



Crafting Tradition: Surname Lanterns

By Tan Mei Kuan

A beacon for cultural heritage, the surname lantern (also goes by the name of umbrella lantern or Hock Chew lantern) is illuminating Ipoh and beyond, thanks to the effort of Chuen Mun Wai, an Ipoh boy. In an exclusive one-on-one with Ipoh Echo, the 39-year-old owner of Tjoan's Lantern Workshop unveils the ins and outs of the craft with only four (or less) such makers left in Malaysia. With pictures of the nocturnal art pieces galore, read on and let there be light!

Continued on page 2



Festival lantern workshop



Johnny (left) and Chuen (right)

新年快樂

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A Beacon for Cultural Heritage: Illuminating Ipoh and Beyond...

Serendipitous Beginnings

When he was still a high school student, Chuen lost his bearings during a road trip to Penang. As luck would have it, he ended up outside a lantern shop named Tai Keat Seong Company along Magazine Road where a couple of vibrant lanterns drying in the sun caught his eye. Fascinated, he parked his car and proceeded to observe the late master (who later became his informal mentor) crafting a lantern inside.

Foreseeing its business viability, he started off by becoming a part-time middleman, handling lantern orders from temples outside of Penang for the late artisan named Lee. Being intensely inquisitive, Chuen would always have a few questions ready for the late craftsman regarding lantern-making each time they met.

Next, he got into the making process wholeheartedly to fulfil the orders that kept coming after the master's unfortunate passing. Putting two and two together, he pieced together all that he had learnt like a puzzle.

Initially, Chuen worked from home accepting only limited orders. Tjoan's Lantern Workshop was established three years ago to accommodate the increasing demand.



The late Lee



Surname lanterns – round



Late Lee's workshop in Penang

The Origins and Traditions

According to Chuen, the traditional lantern symbolises brightness, reunion and goodwill. "The lanterns are inherited from generation to generation as a symbol of the connection between heaven (ancestral) and earth (human)," he stated.

"The bamboo frame of the umbrella lantern is similar to that of the Chinese oil-paper umbrellas, thus its name. It is also known as surname lantern because the Baba Nyonya families would hang the lanterns, with their surname and birthplace of that surname painted on, during joyful occasions and days of ancestral prayer," he explained. Plus, some lanterns tell stories while some are painted with auspicious sayings or phrases to teach good manners.

Chuen was told by the senior craftsmen that the lanterns were brought here during the Tang dynasty.



Chuen Mun Wai



Top view



Cutting the bamboo to size



Surname lanterns - cylindrical



Sturdy frame of umbrella lantern



Bamboo frames



Common colours: tea, white and gold/yellow

Stages of Lantern-Making

The two common shapes for a surname lantern are cylindrical and round while the materials encompass bamboo, wood block, DIY glue made of tapioca and agar as waterproof glaze to facilitate painting. Hung both outdoors and indoors, lanterns usually come in pairs except for the round one which is hung individually.

Candles which were used to light up the lanterns in the past are now replaced with electric bulbs.

Adopting traditional methods, each lantern is painstakingly handmade from scratch by Chuen himself starting from tying the bamboo ribs with threads, wrapping the 100% cotton cloth around the frame, colouring right up to finishing. The coating forms a protective layer which is water and sun resistant thus making it easy to clean. Besides that, the glaze will result in more vibrant colours.

"Painting the lantern well is the most time-consuming part," he pointed out. Therefore, Johnny Wong Kam Weng assists him in painting the lanterns with water paint. Painting for over 30 years now, the self-taught artist hailing from Teluk Intan used to paint movie promotional canvases back in the 1980s. Other than lanterns, he currently paints murals for temples and schools.

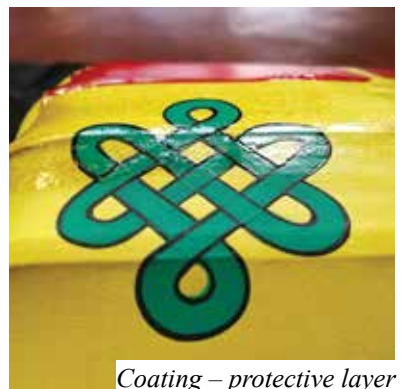
Johnny told Ipoh Echo, "I have painted many lanterns for Chuen and each one is a memorable masterpiece. For instance, depicting the Eight Immortals from Chinese mythology takes up a great deal of time as each one of them has a distinctive facial expression."

"I had lanterns put up on Market Lane (also known as Third Concubine Lane) that tell the story of the beginning of Ipoh," the amiable Chuen enthused.

With customers from as far as Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia and Singapore, a single lantern can take him between seven days to three months to complete. If well cared for, it's no wonder that his durable lanterns can last more than 80 years!

"I receive the most orders as the community gears up for Mooncake Festival and Chinese New Year. During Chinese New Year, the red colour is preferred. The other usual colours are the vintage tea, gold/yellow and white. Once I made three white-and-black lanterns and five yellow-and-red ones for the interior of a popular contemporary cafe in Kedah called Caffé Diem. Those were creations which saw the fusion of traditional and modern elements," he highlighted.

By reusing the sturdy bamboo frames of old lanterns, he breathes new life into the nocturnal art pieces. He also makes the smaller festival lantern in the shape of the ancient Chinese coin. "To integrate elements of the local culture and Chinese culture, I reuse torn and thus unsalable batik, dating from pre-Merdeka days from local fabric stores to make the lanterns instead of the usual coloured cellophane sheets," he added. He also has knowledge of the Teochew lanterns.



Coating – protective layer



Chuen's creations at Market Lane



Painting close-up



100% cotton cloth

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THE PROPENSITY TO DISTORT HISTORY

And to claim that only one particular race is responsible for the country's well-being is definitely in poor taste.



It has become a norm or perhaps a fashion with those in power to distort history for their own convenience. Winston Churchill's famous quote "History is written by the victors" is for an obvious reason. Great Britain was part of the allied forces that defeated Nazi Germany following the D-Day beach landings of June 6, 1944. The objective was to remove Hitler from power and to execute the coup de grâce on the crumbling Axis power. The end of World War Two in Europe became official on May 8, 1945 with the signing of an armistice between the victor and the vanquished. This came to be known as VE (Victory in Europe) Day. Incidentally, I joined the army on the same day 23 years later in 1968.

However, war in the Pacific raged on for another four months until the belligerent Japanese Imperial Army was brought to its knees after atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. These are facts and nobody would want to deny them as peace was the ultimate aim of the battling nations. Malaya was unwittingly drawn into the conflict as we were part of the fading British Empire in the Far East.

Having said so, Napoleon Bonaparte had another theory about history. He said and I quote, "History is a set of lies that people had agreed upon". Towards the end of Napoleon's life, while being incarcerated on the remote island of St Helena in the Atlantic, 1870 miles from the west coast of Africa, the only weapon he had was words when he dictated his memoirs.

You may wonder why I had alluded to these two luminaries as an introduction. Well, it has much to do with events unfolding on our shores presently. I take offence when some self-proclaimed clerics professed to know more about the country's history than you and I. Someone who knows next to nothing about wars and battles could make pronouncements that are not only frivolous but ridiculous, to begin with.

Ismail Mina Ahmad, leader of Gerakan Pembela Ummah (Ummah's Defenders Movement) during a keynote address at the movement's convention in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, January 13 said that those who don't agree with the Federal Constitution to leave the country. But what really irked me was his insistence that only the Malays fought for the freedom of the country. Malays fought the Siamese, the Japanese and later the Communists Terrorists leaving the non-Malays as mere spectators. That to me is nonsense, to put it sarcastically.

Such words coming from someone who cannot differentiate a pistol from a rifle is an insult to my intelligence. He should be mindful of others whose role in the country's independence is equally important. This is not something new as we are being frequently assailed by statements which are made at the spur of the moment or upon instigation from supporters. It is playing to the gallery of which our politicians are noted for.

Many non-Malays and Malays, especially those who had served time in the Malaysian Armed Forces had refuted Ismail's claim as mischievous and without basis.

"We've participated in defending our country and some of us have scars to show we were there risking our lives," said Major Tan Pau Son (Retired) president of the Malaysian Armed Forces Chinese Veterans Association.

Needless to say there were Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Bidayus and others who were killed while in harness. These non-Malays had made the ultimate sacrifices for King and Country. They did not shy away from their responsibility. And to claim that only one particular race is responsible for the country's well-being is definitely in poor taste. And being a former serviceman with 30 years of experience battling Chin Peng and his merry men, I am certainly not amused. My good friend, Capt Chandran was posthumously awarded the Seri Pahlawan Gagah Perkasa (SP), the nation's highest bravery award

while my college mate, Capt Shamuganathan was bestowed the Pingat Gagah Berani (PGB), the next highest. These two heroes did not die in vain.

Give credit when and where it is due. I subscribe fully to this maxim, as getting people to do something dirty and tedious is not easy. Mayor Dato' Zamri Man's proactive effort to keep Ipoh clean is commendable.

Effective January 18 the Council has initiated "Operasi Cari Sampah" (Operation Rubbish). At the time of reporting three such operations have been conducted. Over 500 tons of rubbish have been cleared from illegal dumpsites within the city limits. I find this most exhilarating – one persistent site near my housing estate in Taman Botani has been cleared.

Residents' attitude is to be blamed for this anomaly. Some find it difficult to disassociate themselves from dirt, grime and filth. They are not easily cowed by threats of fines and imprisonment. They treat the whole city as one huge dumpsite at their disposal.

Let us be more caring for the environment as Ipoh belongs not only to Mayor Zamri and his men but to all of us Ipohites. Therefore, the responsibility of keeping Ipoh clean is for us to bear not Ipoh City Council alone. I rest my case.

EYE HEALTH — Preventing Spread of Pink Eye

In our series on Eye Health, Consultant Eye Surgeon Dr S.S. GILL talks to us about Conjunctivitis and how to prevent it spreading.



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

PINK EYE, or *conjunctivitis*, is the **inflammation of the conjunctiva** which is the clear tissue that lies over the white part of the eye and insides of the eyelids.

Common types of conjunctivitis are the **bacterial and viral varieties**, both of which are **highly contagious**. It may start in one eye and then **spread to the other eye or to another person**. The allergic variety of pink eye is not contagious.

HOW IS CONJUNCTIVITIS TRANSMITTED?

Pink eye is spread from **contact** such as shaking hands with an infected person and then touching your eyes. The other common way of spread is by touching an object that has been contaminated with the germs and then touching the eyes.

HOW CAN PINK EYE BE PREVENTED FROM SPREADING?

So, how does one prevent the spread of the pink eye when one member of the family is suffering from it?

Here are some pointers to take note of:

- **HANDWASHING** – Always wash your hands **BEFORE** and **AFTER** instilling eye drops into the pink eye. Alternatively, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **DO NOT RUB YOUR EYES** – this worsens the condition or may cause corneal abrasions which can get infected to become corneal ulcers.
- **STOP CONTACT LENS WEAR** that you normally use.
- **AVOID REUSING HAND-KERCHIEFS** and **TOWELS** contaminated with eye discharge to wipe the eyes. It is best to use tissue paper which is used only once each time before being discarded to prevent reinfections.
- **DISCARD PROMPTLY ANY TISSUES** that you have used to wipe off discharge or tears. **AVOID SHARING** personal items, towels, eye drops, makeup and makeup brushes.
- **DO NOT SHARE SUNGLASSES** used by anyone with conjunctivitis.
- **START with FRESH CONTACT LENSES** and **SOLUTIONS** after you have recovered if you are a contact lens wearer.
- **CHANGE your PILLOWCASE** and **TOWELS DAILY**.
- **WASH with MILD SOAP** and **WATER** any **SPECTACLES** you normally wear.
- **REPLACE** any old eye make-up used with **NEW EYE MAKE-UP**.



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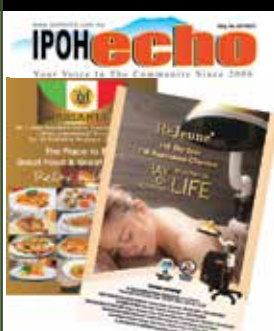
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Robot Waiters: Gimmick or God-send?

In early January, an article in The Star, about Nam Heong Kopitiam at Ipoh Soho, caused a frisson of excitement amongst Malaysians. The main attraction was not its food, its service, its location, its decor or ambience. People patronised the kopitiam to savour the experience of being served by robots.

The robots are called "Lui Sun Pong" (Goddess Gang), a term used to describe a group of beautiful celebrities. They were identified by the names, of famous Asian celebrities such as Dilraba Dilmurat, Hannah Quinlivan, Michelle Reis, Fan Bingbing and Angelababy.

The robots move along tracks in the floor of the restaurant, and with the aid of sensors, they are able to detect the presence of obstacles, to prevent collisions.

Jacklyn Lim, the assistant general manager of Nam Heong, stressed that the main function of the robots is to deliver food. On their first day of work, on January 6, she told reporters that the robots, which had been programmed to speak in English and Cantonese, would greet the customers before asking them to collect their food from a tray, held by the robot.

She said, "They could say 'Welcome', 'Your food is served, please enjoy', 'I'm in operation, please give orders' and 'Excuse me'."

Lim said that customers had to touch a sensor on the robot's arm to tell it to return to the waiting area and added that the restaurant chain planned to instal robots at its outlets in Kuala Lumpur and Genting Highlands. The company had invested 30,000 yuan (about RM18,467) in the robots, and said, "We have eight robots here in Ipoh and two more at our outlet in Da Men Mall, in Selangor."

Denying reports that the robots were an attempt to replace human waiters, Lim stressed that their use would instead help to improve service efficiency. She said that the robots were powered by rechargeable batteries, which could last for eight hours.

Nam Heong employs 25 serving staff to take orders from customers, serve food and clean the restaurant. Lim claimed that the use of robots would reduce the time to serve food to customers, from 15 minutes to about 10 minutes.

She added, "In this era of advanced technology, we hope to incorporate these elements into our services."

The restaurant's human resource manager Charmaine Sai thought that some people would take appreciably more time, to adapt to being served by robots and said, "I think the people need to accept that robots will be part of our lives."

"It's a great way to use machines to assist in our work. It is more efficient."

Owners of restaurants and other establishments, have always tried to make their staff work harder, or for longer periods, within the confines of the laws, which restrict working hours to safe limits.

Increased automation in restaurants will address the shortfall in labour, make certain sections of the operation more efficient, and generate savings in other areas, with the hope of generating more profits for the business.

With the increased use of robots, there will also be calls for staff to be given higher wages. The other risk is that increased automation may generate fears that human staff could be replaced by robots.

One person said, "More employers will appreciate how attractive the use of robots will be for the business. There won't be employees calling in sick. There will be no need to find staff to replace those who are on leave."

"Just think of the constancy in service by robots in the back rooms, like in food preparation. The addition of ingredients to a dish will be more uniform, and the preparation processes, like chopping and mincing, and where ingredients are added, will be more uniform and not subject to large variations in effort."

Other people disagree and said, "I will always value human interaction, the smile on the face of the serving staff or the chef, when a meal is enjoyed and appreciated."

"What happens when the order is wrong, or you change your mind, or you would like to make the dish less spicy, or omit certain ingredients because you are allergic to something? In the past, I had problems explaining my preferences to humans. I would have greater problems discussing my specific requirements with a robot."

The mother of three young children said, "My children would love the idea of being served by robots, and perhaps, they will sit still and finish their food, instead of running around, complaining about something, or gawping at other diners; but I think that the novelty would die off after a few visits."

A busy executive said, "I spend long hours at work,

and I think going out to eat is an experience which should be about comfort, good food, interaction with other humans, including the serving staff. I do not think that going to a restaurant with robot waitresses would appeal to me."

So, would you like to be served by a robot, or would you insist on human interaction with a warm-blooded waitress?

Have you been served by a robot, either at Nam Heong Kopitiam, or any other restaurant? What is your experience of these machines? Do you think that robots are more efficient and time saving, than humans? Do share your experience with Ipoh Echo readers.



Source:
Meals on wheels at this kopitiam - Nation | The Star Online

CHILD HEALTH

Dr Shan Narayanan
Consultant General Paediatrician, Hospital Fatimah

X-Linked Recessive Inheritance

The "sex chromosomes" are the X-chromosome and the Y-chromosome. Females have two X-chromosomes, and males have one X-chromosome and one Y-chromosome. Examples of X-linked recessive disorder are Haemophilia and Glucose 6 Phosphate Dehydrogenase deficiency (G6PD deficiency).

The abnormal gene is located on the X-chromosome, and the risk for children depends on the gender of the affected parent. If the mother has the abnormal gene, there is a 50% risk for passing that gene onto her children with each pregnancy. This is illustrated in diagram 1.

If the father has the abnormal gene, all of his daughters will get the abnormal genes but none of his sons will have the abnormal gene. This is illustrated in the diagram 2.

Daughters who inherit the abnormal gene from either parent do not have the illness, thus they become carriers of the illness. Sons who inherit the abnormal gene from their mother will have the illness.

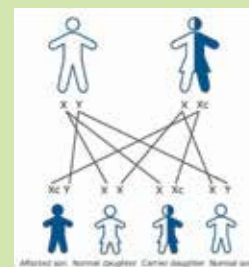


Diagram 1

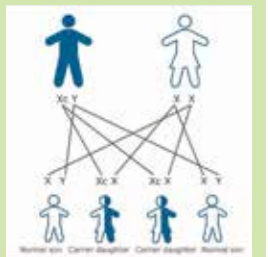


Diagram 2

Glucose 6 Phosphate Dehydrogenase (G6PD) Deficiency

Glucose 6 Phosphate Dehydrogenase is an enzyme in the red blood cells. Enzymes are special proteins that bring about chemical changes in the body. Enzymes are found in many organs and cells in the body including mouth, stomach, intestinal fluids and blood. G6PD protects the red cells from destruction by chemicals following the intake of fava beans (diagram 3) and various medication (including the antibiotics, Co-Trimoxazole).

This deficiency is inherited in a sex-linked recessive manner. Thus males have the illness and females are carriers. The affected male inherits the abnormal gene from his carrier mother.

This deficiency is common among Africans, Mediterraneans and South East Asians. In Malaysia, it is common among the Chinese and Malay population.

All babies born in Malaysia are checked for G6PD deficiency. A simple blood test is performed on the baby's cord blood. If the baby is G6PD deficient, the parents are counselled and given the list of medication and food stuff to avoid. Some babies with G6PD deficiency may develop jaundice needing phototherapy.

Individuals with the G6PD deficiency lead a near normal life by avoiding the offending medication and foodstuff. What if the individual consumes the offending agent?

The chemical in the medication or food stuff will cause the unprotected red blood cells to break. This gives rise to sudden onset of anaemia and jaundice. As large numbers of red cells are broken down, there will be blood in the urine. The kidney is overloaded with the red cell breakdown products and may not function efficiently (kidney failure). In this situation, the affected individual will be hospitalised and treated. The treatment includes blood transfusion.

In conclusion, G6PD deficiency is a minor illness, complications can be prevented by avoiding the offending medication and foodstuff.

For more information, call Dr Shan's clinic at Hospital Fatimah 05 546 1345 or email shaniewa02@gmail.com.

SeeFoon Gets in the Mood for Candlelight, Flowers and Romance!

The meaning or significance of Valentine's day is lost in the mists of history. Today the day is associated with love and romance having lost its Christian origins when Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St Valentine's Day at the end of the 5th century. It was not until much later, however, that the day became definitively associated with love. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that Valentine's Day should be a day for romance. And romance it is, with flowers, candles, soft lights and music being the focus of the day.

And what more conducive to romance than gourmet dining amidst soft lights with a good bottle of wine and whether you're proposing or toasting or just fueling the romantic fires, here is a list of the top places to celebrate your evening with the one that you love.

The four venues I am recommending will not only provide the perfect setting and ambiance for your night of love but the food quality will launch you to the moon and the stars.

So on Valentine's day, for that one night in the year, throw caution to the wind, blow the monthly budget, spend an unforgettable evening whispering sweet nothings, propose, or reaffirm your vows to each other. Here is my choice of venues:

Shayo de Vin

As a wine bar, Shayo is an unusual place for a romantic dinner for two. Proprietor Alex Ng is a serious chef as I discovered recently, honing his skills operating a restaurant in the UK which he still does flying back and forth. His wife, Mei Ching, manages Chayo together with Nicholas Woo who is the 'go-to' person for everything whether it's to order a case of their select wines or just to book a table for two as on Valentine's night.

On Valentine's night I suggest a serious bottle or two of their choice of wines (currently running a promotion of two bottles for the price of one) and a selection from their à la carte menu which includes beautifully marbled (grade 5, 6, 7 or higher) Wagyu steak, lamb chops, grilled Australian Perch fillets grown on their farm without antibiotics or additives; pasta and other items.

For Valentine's night, give your beloved a real treat by ordering Alex's abalone, the dried variety, lovingly rehydrated (takes a week!) and together with the dried sea cucumber (special Kwantung Hoisum) which is given the same treatment, braised till tender with an assortment of aromatic ingredients in superior broth and served on a bed of tender pea shoots. This is a surprising Chinese delicacy hardly expected in a Wine Bar but matched with a good red, was delightfully compatible. Do order way in advance for abalone.

Shayo is known for being quite the maverick. It is also the only place that sells Romanée Conti, touted as 10 of the world's most expensive bottles of wine by UK's Daily Telegraph.

Shayo De Vin

58 Persiaran Greentown 1, Pusat Perdagangan Greentown, 30450 Ipoh.

Executive Nicholas Woo: 012 588 3248, 016 521 3248

Business hours: 3pm-1am 24/7



By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen
seefoon@ipohecho.com.my



Jeff's Cellar

If astounding your beloved is in the cards for you on Valentine's Day then dinner at Jeff's Cellar at Banjaran Hotsprings Resort is on the menu. Set in a million-year-old cave, the ambiance is magical and spellbinding and if weaving a spell of romance is setting the right mood for you on Valentine's Day, then make a booking right now for Jeff's Cellar.

Beginning with an Amuse Bouche (a tiny appetiser to "tempt the mouth"), followed by an appetiser of Osetra Caviar, Pan Seared Scallop, Carrot, Cumin Sand, Crispy Duck Chips and Cress. We then move into the Foie Gras with French Brioche, Caramelized Onions Puree, Grape Juice Reduction and served with homemade Apricot Jam Roll.

A Lobster Bisque with poached Lobster, Pistachio Spheres, Corn Kernels and Lobster Dust follows after which you clean your palate with a Signature Pop Sorbet.

Now you're ready to tuck into either the Cod Fish, stewed in Tomato Consommé served with Saffron Risotto, Scallops, Mussels and Prawns or Japanese A5 Wagyu Beef Striploin Truffle Mash, Burnt Onion Porcini Mushrooms, Charred Spring Onion and drizzled with Beef Jus.

Finish the meal with Dark Chocolate Mousse with Almond Crumbles and Hot Dark Chocolate Sauce and end with Valentine Petit Four.

A Glass of Laurent-Perrier Champagne.

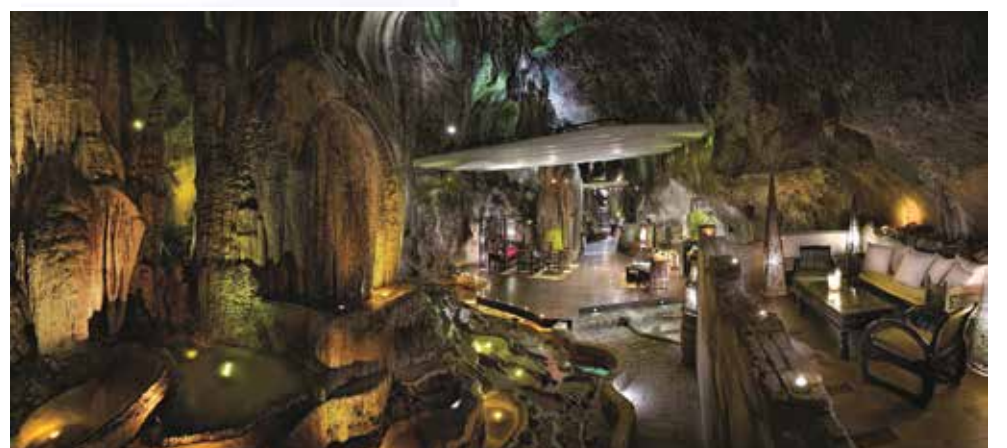
From RM650 per person



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No. 1 Persiaran Lagun Sunway 3, Sunway City Ipoh.
Tel: 05 210 7777



Can it get any more romantic than this?



Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5: On Ipoh Food

Garvy's In The Park

Garvy's 5-course Degustation Menu from Chef Yann Raimbaolt who fuses molecular with traditional methods as he creates his dishes.

- Lobster Roll
- Bone Marrow and Foie Gras Terrine
- Choice of Chicken or Fish Panne with Ratatouille Garden
- Homemade Chocolate marshmallow roasted at your table.
- White chocolate and Vanilla Mousse with dark chocolate glaze and tangerine sorbet
- plus one glass Rose wine RM208++

Garvy's In the Park French Dining
275 Jalan Permaisuri Bainun;
Reservations: 05 255 8082



Chef Yann performing his molecular magic at the table



Citrus Wine and Dine

The funniest and most amusing item on the menu for Valentine's Day comes from our stalwart in culinary excellence, Citrus Wine and Dine and the brainchild of Chef Simon Lee.

"Oops! Honey I dropped the Apple Pie"

This is a dessert to reflect the give and take in relationship. Often partners tend to focus on the other's fault instead of the problem itself. To Chef Simon, he believes that even when your partner makes a mistake, "both should cooperate, communicate and help each other," says Chef Simon Lee.

And what a beautiful statement for Valentine's Day, as couples celebrate their love for one another. It's not only candlelight and roses and romance but the give and take in relationships that will sustain.

For this evening, Chef Simon has created a 4-course menu which is highly affordable. The menu begins with an appetizer of Smoked Duck with Passion Fruit Vinaigrette Mesculin Mix, Pine Nuts and Radish followed by a Seafood Bisque with sauteed Jumbo Crab meat served with house bread.

Main Course is a choice of 2 Way Lamb, a combination of Grilled Australia Lamb Chop & Lamb Croquette on Leek Ragout or Grouper Roulade (Fish) served on Bell Pepper Coulis, Crispy Silver Fish and Sauteed Vegetables.

Dessert is the wonderful conversation starter, the "Oops! Honey I dropped the Apple Pie" which Chef Simon hopes will encourage couples to communicate and accept one another's shortcomings and all – RM129++.

Citrus Wine and Dine

38-42 Laluan Ipoh Perdana, Taman Ipoh Perdana, Ipoh.

Tel: 05 545 1010 or 012 527 1210 (Erica)

Business hours: 11.30am-3pm; 6.30pm-11pm

Closed Mondays

Wishing all my dear readers a Happy Valentines Day!



Crafting Tradition: Surname Lanterns . . . continued from page 2

Keeping the Craft Alive

What keeps him doing what he is doing? "This is one of our precious Malaysian heritage, thus I feel the need to protect it," he replied.

"There are many who are interested to learn but they soon discover how time-consuming it is. For instance, cutting the bamboo to size manually which takes up to three days, will bore most apprentices. However, this is an inevitable step in making the lantern," Chuen said.

When he has time to spare he will organise festival lantern workshops, using wooden ice cream sticks, in Ipoh and Penang for a minimal fee. In Ipoh, he has held demonstrations at SO-MN Oriental Goods & Tea, Masjid Cina and the Culture & Art Corridor at Market Lane. For updates, stay tuned to his Facebook page: [tjoanslanternworkshop](#).



Paintings adorning lanterns



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iSpeak

By A. Jeyaraj

Know Your Government – Member of Parliament

In the final of this three-part series, we will look at the roles of a Member of Parliament (MP).

The Malaysian Parliament is modelled closely after Westminster, comprising of two assemblies: the lower house (Dewan Rakyat) and the upper house (Dewan Negara).

Members of the Dewan Rakyat are known as Members of Parliament whilst Dewan Negara members are called Senators. MPs are elected by voters at the General Elections whilst Senators are appointed by the government to represent each state and the interests of various national bodies such as sports, arts, senior citizens, environment, etc.

An MP is elected to serve for a period not exceeding five years whilst a Senator's term is for three years. Senators are limited to two terms whilst MPs can be re-elected indefinitely.

Currently, we are in the 13th parliament term since Independence and the current term expires in May 2018. The current term sees 220 parliamentary constituencies.

The government, that is, the Executive would be the party with the most number of seats out of the 220 and its leader would be the Prime Minister. Since Independence, Malaysia has been governed by the same coalition: now known as Barisan Nasional with the current Prime Minister being the sixth.

The Dewan Rakyat sits in session three times a year with the opening of each year's session being officiated by the King. The royal address at each year's opening would dictate the direction of the government of the day.

When in session, the Dewan Rakyat would typically begin with a 2-hour question time where ministers will answer pre-submitted questions from MPs. As in the State Assembly, the first prepared question will be followed by a supplementary question. These Q and A sessions are an opportunity for MPs to be a check and balance of the Executive, that is, the ministers.

The question time is then followed by the debates on bills. Bills are proposals for new laws or amendments to existing laws which the government of the day wishes to present. Individual MPs may also present bills known as Private Member's Bill.

However, official government business would take precedence over private bills. Very rarely does a private member's bill see the light of day especially if it comes from the opposition. However, it is interesting to note that once, the Dewan Rakyat remained in session till 5am the next morning in order to rush through various government bills for the sole purpose of having a private member's bill to be at the top of the agenda for the following day's sitting. This was the proposal for amendments to Act 553 (the Sharia Law).

Based on the explanations above, we can safely conclude that one important duty of an MP is to be the voters' 'eyes and ears' in Parliament to ensure their rights are protected. New laws or amendments to existing laws should be in the best interest of the nation instead of for the interests of individuals or specific groups of people.

Similarly an MP has to raise questions and concerns of his constituents and in some instances even to propose amendments or laws for that objective. One example would be if residents know of the opening of a highly toxic industry in their area, they will have to lobby their MP to stop that industry in their neighbourhood.

An MP should also remain in close contact with his constituents to be able to know and understand their concerns and aspirations. A common complaint from voters is that their MP is seldom or never seen in the area except during election time. This is true in many instances as most MPs are more concerned about being close to their political leaders instead of their voters. It is very rare to see an MP having a dialogue with their constituents to take instructions on how to vote on a specific issue such as Act 553. MPs often forget that they are the people's representative in Parliament: not their party's representative only. However, most would put their political survival ahead of the interest of the constituents.

Although this is now the 13th parliamentary session, most of us have voted in the past 13 elections for the party instead of for the candidate. We know little of what our elected representative stands for on important issues such as taxation, education, environment, to name a few. Therefore an important duty of an MP is to be able to share his stand on important issues with his constituents through his published manifesto so that his voters can understand and continue to support him.

Each year in October, the Minister of Finance would propose to parliament the government's budget for the following year. It is therefore the duty of the MPs to scrutinise the budget proposal in the best interest of the nation. Similarly, it is the duty of the MP to submit on behalf of his constituents to the relevant ministries for infrastructure projects required in the constituency. These projects include roads, bridges, telecommunication infrastructures, public transport systems which can improve the quality of life for the constituents. Therefore one responsibility of an MP is to network with the relevant ministries. However, this is almost never done especially by the opposition MPs. Although in opposition, I believe an MP must put as priority, the interest of the constituents and the constituency ahead of party politics.

During weekends (Dewan Rakyat only sits from Monday to Thursday) and when parliament is not in session, MPs should be at their service centres and visiting their constituency. This would also be the period when MPs should be networking with the civil service in the ministries. In Malaysia, most MPs still maintain their full time professional occupation.

Where does a MP get his finances for his service centres and providing assistance to needy constituents?

Currently all government MPs get an allocation of between RM1-2 million to support their constituency work. However, opposition MPs receive zero allocation. This may seem like a punishment to the voters for voting the opposition. The government's justification is that similar allocation is made available via the constituency coordinator which is almost always the ruling political party local leader. Therefore this allocation is often used for political interest only, as the general public and even the elected opposition MPs sometimes do not know who the coordinator is. As an elected representative, the government MP has an obligation to be transparent on spending the allocation but the same cannot be said for the appointed coordinator who is answerable only to his political leadership.

This would explain why the opposition needs to periodically organise fundraising events whilst we do not see the same by the government MPs.

Nevertheless, this abuse of public funds should not be tolerated and it is one area that has to be reformed. MPs from both sides have to be treated equally as they were elected into office by the people.

In their service centres, an MP would commonly meet with people who come for financial and welfare assistance. There will also be groups who come to lobby for specific issues. Then there are also individuals who come for support or guarantee letters from the MPs for loans, job application, entry into institutions, etc. Not all requests will be entertained, but the MP has to be very diplomatic. Where possible, issues can be forwarded to the state assembly person or to the local councillor.

Therefore it is important for all three public service practitioners to be working as a team. Proper partnership and cooperation would greatly benefit the constituency. However, when political survival takes precedent then sadly, it is always the less fortunate community in the constituency that suffers most.

Above all, a good elected representative, be it in the state assembly or parliament, must always put the constituency and the constituents first above political leaders. All constituents must be treated equally and never taken for granted. Humility is always the best policy in public service.

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News

Underground Bunker



The state government of the Malay Department to determine the age and people responsible for the underground bunker discovered recently at Sultan Azlan Shah Airport, Ipoh.

The concrete bunker, measuring 9.5m by 9.5m and 2.5m high, could have been built by the Royal Air Force anywhere between 1940 and 1942 prior to the Japanese Occupation.

Dato' Nolee Ashilin Mohammed Radzi, the Executive Councillor for Tourism, Arts, Culture, Multimedia and Communications, during a media conference on Thursday December 7, said that the state government hoped research would unravel the truth behind the finding. It was necessary, as the historical find has the potential of becoming a major tourist attraction.

"We believe that it was for use by British service personnel and their families as an air raid shelter," she added.

The bunker is located on land owned by Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad. It could accommodate up to 40 people at any one time. Besides it serving as a shelter during air raids, it could also be used by soldiers to defend the airbase in the event of ground attacks.

It is a first of its kind, as such bunkers were normally built above ground level along communication roads and tracks.

Rosli Mansor



Connexion

By Joachim Ng

Interfaith harmony and the missing angle

A Tamil poet dubbed him 'the Angel of Malaya' for his life of spirituality and service. The Angel — an old boy of St Michael's Institution who took vows and became Swami Satyananda — conducted a broad range of educational activities in Perak and beyond during the 1930s-50s, eventually pioneering interfaith gatherings in Malaysia and founding the Pure Life Society.

Forward to the 1960s. A Chinese student at St Michael's Institution spent a lazy afternoon at Ipoh's public library. Devoutly Christian, yet his eyes fell upon a Hindu scripture the Bhagavad Gita. Its words, like a candle in the dark, took him on a journey of inner truth and in later years he carried an interfaith torch bringing light to many. The two Michaelians — one Christian and the other Hindu — could stand on common ground across faith boundaries as they saw a real connection underlying the façade of religious differences.

In 2010, King Abdullah II of Jordan spoke at the United Nations General Assembly and mooted a great initiative to promote interfaith harmony and provide a focal point for all people to recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have. A year later, the UN adopted a resolution to establish World Interfaith Harmony Week on the basis of 'Love of God (or the Good) and Love of the Neighbour' to fall on February 1-7 every year. Unfailingly since 2011, Malaysia has organized national-level celebrations spearheaded by the Department of National Unity and Integration. Some NGOs organize smaller events on their own.

February is also the month of another love event — Valentine's Day falling on the 14th. Unfailingly it captures the public imagination every year. Who hasn't bought Valentine's Day flowers for his mother, wife, or girlfriend? Although having prewar roots, interfaith harmony is celebrated on a scale that is a pale comparison to Valentine's Day. What makes Valentine's Day a runaway success story, while Interfaith Harmony Week is just a limping runner-up?

The UN resolution gave World Interfaith Harmony Week a tagline: Love of God (or the Good) and Love of the Neighbour. It missed out one love: Love of Nature. Ancient spiritual traditions always bind the three into one. In Chinese classical writings, this triune relationship is symbolized by a trigram — three lines stacked above each other to represent Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (tiandi-ren).

Heaven means the non-personal God, and Earth means Nature. Heaven expresses itself in Nature, and Nature is the mother of Humanity. Knowing geometry, we can reconstruct the trigram into a triangle. Nature connects God and Man. Without Nature, the love triangle is missing one angle and our relationships become disconnected. How long have we been disconnected? Not that long, really, and certainly not from the beginning.

Although the human species has existed for 200,000 years, civilization is less than 10,000 years old. What were our primitive ancestors like? They were non-civilized but not uncivilized. The primitive tribes were close to God and Nature, as they were people of the forest or caves who lived by hunting animals but mainly by gathering edible wild plants. Tribal members were also close to one another as they were bound together by kinship ties.

About 10,000 years ago, with the advent of large-scale farming requiring mass labour, tribes began merging into super-tribes and these into tribal federations. Civilization began when the first cities were built around this time to house the thousands. The word 'civilization' is derived from 'city' and to this day, the primary feature of civilization is dense urban living disconnected from nature and from the sense of an all-pervading divine presence. Most urbanites also feel that they are living amidst total strangers.

All our present-day religions sprang up with civilization, as institutions to bind the people back together as a community. The word 'religion' comes from the Latin noun *religio* that means 'bond' and the verb *religare* that means to 'bind back'. The purpose of religion as a binding force is revealed in one of the basic words that we learn from young. That word is simply the word to describe your community — the Muslim *ummah*, the Hindu *sangam*, the Sikh *khalsa*, the Buddhist *sangha*, the Christian *ecclesia* (translated as 'church'). These italicized words have exactly the same meaning — a community of people who are bound together.

This is the basic connective point that touches all religions: they bring people together as communities. The next step — long delayed — is to bring all communities together. It hasn't happened because of our alienation from Nature. If we don't feel connected to Nature, we can't feel connected to one another's faith communities. Nature teaches us the most fundamental lesson of life: there are no real boundaries anywhere, as researchers in quantum-wave physics have newly discovered.



Entertainment

MBO Cinemas Opens in Ipoh



MBO Cinemas expands by making its way to being the first in Ipoh. The cinema, which began operating since December 23, is situated in AEON Midtown Falim, Ipoh. Investing over RM14 million, this is MBO's 27th outlet in the country.

Apart from being the first MBO cinema in Ipoh, they also feature two unique viewing concepts, Kecil and Big Screen, which are both introduced for the first time in the city. Kecil is special as it is meant for family

and children. The hall is divided into three tiers, which are the couple seat sofa bed, beanie seats for kids and normal seats.

It is also equipped with an in-hall built in playground for kids to enjoy anytime during the movie, a diaper changing room for easy access and softer audio and brighter lights so parents can still monitor their children in the midst of watching a movie. There is also a playground outside the hall, which is open to the public.

"Ipoh is the third outlet where we've introduced Kecil. The first two are in Damansara Uptown and Kuantan. There will be more to come in other outlets all over Malaysia. It's usually our best-selling hall, especially during birthday parties as it can

accommodate up to 70 seats. Besides, the tickets are the same price as the standard ones," remarked Cheah Chun Wai, Chief Operating Officer of MBO Cinemas.

The Big Screen, on the other hand, is perfect for avid movie goers as it has the largest screen in Ipoh (17m x 10m). It has 302 seats and is equipped with laser RGB projector, showcasing advanced image quality through outstanding brightness, high contrast and superior colour performance. The price, however, is extra RM4.50 from the standard hall ticket price.

There is also the Twin Hall, which is meant for couples. It costs RM22 for a seat. The Standard Halls emphasise spacious leg room and comfortable seats, even if they are in the front row. MBO Cinemas has a total of eight halls and 1169 seats altogether.

Kids below 1.1m tall watch movies for free if they do not require an individual seat. Also, anyone who is interested to join the MBO Cinemas membership are welcomed to register for free.

"We want to give Ipoh people an immersive experience when they visit MBO Falim and for that we have taken the extra effort to equip our cinema halls with only the best of what sound and visuals have to offer for maximum viewing pleasure. We hope Ipohites will appreciate this," concluded Chun Wai.



Khaleeja

Mok Soon Sang Library

Former SMJK Pei Yuan principal, Mok Soon Sang, took upon himself to create a conducive environment for the convenience of residents of the Anning Children Home in Ampang. He established a library – the Mok Soon Sang Library.

The idea came to fruition about eight years ago, when Mok, 75, visited the home to give away ‘ang pows’ in conjunction with Chinese New Year. He found that the existing library had insufficient reading materials and was poorly equipped.

He had a discussion with Master Shi Kong Chan, the abbot of Bao En Shi Temple, the founder of Anning Children's Home and Old Folks Home. Master Shi was receptive of the idea and plans began soon after.

"Master Shi wanted a library that will benefit not only the residents but the local community as well. We then sought for donations," said Mok to Ipoh Echo when met at the library.

Mok raised some RM200,000 from book sales while the temple received RM500,000 via public donations.

"It's a memorable day for me when the foundation stone was laid in 2014. The library was completed in November 2015 and the opening ceremony was held on November 15, 2015," recalled the former teacher.

Mok wanted the library to be named the Anning Library, but Master Shi insisted otherwise.

"Since I am the one who initiated the idea and had donated my own books, Master Shi suggested that the library to be named the Mok Soon Sang Library," he said. The library began operation with 5000 books in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Chinese, ranging from kindergarten to university books.

With donations from well-wishers nationwide, the number of books has increased to 15,000 units today. The library has a section dedicated to Mok and the books he authored.



"Due to space constraints, we've put in place larger and taller book shelves and racks. I'm glad that the library has received encouraging responses from all parties, including the public," said Mok.

The library can be used for various educational activities such as reading sessions, tuition classes, educational talks and others.

"The latest was a talk by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman lecturers. More activities are in the pipeline this year," Mok added.

Staff from the Perak Social Welfare Department visited the library recently. The department plans to set up similar libraries in other orphanages.

“We still need donations to run the library and we welcome more books,” said Mok. Receipts will be issued for donation of RM50 and above.

The library is open from Tuesday to Sunday between 9am and 5pm with an hour's break in between. Registration is free and a card will be issued.

The library can be contacted at **05 311 9058**.

Nabilah Hamudin

Caregivers Appreciation Lunch

The *Dementia Society Perak* (TDSP), in collaboration with the youths of the Perak Malayalee Association, organised a lunch on January 13 at *Marianis@7*, specially dedicated to the caregivers of *People with Dementia* (PWD). A first of such an event, it turned out to be a great success paving the way for more future activities.

The ambience, delicious food and the live music greeted caregivers and their loved ones as they arrived, each and every one greeted lovingly and ushered to their seats. Mary, a client, sang 'Tennessee Waltz' beautifully to loud applause from the audience.

Professor Dr Esther Ebneezar, the President of TDSP, warmly welcomed everyone and gave a short speech on the vision of TDSP, 'The one stop Dementia Care Centre' comprising daycare, therapeutic garden and residential care, to provide respite space for caregivers. Her future plans to make Ipoh the model city for dementia care in the country needs lots of support and financial assistance from well-wishers, NGOs and corporate bodies. Compared to many other Asian countries like Japan and even Singapore, our closest neighbour, we are far behind in this aspect.

She also revealed the calendar of events for caregivers for 2018, which included the restarting of the 'Forget-Me-Not Support Group' meetings, short visits to recreational areas, cooking classes and caregivers training sessions.

TDSP started the day care centre six years ago with only two to three clients but now it accommodates 20 to 25 clients on average daily.

Ipoh being the fourth largest city in Malaysia, has a population of about 700,000; of this, more than 45,000 are aged 65 and above. Based on this estimate, 2000 PWD are living in Ipoh.

According to data released by the United Nations, about 123,000 Malaysians are living with dementia and it is expected to double by 2030.

Sr Ramayee Sinnasamy



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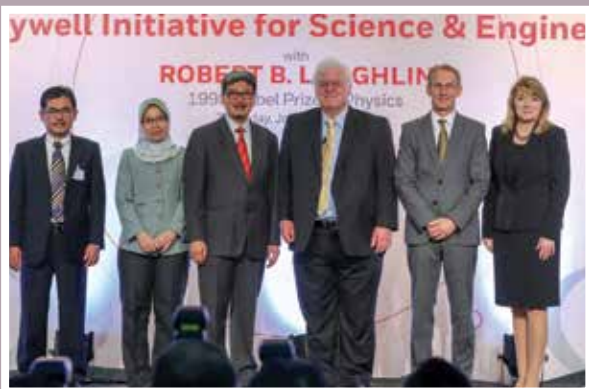
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Education

Nobel Laureate @ UTP



Professor Robert B. Laughlin, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in physics, inspired more than 2000 students and professors at Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) on Thursday, January 18 as part of the Honeywell Initiative for Science & Engineering (HISE).

Sponsored by Honeywell Hometown Solutions, HISE is the company's corporate citizenship initiative cum premier global educational programme that aims to encourage students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) through multiple interactions with Nobel laureates and Honeywell technologists.

For more than a decade, it has benefited thousands of students and teachers at top universities in China, Czech Republic, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Romania and the United States.

Laughlin received the Nobel Prize for the discovery of a new form of quantum fluid with fractionally charged excitations. His discovery opened a new chapter in condensed matter physics.

"This is the second time

Uncovering Perak's Beauty



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Pic from Goh Ah Poon (GAP)

Honeywell brought a Nobel laureate speaker to Malaysia as the first ever HISE presentation was held in the University of Malaya back in 2010. We hope his lecture will inspire students to find passion and help them see their career possibilities in STEM," Professor Dr Mohamed Ibrahim bin Abdul Mutalib, acting vice chancellor and chief executive officer of UTP said.

"Honeywell understands the power of the connected world. As a cyber-industrial company with more than 22,000 engineers located in 70 countries, Honeywell technologies help the world become more connected, smarter, safer and more sustainable," Briand Greer, president of Honeywell ASEAN stated. Having a strong corporate citizenship presence in Malaysia, Honeywell also invites middle school science and math teachers to

the Honeywell Educators at Space Academy while high school students to the Honeywell Leadership Challenge Academy, both held at the US Space & Rocket Centre.

Laughlin presented a lecture on his research of the Brayton Battery in which a thermal heat-pump grid storage technology was described based on closed-cycle Brayton engine transfers of heat from a cryogenic storage fluid to molten solar salt. Found to be competitive with that of pumped hydroelectric storage, its cost were estimated based on the present-day prices of power gas turbines and market prices of steel and nitrate salt. Comparison was also made with electrochemical and mechanical grid storage technologies.

Mei Kuan

Community

Back to School 2018



Over 270 students from secondary and primary schools received assistance in conjunction with the "Back to School 2018 Programme" sponsored by Solid Waste Corporation (SWCorp) Perak, E-Idaman, Kuala Kangsar Municipal Council and the Adun (state assemblyman) of Bukit Chandan.

The aids were presented by Hj Maslin Sham bin Razman, Bukit Chandan state assemblyman during a ceremony held at the Perak Jubilee Hall, Kuala Kangsar on Monday, January 15.

Kuala Kangsar Municipal Council Secretary, Ayub Shadan Abdul Rani and State Director of SWCorp, Hajjah Fatimah Hj Ahmad, were among those present at the ceremony.

Consisting of a school bag and RM50 given to each recipient the contributions were part of SWCorp's and E-Idaman's corporate social responsibility programme to assist students and to lighten the financial burden on their families.

Maslin Sham thanked the donors for their generosity. Incidentally, all of the recipients were from his constituency.

"Hopefully, the children can start the New Year on the right footing and place greater emphasis on their studies," he said.

Luqman Hakim

It Pays to Contribute



Some 300 taxi drivers in Perak are taking proactive steps by contributing to the Social Occupational Security Scheme under Socso (Social Security Organisation) or Perkeso.

Executive Councillor for Health, Public Transport, Non-Islamic Affairs, National Integration and New Village Dato' Dr Mah Hang Soon said that the number was small compared to the 1900-odd taxi drivers currently registered in Perak.

"The scheme not only protects the drivers but their rented cars as well. It gives better assurance for their safety."

Remembering the Veterans



'Jelajah Veteran Sehati Sejiwa Negeri Perak' is a platform to show appreciation for veterans who have contributed tremendously to our country in their respective fields," said Menteri Besar, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry bin Abd Kadir.

"We, as part of the younger generation, should learn from the veterans," said Zambry in his inaugural speech. "When a mistake has been made, don't hesitate to apologise. You'll not compromise yourself or your position in any way by uttering 'I'm sorry'. I feel touched by the commitment and sacrifices these veterans had made," he added.

The event, held at the Taman Meru Multipurpose Hall on Saturday, January 13, was the fifth of the 'Jelajah Veteran Sehati Sejiwa' series. The first was held on December 16, 2017 at the Bukit Gantang Futsal Arena.

December 23, 2017 marked the second event which took place at Paya Panjang Hall, Padang Rengas followed by a third at the Mini Arena Amanjaya Manong, Kuala Kangsar on December 30, 2017. A fourth similar event was held at the Sungai Rokam Dato' Ahmad Said Hall in Gopeng on Saturday, January 6.

Veterans who attended were mainly from the armed forces, police, and non-governmental organisations. This time around, a crowd of approximately 2000 people graced the occasion.

Amongst the activities organised were free medical check-ups and health talks. Apart from these two, events of interest were also discussed.

Such programmes will, hopefully, provide a more meaningful platform for these veterans to come together. Attendees expressed their gratitude and were proud that their sacrifices to the country were appreciated.

Amy Chan

"Contributors will enjoy many benefits such as medical, disability, recovery and many more, including their dependents. Moreover, it's being managed by Socso," he said.

Mah presented a cheque for RM1500 to Mohamad Helmi Hashim, 46, at his residence in Taman Chemor Mesra on January 10. The amount will be paid monthly until he is fully recovered.

Mohamad Helmi suffered three broken ribs after the taxi he drove crashed into a barrier at the Jelapang Toll exit on the North South Expressway on December 9, 2017.

Mohamad, who is secretary of the Taxi Drivers' Association Ipoh, began subscribing to the scheme on August 24 2017 after being certified as temporarily disabled person. He is receiving treatment at Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, Ipoh.

Meanwhile, Socso's Social Security Division Head, Ismail Abi Hashim, urged taxi drivers nationwide to contribute to the scheme.

"We'll work with taxi drivers' association in every state and the Public Transport Commission (SPAD) to ensure that every driver receives protection.

"In the past six months, only 2400 taxi drivers and e-hailing service handlers have registered compared to the 100,000 drivers listed by the commission," he revealed.

As such, he encouraged all registered drivers to make their monthly contribution of RM157 so they and their families can enjoy the protection the scheme provides.

Luqman Hakim



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Community



Media Dinner

Universiti Kuala Lumpur Royal College of Medicine Perak hosted a dinner in honour of some 30 media practitioners from Perak. The event was held at Tandoor Grill Restaurant, Ipoh on Thursday, December 28.

Present was CEO and Head of Campus, Hj Hishamuddin Omar. The dinner, according to Hishamuddin, was the university's way of appreciating the media's effort in promoting the medical institution's activities statewide.

"The objective is to strengthen our relationship with the media besides appreciating their commitment in propagating news regarding the institution to the public. We're truly indebted for the support we received," he said.

The evening ended with a lucky draw with attractive prizes for the winners.

Luqman Hakim

Pongal 2018

Pongal or Harvest Festival is celebrated by Tamils throughout the world, regardless of their religious beliefs, on the first day of Tamil month *Thai* which is also the Tamil New Year and falls in mid-January. Pongal translates to "spilling over" and the festival derives its name from the tradition of boiling rice and milk in a pot till it starts overflowing. The overflowing pot symbolises fulfilment.

Pongal is celebrated over four days. The day before Pongal is called Bhogi and on that day all old stuff from the house are discarded and burnt. The first day of Pongal is known as *Surya Pongal* or Sun Pongal and making of pongal in a pot takes place in the morning. The second day is dedicated to cattle and is called *Mattu Pongal* or Cow Pongal and the cattle are bathed and decorated and given a day of rest. The third and final day is called *Kaanum Pongal* or Seeing Pongal and visits are made to relatives and friends' houses. During ancient days this was used for matchmaking for sons and daughters.

Annakkili Rasiah, President of cultural group of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Silibin said that the church has been celebrating Pongal from the early eighties. This year the event was jointly organised with Thamilar Thirunal Association and in addition to the usual parishioners, many Hindus and Muslims participated.

The function started with making the pongal followed by cultural dances like *kolaattam* (dancing with stick) and *mayilaattam* (peacock dance). For the first time a traditional game called *Uri Adithal*, where, with the help of a stick, blindfolded participants had to break a clay pot hung up high above their heads was organised. Many people young and old participated.

There was a colouring competition for primary school students and a *kolam* contest and prizes were given to winners.

Residents of Buntong celebrated Pongal at Dewan Kg Baru which was organised by DAP Ipoh Barat. Here also pongal was made and the usual cultural dances performed.

Pongal gives an opportunity for children, men and women to don traditional dress. This is a celebration whereby folk dances are promoted and keeps the culture going.

A. Jeyaraj



New School Supplies for the Underprivileged

Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad (KLK) kicked off this new year with a much needed 'Back To School' programme by providing brand new school supplies to 55 children as part of its corporate responsibility (CR) initiative at its clubhouse in Ipoh, Perak.

Being a responsible corporate citizen, KLK encourages its employees across the board to volunteer their time and effort towards various CR initiatives and activities to demonstrate the spirit of 'giving back' to the community. The 'Back To School' programme is one of the CR initiatives whereby the company and its employees from Wisma Taiko purchase school items for children from the Pusat Jagaan Anak-Anak Yatim Dan Miskin Nurul Iman, Pusat Jagaan Diamond Home and the Precious Gift Home.

A total of 38 KLK employees played host to the children at the handover ceremony. Patrick Kee, KLK's Group Plantations Director speaking at the handover ceremony, said, "At KLK, we believe that education is an important catalyst for positive change in the community. We hope that the 'Back To School' items will help reduce the burden of seeing to these very necessary expenses for the children at these underprivileged homes – so as to enable the children to better focus on their studies and to secure themselves a brighter future".

During the handover ceremony, KLK provided the children with school supplies such as school shoes, socks and book vouchers; and groceries to the homes. Apart from receiving the above, the children were pleasantly surprised with the 'Back To School' gifts from the KLK employees as they were not expecting anything more, apart from the school shoes. The children were thereafter treated to delicious refreshments after the fun-filled day. A clown was present to provide entertainment and charmed the children with balloon sculptures of various colours, shapes and sizes.

As one of the key players in the plantations industry, the culture of caring remains at the forefront of the company. KLK is continually committed to bringing a lasting positive impact to the community and its people.



Awards for Rail Heroes

The launch of KTM 4-WAY TEST Plaque and an award ceremony to honour "rail heroes" was held at the Ipoh Railway Station platform on Saturday, January 20.

This event was the fifth and the last among the five launches and award ceremonies held thus far. The first was conducted on January 13 at four different locations – KL Sentral, Johor Bahru, Butterworth, and Wakaf Baru, Kelantan.

Some 66 KTM Berhad (KTMB) staff from 12 divisions were awarded with the Pride of Workmanship Award presented by Rotary Club.

Those selected were picked based on their work performance and ethics. They were honoured as "rail heroes" and were presented with a certificate and a cash incentive of RM500 each from Rotary Club Malaysia.

This time round, 10 rail heroes were picked from the Permanent Way Gang and Fleet Maintenance and Engineering (FME) Rescue Team. The remaining were electrification personnel, cargo and commuter train drivers, ETS train captains, and counter clerks.

The objective was to encourage professionalism in vocations while enabling Rotary Clubs to work with business owners, corporations and multinationals.

More of such ceremonies will be held in the future.

Amy Chan



Arts and Culture

Artist to Watch: Lukman Hakim



Concluding our exclusive interview series of Perak artists from the Nando's Art Initiative is a one-on-one with Lukman Hakim bin Mohd Bahari who turns his passion in fine art from hobby to career.

The creation of the 21-year-old from Gerik titled, 'Looking Down on New York City', was shortlisted in the fine art category of the Nando's Art Initiative 2017. "It was my second participation. Thank God my artwork was selected for the exhibition and sold! In 2016, my work was shortlisted in the top 50," he enthused.

On his black and white cityscape of New York City, Lukman explained, "I emphasised on charcoal and graphite quality as it is an expressive medium with a good range of light to dark shades. I'm interested in the perspective of a building and is persistent in detailing it to perfection. Assembling part by part and constructing a complex structure inside out are no easy tasks as it takes many experiments and try-outs."

After high school, he obtained a diploma in fine art from UiTM Seri Iskandar and is currently studying for his bachelor in the same course at UiTM Shah Alam. The tools he works with are pencil and charcoal. "I can create every detail with this medium," he said.

Citing his lecturers as his mentors and 'The Starry Night' by Van Gogh as his favourite masterpiece, he added, "Kit King and Amron Omar are my inspirations".

When asked why is art so important for the times we're living in, he replied, "Easy! The earth without art is just 'eh'". And here's his advice for aspiring artists just starting out: "Never give up. Passion is the pillar for success".

Check out his Instagram (loque_art / loque_art2) and Twitter (loque_art) for more updates. Interested readers can email him at: loqueart96@gmail.com.



Mei Kuan

I Have a Dream

The home-grown performance "I Have a Dream" on Saturday, December 16 by the Perak Society of Performing Arts (PSPA) was an evening of many firsts. Besides being the first ever ABBA-themed charity musical, it was a first-time collaboration between PSPA and the Kinta Valley Symphonic Society in a musical production to produce the very first musical with live wind orchestra in Ipoh.

Stroke champions, together with volunteers from NASAM, made a special appearance dressed in various traditional attires to show the world how they are celebrating their colourful lives after stroke.

Held at the auditorium of RTM Perak, it was divided into two acts showcasing ABBA songs from the 70s such as 'Chiquitita', 'Slipping Through My Fingers', 'Happy New Year', 'The Winner Takes It All', 'Money, Money, Money' and certainly, 'I Have A Dream'. It reflected a year of hard work and practice of the PSPA Singers, the choral arm of PSPA.

With an impressive stage set complete with stairs, it told the stories of individual struggles and passions in the pursuits of their dreams. One charming character was Mark, played by Tan Tihn Chern, who had a mind of his own and kept the audience in stitches with his sky-high energy level and playful nature. Equally delightful was Ezra Tham, the emcee of the day, who guest-starred as the waiter and doctor.

One of the objectives of the performance was to raise funds for the National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) where 50% of proceeds from entry passes donation would go to. NASAM was established in 1996 and it is the first non-profit organisation in South East Asia that provides rehabilitation and support to stroke survivors and their families. Then, NASAM Ipoh was started in the year 2004 at No. 9, Lorong Pinji, Off Jalan Pasir Puteh, 31650 Ipoh.

Meanwhile, PSPA is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1996 to encourage and develop a greater knowledge and understanding of the arts in Perak. For more, visit <http://www.pspaipoh.org/> or call 05 545 0350.

Mei Kuan



Medical

KPJ Ipoh Makes History

KPJ Ipoh Specialist Hospital made history when the first-ever cochlear implant surgery was successfully carried out on Tuesday, December 19, 2017.

"This is the first surgery to be carried out by a private hospital in Perak," announced Dr Luis Chen Shian Lian during a press conference on Thursday, January 18.

The team was led by Dr Philip Rajan, a Consultant ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) Surgeon and a trained Otologist (specialising in managing hearing and ear-related diseases).

"Prior to this, we could not perform the surgery, as there were several conditions to be fulfilled in order to perform such a feat. First, we needed a surgeon who knew how to perform the procedure. Next, we required the patients to adhere to certain criteria which included being able to afford the exorbitant cost of the surgery. The final condition was to have an audiologist. Without these, cochlear implant surgeries could not be carried out," said Luis.

According to him, patients had to travel to Penang or Kuala Lumpur if they wished to undergo the surgery at private hospitals. The travelling does not end after the surgery is over, as there are consequential check-ups and speech therapy sessions.

Luis added that speech therapy sessions are important, especially for young children.

"The critical age for speech and language development is when a child is three years old. We've prepared a little demonstration to prove the success of the surgery. Our first patient, Eric Leong who is three years old will hear his first sound today," he declared.

Eric arrived together with his mother, grandmother, and elder sister soon after the press conference. He had undergone bilateral (both ears) cochlear implantation last year.

He sat adjacent to the audiologist, Sylvia Lee Wai Hun. He was occupied by toys laid out on the table, busy playing with his sister when he turned his head suddenly. It was his initial response to the sounds he had heard. Eric then attempted to take off the hearing aid as the sound was getting too loud for him.

"His reactions meant that he's able to hear sounds now. He may feel slightly uncomfortable because these sounds are still new to him," Sylvia explained.

Eric's mother was pleased that her child could hear.

"We were devastated when we found out that he could not hear. He didn't respond when we called his name. We knew something was wrong. Now, I'm very happy," Eric's mother commented.



"We hope he's able to enjoy his childhood like any other boys now that he can hear. We want him to grow up like a normal boy," she added.

This fantastic achievement, hopefully, will benefit Ipohites henceforth.

Amy Chan

What's in store for Chinese New Year



Syeun Hotel: CNY Delights

In celebration of the coming Chinese New Year, Syeun Hotel has a line-up of special promotions and entertainments.

To begin with, the auspicious reunion dinner feast on February 15 has four curated menus priced at RM788 (vegetarian), RM888, RM1188, and RM1488 nett respectively per table of 10 guests. Each dining option kicks off with Prosperity “Yee Sang” (salad) to be tossed high for a flourishing year ahead. It features dishes with different kinds of top-quality seafood such as “braised mushroom, dry oyster, sea moss and sea cucumber”, “golden treasure seafood pot with abalone”, “pan fried Ming prawns with Szechuan spicy sauce” and “steamed dragon tiger garoupa fish with superior soy sauce”.

The evening will see Syeun’s God of Fortune distributing red packets, photo booth running on the theme of the year and entertainment encompassing singing and dancing among others. The memorable moment will be captured and instantly printed in a family portrait free-of-charge (two photos for every table). Plus, there will be no time limitation for the dinner to be held at the grand ballroom.

From February 17 to March 2, Syeun Hotel presents a medley of delicacies featuring premium ingredients such as “stewed kampong chicken soup with cordyceps flowers”, “precious ingredients Chinese casserole”, “steamed red rice emperor woo soo chicken”, “braised mushroom, dry oyster, sea moss, ling zi mushroom and green garden” and “steamed pomfret fish in quality soy sauce”. It is available at RM788, RM988 and RM1388 nett per table of ten diners.

Book a spot now by calling **05 253 8889, 012 521 8339** (Rains) or **012 505 1336** (Ika).

Mei Kuan

Un-WEIL-ing 2018 CNY Menu

To usher in the Year of the Dog in 2018, Yuk Sou Hin at WEIL Hotel has prepared a sumptuous line-up of Cantonese delicacies.

The 8-9 course meal takes off with an authentic favourite, the colourful Yee Sang. Guests may choose to add jellyfish, snow pear, soft shell crab, Hokkaido scallop, or crispy fish skin to the basic Yee Sang ingredients.

All in all, there are seven varieties of Yee Sang that are being offered by the restaurant starting from RM68.

Apart from the age-old favourite Yee Sang, the restaurant also serves Roasted Crispy Chicken with Foie Gras Sauce, Braised Bird’s Nest Soup with Cordyceps and Assorted Seafood, and Braised Abalone, Dried Oyster and Charcoal Bean Curd with Superior Oyster Sauce to name a few.

Appetisers available to scintillate the taste buds are Deep Fried Crispy Silver Fish with Chicken Floss, Deep Fried Chicken Wings with Arabica Sauce, Spicy Szechuan “Saliva” Chicken, and more. There is also soup, like Double Boiled Chicken Soup with Dried Scallop and Winter Melon Ring, Double Boiled Chicken Soup with Whelk Meat, or Fish Maw and Rock Melon.

Yuk Sou Hin offers a range of five different menu options to customers. Set Menu A is priced at RM1288 per table, Set Menu B at RM1488 per table while Set Menu C is RM1888 per table and Set Menu D is priced at RM2688. Set Menu E which caters to small groups of four people is priced at RM588 and Set Menu F which caters for medium-sized groups of six people is priced at RM688.

For the Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner, there will be an accompanying complimentary ‘Lin Koh’ dessert, lion dance performance, Choi San Yeh, and a live band. Only the Reunion Dinner will be held at WEIL Hotel’s Grand Ballroom.

This Chinese New Year special is available from February 1 until March 2. For those who are interested and further details, call **05 208 2228 ext 2103** (Yuk Sou Hin). Bookings can be made from now.

Amy Chan



Riverfront Gourmet Adventure

February 2018 ushers two significant events – Valentine’s Day and Chinese New Year. To celebrate the occasions, Kinta Riverfront Hotel & Suites will host the ‘Double Happiness: Chinese New Year & Valentine’s Day Promotion Year 2018’. The auspicious event will be held at Palong Coffee House, Zui Xin Lao Seafood Restaurant, Shinjuku Japanese Cuisine and Moon River Bar & Grill.

Palong Coffee House will serve a Chinese New Year Eve buffet from February 15 to 17. The dinner is on February 15 while a buffet high tea and a buffet dinner are planned for February 16 and 17.

Lucky draw, games and a best-dress competition are on the cards.

However, Palong Coffee House’s Valentine’s Day Promotion is only available for one day – February 14. It will be a romantic 4-course Western-style meal with an appetiser, two varieties of soup, three choices of main course and two choices of dessert. The promotion is valued at RM220 per couple. A special price of RM180 per couple will be offered for early birds. The offer ends on February 10. It comes with complimentary flowers, gifts, and fresh juice.

Call 05 245 8817 (Palong Coffee House) for enquiries and reservations.

For those who prefer a more traditional method of welcoming the New Year, opt for Zui Xin Lou Seafood Restaurant which is introducing three different sets of 9-course meals priced between RM799 and RM1188 which caters for 10 people per set. A complimentary bottle of red wine will accompany each set.

Valentine’s Day does not get any more exclusive than a sumptuous 7-course meal at RM168 per couple. The special menu includes Braised Shark Fin Soup, Lamb, Dory Fish, Vegetables, Prawn, Pomelo Tea, and dessert. This promotion is available for four days from February 10 to 14. For details call Zui Xin Lao Seafood Restaurant at 05 245 8818.

Shinjuku Japanese Cuisine will not be undermined, as it will present a plethora of



limited-edition culinary favourites. Guests can either choose the Salmon Yee Sang or the Salmon & Abalone Yee Sang. A special menu will be offered between February 10 and March 4. The pièce de résistance is the Hokkaido King Crab from Russia prepared in three different cooking styles. The Premium Matsusaka Beef, another recommended item, is specifically prepared for this promotion.

The Shinjuku Valentine’s Set Menu will feature premium dishes starting with an appetiser, the main course, a hotpot (nabemono), and a dessert. Two glasses of red wine come free with this package. It is available from February 1 to 14. For enquiries call 05 245 8838.

In conjunction with the CNY celebrations, alcoholic drinks at the Moon River Bar & Grill are offered at a discounted rate from January 30 to March 30.

The Moon River Bar & Grill will also offer a Valentine’s set beginning February 1 to 14 at RM240 per couple. The 3-course meal will include an appetiser, a main course, and dessert. To enquire, call 05 245 8815.

The two annual celebrations are definitely suitable for the palates of the young and the not so young.

Amy Chan

Tourism

Tourism Round-table Meet

Perak Tourism Association (PTA) held their Tourism Round-table Meet 2018 on Thursday, January 18 at the ballroom of Lost World Hotel, Ipoh. The theme set by President of PTA, Datuk Hj. Mohd. Odzman Abdul Kadir was 'Engaging NGOs towards a Productive Collaboration'.

The discussion which lasted from 9am till 5pm was officiated by Dato' Nolee Ashilin Dato' Mohd. Radzi, Chairman of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Communications and Multimedia Committee.

It was well attended by stakeholders all over Malaysia. The meeting included presentations by NGOs and guest speakers on selective topics such as Improving Service Industry, Promoting Heritage Tourism and more. Hj. Mohd. Odzman suggested that the aim of the meeting was to make Perak the preferred destination and in order to achieve that, by publishing a Stakeholders Guidebook 2018-2020.

"The guidebook will feature the findings of the round-table session which includes the issues raised, probable solutions and corresponding action plans. This will serve as a platform for stakeholders to discuss, deliberate and voice their opinions on various issues that affect the advancement of tourism in Perak," he continued.

Also, the means to publish the guidebook is to set up a Centralised Issues Management

Centre (CIMC). This centre will enable tourism consumers or educational institutions to gain information on tourism in Perak.

"Perak has gotten recognition by Lonely Planet and was even added to UNESCO's list of world heritage sites. We need to realise that these recognitions are hard to come by and should start living up to it. Heritage and nature are our two main focuses in promoting Perak and we'll need to include NGOs to make this happen. We need to get in the game and start working together," exclaimed Nolee.

One of the guest speakers was the town planner of Ipoh City Council, Zulqarnain Mohamad. His topic was 'Setting New Tone to Ipoh Old Town through Informal Collaboration'. He mentioned that people are more interested in informal things. Hence, the informal collaboration.

Some of the things he suggested were turning streets into interesting places by the locals (like Concubine Lane), building local economies through street markets, reinventing community planning, improving safety of public space and maintaining heritage in Ipoh.

"I've had conversations with tourists from Netherlands who told me they loved Ipoh for the rustic buildings. Some countries are too proper for them. We also encounter situations where we want to maintain certain heritage buildings which require development. But above all, I think we're doing pretty good. We have lots of room for improvement but we're doing good," continued Zulqarnain.

Khaleeja



LETTERS

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

Ipoh GH Psychiatry Clinic

It was supposed to be a day for my father's routine check. My father, 83, is suffering from Organic Brain Syndrome. Upon arrival, I stepped into a very crowded clinic where physically, it was impossible to walk a further step in. I realised there were more patients in the room (clinic) than my previous visit which was three months ago. However, the clinic space size is the same. In that overcrowded space were patients on wheelchairs and strollers, school-aged children to senior citizens, nurses, doctors, etc. There was a lot of noise in the overcrowded clinic making everyone feel very unsettled. Nurses were having to shout out patients' names amidst crying and screaming patients who were obviously very disturbed by being in this packed clinic. There was no place to sit or walk. I waited over an hour without sitting down like many others but felt very upset to see other visibly frail visitors having to stand as well.

This clinic is meant for psychiatric patients but the clinic's environment is a hazard for them.

I personally felt terribly stressed whilst waiting there. It drained me mentally, waiting in that clinic and I wondered how a mentally ill person would cope.

In recent years, media using research data have shown that statistics are showing an exponential increasing trend on the numbers of psychiatric patients in all age groups. The reasons are varied but mental health issues are currently a global phenomenon we

have to come to grips with. Stress, depression leading to suicide, self harm and violent outbreaks are common these days. We need to support and take good care of people who acknowledge their mental health problem. When they take the bold step of seeking help, the least we could do is make it a pleasant experience so that they continue to get the support they need. If not, it is the community that suffers at the end as supporting them after a violent rampage (which commonly is the case on most of these crimes we read in the media) is too late. Thankfully, majority of the mental illnesses do not pose any harm to anyone other than the sufferer, but it is time we give them minimally the right clinical environment to seek help.

We should show gratitude to our doctors and nurses in the Psychiatry Department. A job that earns little materially, with a high risk of being attacked. One that few could do unless they have the dedication demanded for this job. However, the positive impact these healthcare workers are making on the lives of the patients and their families are immense. For this reason, my hats off to them and thank you for your great job.

GY

HAPPENINGS

Ipoh Echo IS the ONE and ONLY medium to reach Ipohites and Perakeans for your Announcements or your Ads.

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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

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).

MEDICAL

KPJ IPOH SPECIALIST HOSPITAL ANTENATAL CLASSES FOR 2018. Dates: January 20, March 17, May 19 (Mandarin Class), July 21, September 29 and November 17 (Mandarin Class), 1pm-5pm at Dewan Anugerah, 5th Floor KPJ Ipoh Specialist Hospital. Contact customer service at **05 240 8777 ext. 8111** for enquiries.

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Sport

Silver Nite Ride 4.0



More than 300 cycling fans and riders in Perak gathered at Perak's Youth Sport Centre to celebrate the fourth Perak Silver Nite Ride in December 2017.

The event which is held annually, was attended by the public and Ipoh Foldies Club members; a cycling club in Ipoh who is also the organiser of the event.

"As a club, we usually cycle at least twice a month at night. Participants of this event would come from Kuala Kangsar and Teluk Intan and there was one time that we were joined by over 400 cyclists," said the president of Ipoh Foldies Club, Muhammad Remy.

"All the cyclists are cycling about 25 to 30km around Ipoh town today. Our event is also supported by the police and we have paramedics on call should something happen. We prioritise safety to ensure a fun ride for everyone who joined," said Remy.

As this is their fourth year of organising, Remy and his team hopes that the Perak government together with Perak Department of Youths and Sports will continue to support this healthy event in 2018.

"This is the only way we can gather cycling fans and cyclist together and promote a healthier lifestyle as well as making friends who share the same interest regardless of their race and gender," added Remy.

Luqman Hakim

Waterfront City Fun Run

Stretching as far as the eye could see, over a thousand runners took part in the WaterFront City Charity Fun Run '17 Walk-A-Thon at Lahat Mines, Ipoh recently.

With a catchy theme, "Run with a View", participants took the opportunity to jog and enjoy the scenic view at the same time. They were running around a beautiful lake surrounded by hills and greens.

The morning kicked off with a zumba warm-up before the participants were flagged off at the start line by company directors, Dato' Seri Lee Yau Sing and Dato' Ooi Boon Hoi.

The charity run, organised by WaterFront City's developer, Excellent Realty Sdn Bhd, was a roaring success. Funds raised were donated to four schools – SJK(C) Wan Hwa 1, SJK(C) Lahat and SJK(C) Yuh Hua. The schools received RM1500 each.

After the run, participants gathered at the finish line for the much-anticipated lucky draw. While the crowd was milling around, a classic car exhibition was featured.

General Manager Eunice Foo was visibly pleased with the overwhelming response from the public.

"It's our first time organising an event of this nature. It's encouraging to see people from all walks of life coming together for reasons of health.

"Apart from contributing to society, we also hope to promote a healthy lifestyle by getting people to run and enjoy the great view at the same time," she told reporters covering the event.

Nabilah Hamudin

