

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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We're sorry but you've grown too young for us ...

‘WHILE THE NGOs MAY propose what to do with our heritage it's for the planners to dispose,’ averred a member of the PHT. Though that is no big news it is nonetheless eloquent enough a remark to serve us here as an opening sentence.

This month, for what it's worth, we propose to take a little look at the big problem of Tourism and Conservation, or rather how the aspirations of the one may affect those of the other.

Tourism is big business and few cities would disdain to pick up the tourist dollar, and if our planners have now dedicated themselves to turning our heritage, some would say our memory and others our identity and still others our soul, into something called a ‘tourism product’, that is only to be expected.

But tourism has shown itself the world over to be the enemy of the past, an essentially destructive Act of God. The Australians, for example, complain that their new round-the-continent highway has now exposed their archeologically important Aboriginal sites to hordes of sightseers. The French have had to close the Lascaux caves to the public because the caves’ rock paintings have been badly affected by the breath of thousands of visitors. And the National Trust of England, in an effort to make their more popular properties less popular, have begun to put such tourist ‘facilities’

as the carpark and the lavatory an inconvenient distance away.

Lord Duncan Sandys, the first President of Europa Nostra, was moved to declare: ‘Those who are organizing and planning tourism must be careful to ensure that the tourists do not destroy what the tourists come to see.’ Our well-travelled, well-informed planners must be well aware of the serious threat tourism will pose to our own heritage sites, but are they ready to deal with the threat with any seriousness?

The answer is to be found in the development plan for Penang Hill published as recently as last year. The plan professes an intention to protect the irreplaceable heritage of this the last of the island’s rainforests, but it also calls for the building of a sophisticated cable-car system capable of making it possible for some ten thousand people a day to have access to that heritage. What are we to make of this? Said a concerned Penangite: ‘It’s only a matter of time before the need to enhance our vital tourism industry is called in aid to justify developing the catchment area into a water theme-park. We’ll be told it’s progress our hills alive with swimming pools, boutiques and bistros, the sound of karaoke music and hotels of course, though these are likely to put our PHT friends up there in danger of being invited to the longest hill buffet to acquire a taste for the longest tourist *teh tarik*. The plan is nothing if not a deliberate attempt to exploit the hill by stealth.’

UNESCO has come to offer us the great opportunity to become a World Heritage City. Our being hsted as one will no doubt give our second-only-to-manufacturing

tourism industry a further boost. But getting ourselves listed is one thing; making sure that we remain listed is quite another thing.

We would do well to bear in mind that the UN World Heritage Committee can always come along five or ten years later and say: we’re sorry but we can no longer count you as a World Heritage City and this is because you are not what you were when we inscribed you on our list. You have now grown much too young for us. We’ll come back to have another look at you, say, in the year 3030. We’ll have to see if all this tourism-inspired infrastructure and environment you have created, your heritage of the future, is still there at that time, and if it is we might put you on our list again.

TTK

Invitation

Alex Koenig's Mid-life Crisis Birthday Bash

**Sunday 22 March
10.00 am – 10.00 pm
120 Armenian Street**

Former MPPP town planning officer, now PHT unofficial consultant Alex Koenig is inviting all those who know him, however slightly, to his marathon birthday party. Breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner will be served – perhaps midnight supper as well, but that will depend on how he feels on the stroke of that fateful hour when he will not see 50 again.

Call Alex, tel: 227 9453

TALK & SLIDE SHOW

Management of Heritage Areas in Penang

a talk on heritage building inventory and guidelines
by *Lim Hooi Siang*

Friday 20 March

8.00 pm

**Syed Alatas Mansion,
128 Armenian Street.**

Lim Hooi Siang, a former town planning officer of the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) was largely responsible for initiating the conservation strategies and guidelines for the inner city of George Town. He is presently preparing the inventory of heritage buildings and drafting the guidelines for conservation areas in Penang.

Mr Lim was instrumental in organizing the first international conference on urban conservation and planning in Penang, a collaboration between the MPPP and the Malaysian Architects Association (Northern Chapter).

During his tenure at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) Nagoya as UN Researcher from 1989-1991 he conducted research on urban development as well as organized training workshops and seminars in several Southeast Asian countries including Penang. He also initiated the founding of the Asia West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation (AWPNUC).

Mr Lim has presented papers at many international conferences. He was awarded *The Outstanding Young Persons Award* by the Osaka Junior Chamber Inc in 1992.

He left Penang at the height of the building boom in 1993 to lecture at the University of Brunei Darussalam. He returned in 1997 to serve in the Heritage Unit, convinced that much of Penang's heritage could still be saved.

Light refreshments will be served.

SEMINAR

Current Library Developments

Saturday 14 March

8.30 am – 1.00 pm

Auditorium A

Level 5 Komtar

The seminar will discuss current education and community service policies in Penang, the changing role of libraries in Europe, Australia, and America, and the adaptive reuse of buildings.

Admission free

SYMPOSIUM

Heritage and Habitat

**The Context of
Sustainable Development
in Historic City Centres**

6 – 8 April 1998

Cititel, Penang Road

The intent of this round-table symposium, organized by the Technical University of Darmstadt, is to get a better understanding of today's planning needs, of methods, phasing and priorities in this complex field, ranging from conservation to renewal.

In their presentation the Darmstadt group will focus on four case-studies – Penang, Singapore, Yogyakarta and Hanoi. (*Admission to this part of the programme is free*)

Panels:

- 1 Public and Private Sectors –
Conflicting Approaches?
- 2 Values and Urban Identity
- 3 Housing and Working in Inner-city Areas
- 4 Critique of 'The City', Urban Visions

Registration fee:

US\$100 (foreign participants)

RM 200 (Penang/local participants)

*For further details please contact the
symposium coordinator **Lim Hooi Siang**,
tel: 261 0934 • fax: 261 0976*

CM: City plan basis of heritage policy

By K. SUTHAKAR

PENANG: The George Town inner city local plan will form the basis of the state's heritage policy, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said.

He said the plan, which is being drawn up by the Penang Municipal Council, could take into account the views of landowners, developers and non-governmental organisations.

"We hope the policy will be acceptable to all as the people concerned can see the benefits and their role in heritage conservation," he told reporters yesterday after address-

ing the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) senior officials meeting at the Hotel Equatorial Penang.

Four hundred delegates are meeting for two days to lay the groundwork for the Kuala Lumpur Summit in November. Also present were observers from Vietnam, Russia and Peru which will be admitted as Apec members in November.

The state government was open to ideas on the heritage policy, Dr Koh said when commenting on a statement by a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation expert that

Malaysia was a "blank spot" on the world heritage map in Asia.

Unesco regional adviser for culture in Asia and the Pacific Richard A. Engelhardt had on Feb 8 said Penang has many heritage sites which could be nominated for inscription in the World Heritage List.

Dr Koh said Unesco with the state's co-operation would hold a seminar-cum-workshop after July on the economic aspects of heritage conservation.

He said the seminar would enlighten landowners and developers on the "tremendous" economic

potential of heritage buildings.

"Some of these people are unaware of the benefits," he said, adding the seminar would dispel apprehension among them on heritage matters.

In his speech earlier, Dr Koh spoke on the success story of Penang's smart partnership between the government and the private sector.

He cited the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) as an example on the co-operation between both parties to train skilled manpower to meet the needs of the factories.

Unesco hopes to promote heritage education

PENANG: Unesco is seeking the Education Ministry's approval to introduce its world heritage education resource kit in schools here to promote heritage conservation.

Unesco regional adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific Richard A. Engelhardt said yesterday it is part of Unesco's effort to build consciousness among the people and a grassroot movement for cultural conservation.

"Over the past year, Unesco has been developing an elaborate teachers' heritage education resource kit, which can be used in non-formal education situations, primary and secondary schools.

"I will talk to officials at the federal level about this," he told a press conference.

Engelhardt said the kit could be translated into the country's national language if the ministry decided to incorporate it in the schools' curriculum.

"We provide assistance to produce national language versions of the kits around the world for school systems, which want to use them," he added.

The kit, scheduled to be produced by June in six Unesco official languages — English, French, Russian, Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish — will be distributed to Unesco's education network.

Call to develop 'theme walks'

By ANG SU CHING

PENANG: Theme walks which tell different stories of the country's multi-ethnic society, should be developed by the state tourism authorities to relate Penang's history.

Unesco regional adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific Richard A. Engelhardt said yesterday the focus should be

on linking the city's landmarks together to form thematic walks.

"The concentration should not be on conserving this building or that but to link them together in different thematic walks to tell different stories of Penang's past.

"For example, the stories can be of different cultural communities or of a single man who immigrated here and what kind

of life he had led," he told a press conference.

Engelhardt also said financial assistance, especially for technical support and education programmes, would be available from the Unesco World Heritage Fund if George Town is listed on the World Heritage Map.

He said the Unesco World Heritage Fund was to offer technical assistance, educational activi-

ties and for emergencies.

"However, there is never enough for conservation. Resources to conserve the city's historical landmarks will have to be sourced from within the community," he added.

Engelhardt noted that heritage conservation was a common responsibility for all, adding that cultural diversity was important to ensure economic competition.

Hotel's longest teh tarik set for Book of Records

By DERRICK VINESH

PENANG: Penang Mutiara Beach Resort set another record when it made the longest teh tarik yesterday.

Some 150 litres of tea were poured from the hotel's eighth floor to its Eastside Garden grounds 28.2m below.

Executive chef Dieter Geiger and four colleagues poured the buckets of tea through a 2m PVC pipe while four kitchen employees, in

raincoats and straw hats, collected the hot beverage as it gushed down.

The process was repeated four times as it would to make a glass of teh tarik. The tea was finally ready in 45 minutes, but only 40 litres made it to the guests and the witnesses at the event.

Food and beverage director Andrew Hickey said 2.3kg of tea powder and 39.7 litres of milk went into the making of

the tea.

This is Penang Mutiara's fifth entry to the Malaysia Book of Records. The others were the longest Christmas cracker (8.1m); the longest apple strudel (52.8m); biggest Easter Egg; and the largest birthday bash involving 188 people who were born on Sept 16.

The book's corporate affairs manager Irene Liong said such fetes would promote Malaysian culture to tourists.

WH listing only if Penang meets tests

By TUNKU SHAHARIAH

PENANG: The World Heritage (WH) Committee, a body which decides if Penang can become a world heritage site, will seek periodic reports on the state's conservation of her sites before it can be listed on the World Heritage List (WHL).

Unesco regional advisor for culture in Asia and the Pacific, Richard A. Engelhardt, said for Penang to be listed, it must meet both the authenticity and integrity test, and the appropriate and adequate management test.

He said to meet the authenticity test, a site must contain, maintain and preserve its original design, material, workmanship, setting and distinctive character.

To meet the test of appropriation and adequate management, it must have adequate legal an-



Engelhardt ... every world heritage site should have a proper management plan

d/or contractual and/or traditional protection to ensure the conservation of the property in perpetuity.

Engelhardt, who heads the Unesco Regional Unit For Social and Human Science in Asia and the Pacific, was presenting a paper on *Can Penang Be-*

come A World Heritage Site, The Role of Public-Private Partnerships In The Conservation Of A Living Historic Town at Komtar on Monday.

He also said every WH site should have a proper management plan which controls development in the core (protected) area and surrounding area.

"The plan should spell out the relationship between the protected area and the surrounding area," he said, adding that the plan should also address four elements — resource management and protection, human use and tourism, research and monitoring, and administration.

Also present at the talk were state executive councillor Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen, Penang Heritage Trust vice-chairman Dr Choong Sim Poey and Penang Heritage Centre chairman Datuk Tengku Idaura Ibrahim.

Focus heritage conservation on human and culture

PENANG: The state should start its heritage conservation programmes by focusing on human and cultural aspects, Unesco regional advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific Richard A. Engelhardt said.

Engelhardt said the outstanding story Penang has to tell was the interaction and fusion of all the cultural communities here and the mosaic of different cultures which have made Malaysia what she is today.

He said that he is interested to see how the cultural interaction was manifested.

"Although there is a large bank of exceptional and beautiful buildings in George Town worth preserving, this architecture was only the frame for human cultural activity," he said in an interview after visiting the Masjid Kapitan Keling and Chew Jetty and talking to several community members on Sunday.

Engelhardt is on five-day visit to Penang on invitation of the state government to study how the state can apply for George Town to be listed on the Unesco (United Na-

tions Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) world heritage map.

Engelhardt said Unesco has been trying to identify historical vernacular architecture in Asia to be recognised as heritage.

"We are looking at new ways of preserving heritage while people are living in it and using it. In the past, heritage used to be preserved like an archaeological park and people were kept out," he said.

On Penang's intention to be listed on Unesco's world heritage map, Engelhardt said the World Heritage Committee would look at the intrinsic value of the city's heritage, its authenticity, zoning and buildings laws, and community participation in keeping the area alive.

"We are concerned not only with preserving isolated buildings, but at how heritage conservation can play a role in future development," he said.

Malaysia joined the Unesco World Heritage Convention in 1988 but had not listed any sites on the map.

'Penang can make heritage list'

PENANG, Wed. — Malaysia can place Penang on the prestigious World Heritage List by the year 2000, if it can display Georgetown's historical "outstanding universal value", according to a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation expert.

Unesco regional advisor for culture in Asia and the Pacific, Richard A. Engelhardt yesterday said the organisation would also accord all assistance needed to help Penang meet the listing requirements stipulated by the World Heritage Committee.

"Unesco will provide whatever assistance it can to the Penang Government such as help in developing an integrated management plan to satisfy the needs of the committee, which will hopefully give the State an auspicious beginning to the new millennium," he said at a public lecture on "Can

Penang Become a World Heritage Site" at Komtar last night.

World Heritage sites are those with exceptional natural and/or cultural values. The international importance of these sites is recognised through their inscription on the World Heritage List, established by the World Heritage Convention.

The World Heritage Committee, comprising representatives of 21 nations, administers the Convention.

Malaysia became a State Party to the convention in 1988 and is one of over 150 countries which are signatories to the Convention.

"Every World Heritage site should be guided by a management plan that controls all development in the core areas as well as the surrounding buffer zone placed under the protection of the World Heritage Convention," said Engelhardt.

"The management plan should spell out the relationship between the protected area and the surrounding region," he added, saying the plan should address resource management and protection, human use (including tourism), research and monitoring and administration.

Engelhardt, who is based at Unesco's principal regional office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, is in Penang until tomorrow (Feb 12) to assist the State in identifying Georgetown's qualities as a suitable site on the World Heritage List.

The World Heritage List includes over 500 sites worldwide. These include the Pyramids of Egypt, the Grand Canyon of the United States, the Taj Mahal of India, Westminster Abbey in England and the Great Wall of China.

"The criterion of outstanding universal value which is of relevance to a historic town like Penang states that the property must exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world," Engelhardt said.

"The developments could also exhibit the interchange on developments in architecture, technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design."

In seeking listing on the World Heritage List, Engelhardt stressed "the importance for Penang to tell its story and how this story affects everyone in the world."

Penang's pre-war premises which total over 12,000 constitute the country's largest pool of pre-war buildings.

Penang's heritage buildings up for sale

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: An ambitious RM60mil conservation project involving a historical enclave in George Town's central business district has been called off.

Instead, the 30 pre-war shophouses near Komtar, including Penang's oldest Chinese restaurant — the

Loke Thye Kee restaurant — have been put up for sale below market price.

The unique boat-shaped heritage restaurant building at No. 2 Burmah Road is priced at RM2mil, while 16 shophouses fronting Penang Road and 13 others in Khoo Sian Ewe Road are being sold at a reserved price of RM600,000 and

RM350,000 each respectively.

Among the buildings up for sale at Penang Road is the Wing Look Restaurant, the state's first Western-style restaurant run by a Chinese.

The double-storey buildings were to have been part of a pioneer conservation project by a local developer.

A notice on the sale of the buildings by a property consultant described them as "shops with heritage character."

A company spokesman said the shops were being offered at "below market price" as those along Penang Road were worth around RM800,000 while those at Khoo Sian Ewe Road were about

RM400,000 to RM500,000 each.

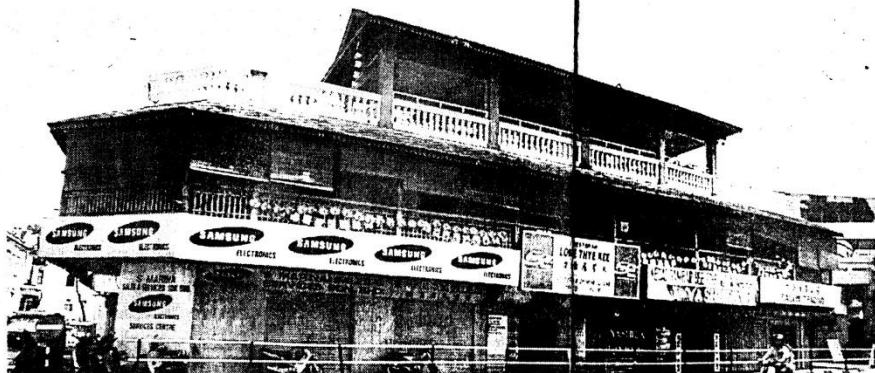
It was earlier reported that the developer had proposed to turn the top floor of the Penang Road houses into a heritage hotel while the ground floor would be converted into a heritage shopping centre.

The developer had also planned to conserve the Loke Thye Kee restaurant,

started in 1919 by two Hainanese brothers, to "retain the life and flavour of old Penang."

The Wing Look Restaurant was one of the favourite restaurants of Tunku Abdul Rahman.

It had served as a canteen for high-ranking Japanese navy officers during the Japanese Occupation.



GOING CHEAP... the 79-year old boat-shaped Loke Thye Kee restaurant now up for sale.

PHT: Zone area for heritage development

Move necessary to protect enclave

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: Conservationists, concerned over the fate of 30 pre-war buildings in a historical enclave at the city's central business district, have called for the area to be zoned for heritage development.

Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) secretary Khoo Salma Nasution said yesterday the move was necessary to protect the buildings, which include Penang's oldest Chinese restaurant — the boat-shaped Loke Thye Kee restaurant.

She was commenting on the proposed sale of the buildings at Penang Road, Burmah Road and Khoo Sian Ewe Road and the scrapping of a RM60mil conservation project in the area by a local developer.

Khoo urged the Penang Municipal Council to include the enclave bounded by the three roads and Phee Choon Road in its draft heritage development concept plan.

The area was not among the six inner city zones identified by the council last year for heritage development.

She said the zoning would ensure that other historical buildings in the enclave, including the 72-year old Majestic Theatre which was also reportedly up for sale, would be protected.

"The buildings, designed in the 1920s by one of Penang's first non-European architect, Chew Eng Eam, have historical and architectural significance and should be conserved," she said.

Khoo said the council should not allow high density development in the enclave as it was lo-

cated at a critical junction near Komtar where traffic was already very heavy.

"The area could instead be pedestrianised or semi-pedestrianised and turned into a traffic-calmed area with street-level shops.

"Hopefully, the new owners will conserve or carry out adaptive reuse of the existing buildings. The row of shophouses form a nice ensemble and can be upgraded into boutique shops."

The council's heritage consultant, Lim Hooi Siang, said the council was still studying areas other than the six zones for heritage conservation.

"The enclave has heritage potential and we will study the possibility of including it in our draft heritage development concept plan," he said.



Khoo... the council should not allow high density development in the enclave

Cinema sold, another to go

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: One of Penang's early cinemas has been sold in a multi-million ringgit deal while another "heritage" theatre is said to be now available in the market.

It is learnt that the sale of the Rex Cinema together with 28 pre-war houses fronting Burmah Road and Kinta Lane to a Kuala Lumpur developer for over RM20mil is now being finalised.

The landmark property in the hub of George Town's business precinct was put up for sale last April.

The pre-war building is, however, unlikely to be retained as a cinema although the new owner has expressed interest in restoring the unique art-deco structure and adapting it for other commercial usage.

Meanwhile, another theatre now available in the market is the 72-year

old Majestic Theatre at Jalan Khoo Sian Ewe which screened silent movies and held opera performances in the 1920s and 1930s.

It is learnt the cinema was recently offered for sale to a church here.

Also known as the Khoo Sian Ewe Theatre after the late tycoon who was its first owner, the theatre was sold to a local developer two years ago.

During World War Two, Japanese productions were screened in the 758-seat cinema.

The Rex and Majestic cinemas are among six remaining convention hall theatres on the island.

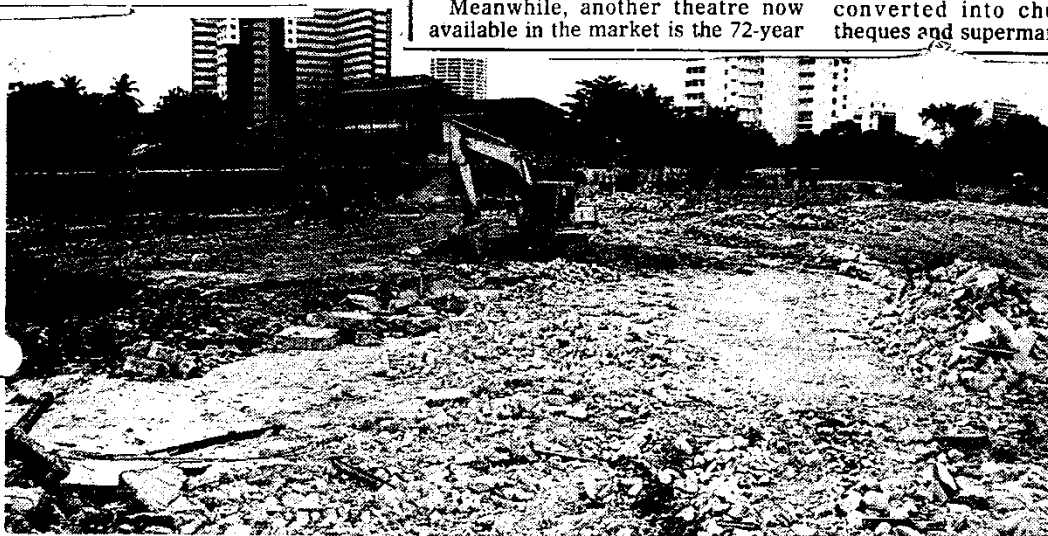
Since the first cinema was introduced in 1911, a total 18 such cinemas were built here.

Several cinemas have been demolished over the years to make way for development while others have been converted into churches, discotheques and supermarkets.



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ALL GONE ... The former amusement park in Swatow Lane being cleared

Former New World Park demolished

By ANG SU CHING

PENANG: The former New World Park — Penang's premier entertainment park from 1940s to 1960s — has been demolished to make way for commercial development.

The dilapidated building in Swatow Lane, left idle for over 20 years, was recently torn down. Excavators and lorries could be seen at the two-hectare site clearing the debris yesterday.

It is learnt the site has been earmarked for a high-rise project by owner, Malayan Sugar Manufacturing Co Bhd.

The Penang Municipal Council had last year approved the conceptual plan submitted by the firm two years ago.

A company spokesman said the project would not take off immediately in view of the softening of the market due to the current economic situation.

She added that details of the project were still under consideration and had not been finalised.

It is understood that the amusement park, which saw the likes of the late striptease queen Rosi Chan and 'Bad Boy of Wrestling' King Kong performing there, would be developed into an of-

fice-cum-commercial complex.

The property, formerly belonging to the Lim Lean Teng Foundation, was sold to Malayan Sugar Manufacturing in 1970.

During the park's heydays, it boasted of two theatres — Globe and Libo, cabaret, Cantonese and Teochew opera shows, restaurants, a merry-go-round, ferris wheel and dodge 'em cars.

Other celebrities, who reportedly performed at the park, included Tarzan Ahmad Ali, Felix Boy, Tiger Aman and Speedy Hassan.