult to breathe due to a lack of air passage from the mask. It costs RM6 per piece or RM100 per box of 20 pieces.

According to an Ipoh-based pharmacist, there are a few precautions that people should observe to be on the safe side.

They should wash their hands frequently, avoid touching their face and avoid crowded places such as the wet market and shopping malls.

Ipohites are seen buying masks and hand sanitisers in bulk to be shared among their friends and family members. The rush does not seem to slow down.

"If the trend continues there'll be no more masks and sanitisers in the city," lamented one housewife when met at Guardian Pharmacy in town. "I hope the health ministry would step in and address the situation as they did in Singapore."

She was mindful not to buy more masks than was required. She bought three boxes to share among her family members. "That's enough," she added.

Members of the public can buy these items online via Shopee and Lazada. It is hassle-free.

HAPPENINGS

Only pay RM30 for chargeable events/seminars announcements. You get 3 media avenues for the price of one: • Print (circulation 100,000) • Website (over 1 million hits per month – verifiable) • Facebook (Free public events are published FREE)

Announcements must be sent by fax: 05 543 9411; 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.

COMMUNITY

FALL PREVENTION TALK BY PANTAI HOSPITAL IPOH. FEBRUARY 20, 9am-10am at Magnolia Hall @ GreenAcres, Ipoh. Price: RM5 per pax.

PERAK ACADEMY TALK: "KINTA KARSTS – A MALAYSIAN GALAPAGOS" BY W.K. FLETCHER. FEBRUARY 28 (Friday), 8pm at Perak Academy, 7A, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, 30000 Ipoh. Come and learn more about the Kinta karsts hills, an iconic feature of the Kinta Valley; it's natural history and its preservation. A fee of RM10 by way of donation to defray expenses on the administrative cost for this event. Limited seating. Call Georgie 05 241 3742 or Michael Thomas 016 221 3742 to confirm your attendance.

53RD ANNIVERSARY REUNION DINNER 'CLASS OF 1967' OF SULTAN YUSSUF SCHOOL, BATU GAJAH. MARCH 28 (Saturday) at the Perak Malayalee Association Hall, 14A Medan Istana (opposite Gunug Cheroh Temple), Ipoh. Entertainment is by The Waves. Former students of the batch are requested to call Dato' Gregory Wong at 012 517 2858, Dato' Dr Bhupinder Singh at 012 499 6444 or Mr Gopalan Nair at 012 450 2620 for further info and reservations.

ALPHA @ CGMC (For Non-Muslims only). Starting MARCH 1 (every Sunday for 11 weeks), 1pm-3pm at Canning Garden Methodist Church, 23 Jalan Keliling, Canning Garden, 31400 Ipoh. An opportunity to explore the meaning of life and faith through a series of talks in an open and friendly setting. Lunch will be provided. For further information, call 05 546 2023 or email: cgmcpoh@gmail.com.

HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMME ON MENTAL HEALTH will be conducted at the Ipoh Adventist Community Services Center. This programme has helped many to optimize their

brains and has equipped others to help loved ones recover from mental health illness, with proven results. **It runs for 2 hours, every Saturday afternoon for 8 weeks, from July through August.** For further details, WhatsApp us at 016 400 0271.

NEDLEY DEPRESSION & ANXIETY RECOVERY PROGRAM™ will be run by the Ipoh Adventist Community Services to equip those who are struggling with anxiety disorder or depression, or those desiring to assist loved ones with mental health disorders. This programme can help improve EQ and help students achieve peak mental performance. For further info, WhatsApp 016 595 0829 or 016 400 0271.

Kechara Earth Project. LET'S RECYCLE FOR GREENER EARTH. EVERY 4TH SUNDAY of the month, 9.30am-11.30am in front of Ipoh Garden Post Office, Jalan Dato Lau Pak Khuan, Ipoh Garden, 31400 Ipoh. Carton boxes, paper, metal/aluminium, electronic equipment, plastics, light bulbs, batteries and used clothes. Funds are channeled towards Kechara Food Bank that serves the urban poor and underprivileged community in Ipoh. For more details, contact: 016 532 8309 (Mr So) or 012 522 3200 (Ms Yee Mun).

FREE REALITY-BASED STREET DEFENSE WORKSHOP. Organised by Urban Street Defense's Centre for all NGOs and Women's Groups in Ipoh. Workshop covers what to do when you are attacked, defend against various real life attack scenarios and more. Call 016 538 4562 to book a FREE session. Booking confirmation on a first come, first served basis.

REPORT BULLYING. All schools in Malaysia have an Anti-bullying Guideline. Anti-bullying hotline: Talian Aduan Disiplin 1800-88-4774 or email adudisiplin@moe.gov.my. You can also call 15999 Childline to report bullying.