

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

c/o 19 Kelawei Road, 10250 Penang, Malaysia • Tel/Fax: 04 - 226 1358

Number 37

March 1997

An Oasis of Green for George Town

Good may yet come out of the Prangin Mall crisis. For one thing, it has set the Penang public talking seriously about George Town having a Central Park of its own, on that triangle of prime land the government is now reserving for more shopping malls, hotels, and carparks — the roughly 4ha site of Komtar Phase 3 and Phase 4 combined.

No doubt those Penangites who would buzz us with such words as development, the future, and progress when promoting their superhyper commercial projects will say that the PHT must be living in the wrong time zone, to dream up this crazy scheme to return the city's most expensive piece of land to the mangrove jungle. That the PHT is living in the past or simply mad is debatable. They are not far from right, though, about the jungle, for what we have in mind is not the usual fun-fair or golf course sort of park, but a tract of real rainforest complete with swamp lotus and water-lily ponds — it should not be too difficult to turn the flooded Prangin Mall excavation into several of them — where one can go to escape for a while the city's car-infested streets, or just to walk among the elegant Tree Fern, sit in the shade of the giant Pulai or the Tembusu, and listen to the happy songs of the wild merboks.

We should also like to see what is left of Teik Soon Street restored as an enclave of Boom Boom Babylons, X-pubs, Hot Woks, Club Mixxx and the like. So, at one end of the city's 'Golden Triangle' we have the Komtar government offices, civic centres, and shopping arcades, and at the other end the yuppie haunts and hangouts, and right in the middle — this easily accessible tropical Eden where no one, including the day-tripper or tourist, need pay to enter. A truly well-balanced development. And perhaps we can also redesign both Jalan Magazine and Jalan Lim Chiew Leong as pedestrian malls, and make the old Prangin market (Sia Boey) the site of a main station of our long-awaited Light Rail Transport system, so that we can have more Penangites than Protons in the area.

This oasis of green in the heart of the city is something good our rapid economic growth has so far been slow to bring us. The government should give a

serious thought to establishing it to make the quality of our taxpaying lives a little better. Many of us here at the PHT are with all those concerned Penangites who would rather their money is spent on building George Town a beautiful Central Park than on saving the wretched Prangin Mall.



DINNER

An Evening of Culture & Heritage

**A Penang Heritage Trust
Fundraising Event**

**Saturday 5 April 1997
7.30pm**

**Rasa Sayang Resorts
(Pelangi Ballroom)**

*See leaflet inside
for more information*

New Members

We welcome the following as members of the Penang Heritage Trust. They can take part in any of the activities of the Trust.

Life Member: Angeline Chew Paik Yong

Ordinary Members:

Chia Loong Thye

Barbara Bugg

Vince Yeap

Ch'ng Huck Theng

Leong Kean Chiew

Ng Thye Aun

Mohd Kassim Azari

Carolina Cheah

Zuraimi Harun

Alicette Dorlanne

Dr Tan Chong Guan

Johnson C K Tan

Fahmy Ismail

K Kumaraendran

Mok Thoo Kong

Chew Beng Hian

Lim Mook San

Ooi Phee Yong

Gerard Newcombe

Mary Slattery

The Prangin Mall Crisis



Concern over houses with cracks

CRACKING UP ... Penang Municipal Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan is seen through a 13cm crack which appeared in one of the houses in Noordin Street.

A similar crack was discovered on the other side of the kitchen wall while smaller cracks have appeared on the second floor.

The shophouse is now used as the pro tem residents' committee service centre.

Dr Teng, who was accompanied by State Infrastructure and Public Utilities Committee chairman Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya and Pengkalan Kota assemblyman Lee Hack Teik, also visited McNair Street and Presgrave Road.

THE STAR 21 FEBRUARY 1997

THE STAR 10 MARCH 1997

Interests of nature lovers will be taken care of: Kee

PENANG: The interest of nature lovers will continue to receive the state's attention after the Penang Botanic Gardens have been corporatised for expansion, State Executive Councillor Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen said.

She said other than the state, the Friends of the Penang Botanic Gardens Society would continue to look after the interests of nature visitors of the gardens.

She said the gardens would be expanded to eight times its present

size to function as a research centre, gene bank and recreation park.

"The Botanic Gardens Committee has embarked on a plants exchange programme with other countries to promote the gardens horticultural aspect," she said when opening the society's nature shop Botanika on Saturday.

Kee said the state Tourism Committee would contribute a RM10,000 grant to the society for their activities.

Bukit Bendera MP Chia

Kwang Chye, who is the society chairman, said the shop sells unique souvenirs of Malaysia's only botanic gardens.

Products sold at Botanika, which opened for business in November last year, include apparel, books, brochures, maps, plants, gardening items and stationery.

Among those present were Penang Municipal Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan, who is Kebun Bunga assemblyman, and Botanika chairman Mariam Lim.

NEW STRAITS TIMES 6 March 1997

NATIONAL

Prangin Mall: RM6m remedial work to begin

By Noor Hayati

PENANG, Wed. — An additional RM6 million will be spent on remedial work to stabilise the foundation of the RM200 million Prangin Mall project which has been identified as the most probable cause of cracks in 327 houses nearby.

The Penang Island Municipal Council today approved the developers' revised proposal for the measures which incorpo-

rate the installation of a new line of sheetpiles at the outer perimeter of the site using a new piling technology with the help of a "silent piler".

The method is expected to eliminate vibration and reduce noise when the sheetpiles are driven in and the work is expected to be completed in eight weeks using three pilers.

Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan said it would issue the letter of ap-

proval tomorrow for the developer to commence remedial work.

The stop-work order for the Prangin Mall project issued on Jan 31 would however remain until further review to ensure it was safe to proceed, he said.

Prangin Mall is jointly developed by Getaran Unggul Sdn Bhd and Idris Hydraulic Properties Sdn Bhd.

The method used for the remedial work is aimed at

reducing water seepage from the surrounding areas into the project excavation site.

Excavation work which began in October last year is believed to have resulted in underground water movement and ground instability, resulting in serious cracks in buildings and pavements in the vicinity.

The remedial work will be undertaken by the project's main contractor, Penas Corporation.

Pencorp executive director Ooi Soon Hong Ooi said any compensation to the affected residents would be borne by Getaran Unggul in accordance with the terms and conditions of the earlier contract awarded to it as the main contractor.

Meanwhile, Prangin Mall's Affected Residents' Affairs Committee chairman State executive councillor Dr Kang Chin Seng said the developer had completed propping up of 22 of

the 42 houses identified as needing such strengthening.

Dr Kang was speaking to reporters during a visit to six shophouses, including the Hotel Singapore, in Jalan Penang which suffered cracks believed to have been caused by the adjacent Metrojaya Properties (Komtar) Sdn Bhd project.

The project is also under a stop-work order by the council.

'Clear heritage objectives needed'

Reporter CHEAH UI-HOON at the Penang Heritage Seminar

HERITAGE development in Penang needs both a proper administrative framework and supportive participation from the local community.

Penang Heritage Seminar's speaker Lord Donald Hankey said the state government's framework and objectives need to be clear to inspire confidence in both local and foreign investors.

"The role of the government is to enable the private sector to act with confidence," he told a press conference after

the closing of the two-day seminar.

Private and public co-operation was also imperative, he added.

Keynote speaker Dr Peter Addyman said heritage development projects could not be imposed on the local community who have lived in the heritage areas and made them what they are today.

"Crucial to the success and sustainability of heritage projects is the critical mass — the community involvement — as the

projects won't work otherwise," he said.

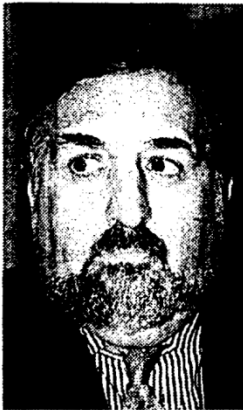
Dr Addyman said sustainability and cultural integrity of projects were important, adding that the changes the community had to go through had to be managed well.

He said feedback from the speakers indicated that George Town had tremendous potential to be developed into a heritage city, but it was also necessary to get public feedback, opinion and support.



Lord Hankey... support needed

Living anecdotes in shophouses



Johnson... ensure maximum retention

THE QUALITY and existing patterns of George Town's traditional shophouses should be reinstated to retain its inherent spirit and original ambience.

Chairman of international designing firm JGSP Design Sam Johnson said the buildings with their historical, architectural and multi-ethnic heritage "are living anecdotes of the past which provide the vital link to history."

"Successful reinstatement should be based on maximum retention, sensitive restoration and

careful repair," he said at a panel discussion on *Shophouses: Conversion to Residential Accommodation*.

He said traditionally, the shophouse provided facilities for business on the ground floor and residential accommodation on the upper storeys, an ideal unit for small-scale family-based commercial operations.

In updating the traditional shophouse, said Johnson, a mixture of social and private housing can be achieved through sensitive adaption of buildings.

The conversion of shophouse to a boutique hotel also has commercial potential and viability, said Hotel and Leisure Design Consultants Richmond International development director Richard Garland.

"The key success ingredients are location, market, product and economic criteria," he said.

Garland said surveys had shown that room sales would be the main source of income for boutique hotels, and few additional facilities were required, such as a "neighbourhood restaurant and bar" and a guest lounge.

Plan realistic budgets: Consultant

DEVELOPERS and landowners who are looking at restoring old and heritage buildings have to prepare realistic budgets which cover potential extra costs, a foreign consultant said.

David Burton of international consultancy firm E. C. Harris said that from case studies, the extra costs could range from 11 per cent to 40 per cent.

"In developing a new building, developers are looking at 11 per cent risk which is focused mainly on the foundation of the project.

"The overruns could come up to 40 per cent for restoration works because there are so many unknown factors in the existing building like the condition of the foundation, walls, flooring and so on," he said.

Burton said risks likely to be encountered must be understood and managed at the outset.

"Practical risks include unrealisti-

cally structured budgets, and over-restoration," he said in his panel discussion on *Inner City Enhancement: Precinct Development*.

He said developers could plan for profit by conducting a detailed survey of the building, minimising the extent of structural alterations, engaging experienced consultants and planning ahead.

"Extensive site survey is imperative, as is the practicality of construction techniques and client involvement," he said.

Developers must also set a realistic budget, which includes a sensible contingency, costing the 'exclusions' or indirect costs such as facilitating works and local liaisons, and looking at grants and incentives, he added.

He stressed that heritage development or restoration could be made economically viable.



Burton... risks likely

PHT

**PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG
PENANG HERITAGE TRUST**

presents
an evening *of*



**CULTURE
&
HERITAGE**

with the
PENANG HERITAGE TRUST FUNDRAISING DINNER

Date : Saturday, 5th of April, 1997

Time : 7.30 pm

Venue : Pelangi Ballroom,
Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort.

For tickets and enquiries, please call 04-2261358 (Mr. Tan) or 04-6569588 (Ms. Anu).

• Programme for the evening include lucky draws, a silent auction and auctions of antiques and heritage keepsakes.

And Evening Of Culture & Heritage

A Penang Heritage Trust Fundraising Event

The Penang Heritage will hold the fundraising dinner at the Rasa Sayang Resorts on April 5. The Chief Minister YAB Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon and Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen have accepted our invitation to attend the evening, along with many keen antique collectors, supporters of the PHT, and leading members of the business community.

There will be a Silent Auction of antiques and collectibles and heritage keepsakes as well as other items including travel and accommodation at Shangri-la hotels in China and Canada, Sheraton Penang complimentary voucher for a 2 night stay for 2 persons in its executive suite, toys from Mattel, mini stereos from Audio Electronics, Christian Dior watches and cosmetics, products from Vercase, Tangs Department Store, and Kenzo Fashions. This is only part of the list. We expect there will be over 100 items on which guests can bid. There will also be equally attractive prizes for the Lucky Draw.

Food will be a variety of local foods including Nyonya, Malay, Indian and Chinese. There will be music, dancing and fun for all. Several leading businesses will hand over their donations to support our fundraising effort on the night. And Laurence and Lin Lee Loh will present an overview of the major PHT projects, including the restoration of the Loo Pun Hong or Penang Carpenters' Guild.

The theme of the evening will be "Penang Days Past, Culture and Heritage" and guests are invited to dress in relevant costume if they wish but this is not mandatory. The dress generally will be Batik Shirt.

The Rasa Sayang have agreed to waive their corkage charge for the evening. They have also have generously agreed to sell champagne, beer and wine at vastly reduced prices.

The Malaysian Tatler magazine will officially cover the event and with this they have brought the support of their advertisers with donations of many exciting items.

*Come and join the fun
while supporting this worthy event!*

For tickets (RM100 each) and more information call:

Tan Teong Kooi, Tel: 04 - 226 1358

Mary Slattery, Tel: 04 - 899 9950

Lee Laine, Tel: 04 - 890 1451

**Friends of Penang Hill
Public Forum**

**‘THE
PENANG HILL
LOCAL PLAN’**

***Come Find Out What
It's About***

**VENUE: AUDITORIUM,
KOLEJ DAMANSARA UTAMA
(KDU), ESPLANADE, PENANG**

DATE : SATURDAY, 22ND MARCH 1997

TIME : 8.00 PM - 10.00 PM

**For Enquiries Contact: FRIENDS OF PENANG HILL
c/o Consumers Association of Penang
228, Macalister Road
10400 Penang
Tel: 2293511**

Stirring up interest in the hill

TAN Sr Dr Koh Tsu Koon arrived at City Hall for the launching of the Penang Hill draft plan in a wheelchair, with a crutch proping up his injured left foot.

The venue was packed with government officials but attracted few from non-governmental organisations.

Friends of Penang Hill, comprising 12 NGOs with over 1,000 members, was represented by Consumers Association of Penang president S.M. Mohd Idris, legal adviser Meenakshi Raman and Malaysian Nature Society chairman Dr Dick Ho.

Despite being the first draft local plan to be exhibited by the Penang Municipal Council since the island structure plan was gazetted in 1987, the Penang Hill exhibition has not been pulling in the crowds.

A council official contrasted the situation with the 1990 public outcry over the RM500 million project proposed by Bukit Pinang Leisure Sdn Bhd.

Then, some 45,000 people had protested against the Bukit Pinang project which proposed an international recreation-and-holiday resort development, which included a water world, a Disneyland-type theme park, five-star hotel, 350 condominium units, shopping centre, cable car and summit acropolis.

The controversy hogged the news for over a year before it was finally scrapped. Since then, Friends of Penang Hill had become dormant until it was revived recently.

So, has public interest in Penang Hill waned? Has dust set-

The long-delayed Penang Hill draft local plan was released last Friday. At the exhibition to publicise the plan, however, the Chief Minister's bandaged foot appeared to draw more attention. LIM A LEE reports.

tled on the Bukit Pinang controversy?

Meenakshi, who is also spokesman for Friends of Penang Hill, does not think so. She said all the group's member organisations were "very interested" in the hill plan and would meet next week to discuss the development guidelines.

She added that the public should play a keener role. To mobilise the people, the group intends to hold a public forum this month so that more people will be aware of the plan and its implications.

A lecturer here felt that the council could play a bigger role in stirring up public interest.

"The people need more guidance and understanding, not only for the Penang Hill plan but the planning process in general. Apart from exhibiting the plan, the council planners and professional bodies can hold explanatory sessions to create more public awareness."

MNS vice-chairman Kanda Kumar said members needed more time to study the draft plan in detail.

He said MNS was not comfortable with the proposal to "upgrade" Jalan Bukit Bendera into a four-lane dual carriageway or the alignment for the proposed cable-car system because both projects would involve more hill clearing.

acteristics - in terms of its flora, topography and heritage.

Coming up with the local plan has been a long-drawn process.

After the Bukit Pinang project was scrapped, the state decided to draw up a master plan for Penang Hill in 1992. The plan was accepted in 1994, following which the council began work on the draft local plan.

In the last six years - while the local plan was being drawn up - a new problem beset Penang Hill, threatening its catchment areas, causing flooding downstream as well as erosion.

Illegal clearings, largely blamed on hill farmers, have grown not only in size but in number.

The problem is noted in the draft local plan which identified 277.8ha of cleared land and forest area that needed rehabilitation as farming activities had exposed bare soil to the rain, causing serious soil erosion.

The plan noted that most farming and terracing at privately-owned land contravened the Land Conservation Act 1960 which prohibited farming on such steep slopes.

The MNS wants the state to investigate the massive clearing, Kanda described illegal hill farming as rampant and urged the state to penalise the culprits. "Unless the problem of illegal clearing is checked, efforts to promote the hill as an eco-tourism spot may be jeopardised."

With the release of the plan, the state government has announced that it is drawing up a strategy to tackle the problem.

Dr Koh has warned that action

would be taken and that the police would be roped in to help. Replanting measures would also be taken to rehabilitate cleared areas.

To oversee the hill and monitor its development, the state government has decided to adopt a multi-agency approach instead of forming a hill authority.

The draft plan has identified several agencies to handle surveillance and enforcement, including the district office, the council, the Forestry Department, the Penang Water Authority and the Penang Development Corporation.

But how will enforcement be co-ordinated?

"When too many departments are involved, it usually becomes a case of passing the buck," lamented a municipal councillor.

The draft plan also proposes that Penang Hill, with its old world charm, be promoted as an extension of the "historic city" development theme of George Town. Many interesting places and buildings date back to the 18th century.

For those who wish to know more about the Penang Hill development guidelines, the exhibition will be on until March 27.

The public is invited to submit their views and, if necessary, a one-month extension will be given according to the amended Town and Country Planning Act.

Penangites have always been protective of their hill. It is hoped complacency will not lull them into missing out on this opportunity to be part of the planning process for the hill's development.