

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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

Number 51

May 1998

Penang Heritage Centrust

THE general public are hardly to blame for confusing the Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Heritage Centre: the two organisations not only have the same two key words for their three-word names but also much the same objectives, programmes and activities.

The Trust, the NGO or non-governmental organisation, is now planning to move into the mid-19th century Syed Alatas Mansion on Armenian Street, a council building recently restored – to share an address with the Centre, the GO or government organisation.

'The activist and the official under the same roof – an experiment in strange bed-fellowship I imagine. But will this not add to the confusion? And will it not knock the stuffing out of the Trust? Or are we now aspiring to be a GO?' a PHT stalwart wanted to know. Explained a more senior member: 'This set-up is not as strange as it looks. After all, the Trust played no small part promoting the restoration of the Syed Alatas, and the formation of the Centre as well. I really don't see why we cannot install ourselves in the building The authorities have shown they're not unsympathetic to the idea of conservation. They've set up the State Heritage Committee headed by the Chief Minister himself and this committee is already in the process of drafting a comprehensive building policy for the inner city. Our job is to try and influence the shape of these drafts and policies by bringing forward

our proposals and recommendations. We cannot hope to do that effectively unless we're prepared to concentrate on working closely with the bureaucrats, even if that means doing their homework for them every now and again..... It's not an unhealthy relationship; it's what the CM himself would call a smart partnership.

Meanwhile, you are forgiven if you mistake the Trust for the Centre, or the Centre for the Trust, or, to save yourself all the trouble of trying to figure out who is who, you simply call their soon to be amalgamated selves Penang Heritage Centrust.

PHT Members Day Potluck

Sunday 17 May
5.00pm

Syed Alatas Mansion
128 Armenian Street

Call Priscilla, Tel. 226 1358

Take them for what they do, not what they say

DR Koh Tsu Koon, the Chief Minister and Chairman of both the Penang Development Corporation and the State Heritage Committee, seems to have made it a point to come out regularly and encourage the people of Penang to work towards achieving for their city a 'balanced development'. He has been quoted

in the press as saying: 'We are developing fast enough. We do not have to push it any faster at the expense of history, heritage and the human condition.' Very eloquent. But the state government, it appears, may have the discretion to ignore its own good advice and intentions. It may, for example, vandalise its own 80-year old Farquhar Street property to make way for a luxury hotel, and this without its having to get planning permission from the local council (see *Star* report). True, it has spared one of the ten buildings there and will have it renovated and modernised but, as a PHT member put it, 'this is an empty gesture, a bone thrown to history and heritage, indeed a case of the authorities making utter nonsense of their own plans for Penang to become a World Heritage City'.

Dr Koh is likely to find it much harder now to persuade the land-owners to abandon any plans they may have to squander their architectural inheritance. Said one of the developers: 'The government has given us a clear demonstration of what its balanced development programme is all about – save one and you may knock down the rest. That seems to me a sensible solution to the problem of building in the inner city. Give me one good reason why we should think or behave any differently.'

Dr Koh can certainly continue to try and convince the captains of the building industry that the past is not another country, or that it makes good economic sense to put the city's old shophouses to new uses, but they can now always point to the example of Farquhar Street and argue that you have to take the politicians for what they do, not what they say.

TTK

The Disneyfication of Penang Hill

DR TENG HOCK NAN, the President of the Penang Municipal Council, announced the official endorsement of the Penang Hill Draft Local Plan, which, he seemed proud to tell us, took 4 whole years to prepare. The cable-car project would go ahead as planned. The carrying capacity of the hill, however, would be scaled down from 10,000 to 8,000. But 8,000, as we all know, is still at least 4,000 tourists too many according to the World Tourism Organisation.

When the plan was first exhibited last year it caused howls of protest from the NGOs. Public forums were immediately organised and press statements issued to express outrage at various aspects of what many saw as an invitation to the Disneyfication of Penang Hill. The NGOs objected to the cable-car in particular, arguing that you could expect its owners and operators to say later that if their project were to have any chance of being commercially feasible the hill's carrying capacity must be revised upwards. A proposal the authorities would find themselves obliged to approve, because they simply could not allow such a high-profile scheme, one they had so enthusiastically supported, to fail. And this would lead to the flood of tourism-related facilities and activities swamping the catchment area soon growing to unmanageable proportions. The plan's rhetoric about protecting the environment was seen as just marketing flim-flam that the planners must have drafted for their own reading pleasure.

The public's case has obviously been judged to be largely without any real merit. But judged by whom? The *Star* said Dr Teng said the decision to retain the 'majority of the original proposals..... was based on the recommendations of the three-man hearing committee set up by the state government to hear the views of the public'. Who are they, these powerful nameless three? We can safely assume that one of them is Dr Teng himself, that energetic apostle of change and novelty now running the council. Could one of the other two be the same Dato' Kee, the State Executive Councillor for Culture, Arts, and Tourism and Chairman of the Botanic Gardens Management Committee, who has been appearing so often in the news-

papers to urge us to show more concern for the island's 'old-world charm' and places of natural beauty?

Said a veteran of the Save Penang Hill campaign: 'It can only make you suspect that the authorities are not the people of judgment we are told they are but simply an exalted short-sighted bungling lot who think that uglifying the hill is beautifying it. But they must be enjoying it all, this authority we've given them to tell us what's best for us, this power to inflict their grandiose schemes on our hills, valleys, and rivers. They should really go and clean up the filthy Sungei Pinang, and build a garden on its banks for us all hard-working people of Penang.'

By the time you read this, the news that the plan may be gazetted in June will have been several weeks old. The NGOs have so far not commented on it in the press. Have they all decided to shut up and suffer this millennium cable-car assault on the historic hill with resigned shrugs and philosophical mutterings?

New names for old

THE AUTHORITIES have gone back to playing their 'silly' game, long since forgotten or so we thought, of giving old streets new names (see Loh-Lim's letter).

A Pulau Tikus old-timer the PHT interviewed about the matter said: 'What are the great street naming jesters up to this time? We are to say and write Jalan Something when we think and mean Cantonment Road, are we? That's going to be a problem for me. At this age I can no longer perform this sort of mental gymnastics. The authorities should have greater respect for people's habits, particularly those habits of mind they have developed over a long period..... This rewriting of our history is surely a subject about which it is worth marching through the streets with flags and banners, even if you're still not familiar with the council's new one-way traffic system. So is the Waterfall Gardens a subject to march about, not to mention Penang Hill.....'

A blessing in disguise

THE ADMINISTRATORS and statisticians are saying that the fall of the ringgit against the major currencies is good for our tourism industry. In other words a blessing in disguise

they are saying at the coffeeshops. And what a disguise; the struggling ringgit may have brought about an unprecedented increase in the number of strangers visiting Penang, but it has certainly obliged a great many Penangites to spend their holidays in their own backyard.

Get ready to be seen

THE FOREIGN ORGANISERS AND planners of tourism are complaining that Penang, the island we dare call Pearl of the Orient, is simply too dirty a place by international standards to be regarded as a choice visitor attraction. That must explain why the hoteliers and other barons of our hospitality business have now come to think it their duty to lecture us about keeping our island clean. But the truth is that the Pearl, though it might have lost much of its lustre in recent years, still attracts more visitors than all the other states combined. And since the authorities might one day see fit to use some of this huge revenue from tourism to restore Suffolk House, we thought we might do our bit to support Visit Penang Year 1999 by writing a rhyming jingle for it for free:

*Keep Penang clean
Keep Penang clean
Get ready to be seen
The tourist and the traveller
are here with their pretty dollar
Thousands more are coming
the planners are chanting
Keep Penang clean
Keep Penang clean
Get ready to be seen
Let the good Seawitch fight
the sad Ferringhi blight
Let no one say it's a racket
the Pearl of the Orient ticket
Keep Penang clean
Keep Penang clean
Get ready to be seen*

A member of the public, clearly fed up with all this attention being lavished on foreigners, said: 'How about keeping Penang clean for Penangites for a change?' There seems to be only one way to do that and that is to organise a Visit Penang Year every year.

TTK

New role for building

By SIRA HABIBU

THE Penang Library Corporation wants to convert the dilapidated former Maternity Hospital in Macalister Road into a public library for the north-east district.

The corporation's chairman Dr Toh Kin Woon said that resorting to adaptive reuse of old buildings was part of the corporation's strategy in setting up more district libraries.

Dr Toh said if the proposal was approved by the Penang Municipal

Council, trustee of the premises, the 'heritage' library would be a model for other district libraries.

The federal government was ready to inject RM2.5mil for the proposed district library pending the council's written approval, Dr Toh said.

"If the cost is more than the allocation, we will get the state government to come up with the balance," he said.

A book city can also be set up at the lawn to sell good new and second-hand books," said Dr Toh who is also the State Education, Economic Planning and Information Committee chairman.

The roadside book sellers along

Macalister Road which had since been relocated to Chowrasta market may be called to trade at the lawn.

Dr Toh said the buildings would soon be vacant as the non-governmental organisations housed there, such as the Women Crisis Centre and Red Crescent Society, would be moving to the Caring Society Complex.

"The two adjacent buildings which take up an area of 3,252sq metres, belong to the people of Penang.

"So the people should show their support if they want the place to be turned into a library complete with Information Technology facilities," he said.



Dr Toh ... federal government ready to allocate RM2.5mil for the library.

Centre to hold flea market on Sundays

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Pusat Warisan Pulau Pinang will organise a flea market every Sunday to help people generate income from craft and other materials of artistic interest.

Its chairman Tengku Datuk Idaura Tengku Ibrahim said with a nominal contribution of RM3, people could utilise the centre's premises in Armenian Street to sell craft, ceramic wares, brass-ware, copperwares, post cards, paintings as well as old mirrors, books and pictures.

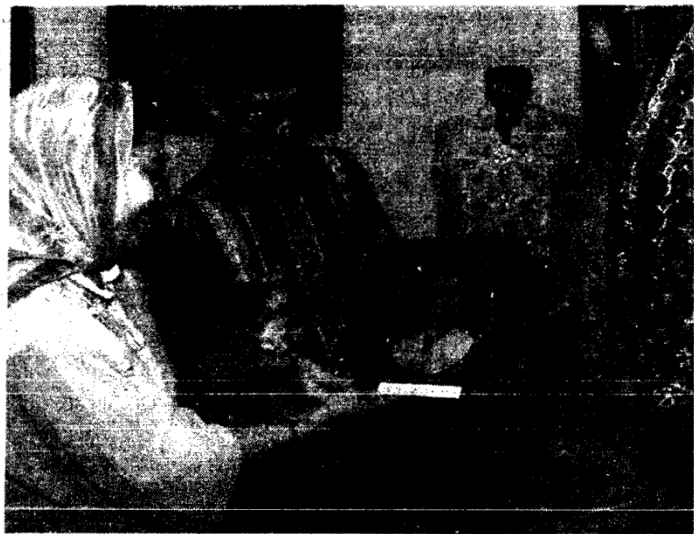
She said the flea market would be opened from 8am to noon every Sunday from next month.

She said this when opening Raymond Kwok's embroidery exhibition entitled *Treasures of Old, Threads of Gold*.

She said people who had craft collections handed down from generation to generation and "who do not know what to do with them may take them over to the centre and sell them to others who appreciate them better."

"It need not be strictly an antique collection. Here, people can sell anything that is of artistic interest," she said, adding those interested in selling their crafts should bring their own tables or mats.

Idaura added that the centre would also open a vegetarian res-



EMBROIDERY EXHIBITION ... Kwok, who is also an antique collector, showing Idaura his Nyonya mother's portrait and intricate kebaya designs.

taurant on May 1.

On the more than 40 embroidery works exhibited at the centre, she said the assortment of embroidery from the *peranakan* cultures indicated strong evidence of cross culture, particularly in the old Straits Settlement.

The exhibition, which showcases exquisite and elegant Chinese, Malay and Nyonya embroidery works, is open to the public during office hours until April

30.

Meanwhile, New Zealand architect Julie Stout, who was visiting the centre, said she was pleased that old buildings in George Town would not be torn down to give way to modern development.

"In George Town, even tourists can feel like they are part of the community because we get to interact with the people who are working and living in the same place," she said.

Make George Town a 'world-class city'

PENANG: The government should strive to establish George Town as a world-class city instead of emphasising solely on becoming a world heritage city, an international seminar was told yesterday.

AR & T Heritage Consultancy Sdn Bhd manager-cum-urban planner Lim Hooi Siang said conserving the city's heritage was part of the overall world-class city concept.

"However, there is more to a world-class

city. There should be an efficient public transport system, good urban planning as well as a mixture of commercial and residential use of buildings to ensure the city stays vibrant and alive.

"There should also be quality living environment and sufficient green landscaped areas. George Town is lacking in all these areas," he said after presenting a paper on *Public and Private Sectors: Convergence and Divergence* at the International Symposium on Her-

itage and Habitat.

More than 40 participants from around the world are attending the three-day symposium organised by Darmstadt University of Technology.

Twenty-one papers will be presented on the theme *The Context of Sustainable Development in Historic City Centre*.

Lim stressed on the importance of efficient urban management of public facilities, including the proper management of roads and drains.

"We are behind in our

planning. In a private sector-led economy, there is a danger of ad hoc development which lacks focus and vision.

"Here, we should reinforce the role of government," he said, adding that non-governmental organisations played a crucial role in representing the wider interest of the community.

Lim said many European cities had reached this status and Singapore was moving towards this direction.

Council must explain why pedestrian mall is useful

THE Penang Municipal Council will spend RM1.4mil of taxpayers' money to landscape a proposed pedestrian mall at the Campbell-Buckingham street areas as part of its beautification programme for George Town.

While the state government has been serious in promoting the heritage conservation policy for our city, it has (unfortunately) demonstrated its usual lack of professionalism in its implementation, time and again.

We know that all existing old buildings in the city are in dire need of modern facilities, amenities, and services for them to be properly renovated and conserved to become functional in this information age.

Therefore, if the Government is serious about its conservation policy, it must make sure that all basic modern infrastructural requirements - underground power supply cables; telecommunication lines; sewerage system; water service mains, etc -

are carefully planned for and thoroughly co-ordinated among the government authorities and agencies, and then installed so that the whole conservation programme can be carried out in an orderly and professional manner.

On the proposed pedestrian mall site, will the place be dug up and the new structures condemned to abandonment in a few years' time when new services are laid and future developments are carried out?

More importantly, one wonders whether the state government has drawn up a master plan to finalise and formulate all necessary underground services with Telekom, Tenaga, PBA, IWK and JKR.

My recent conversation with one senior officer in one of the authorities did not give me any comforting feeling.

He mentioned that much as he would like to plan for the future needs for the inner George Town

area, he does not have a set of consistent planning criteria with which to work on.

So the "logical" thing to do is to make necessary provisions on an ad hoc basis.

It will be interesting to find out the "state of things" in other authorities and agencies.

Therefore, we urge the Penang Government and the municipal council - in their endeavour to pursue this heritage conservation project - to hold themselves fully accountable to the taxpayers and to ensure that implementation is carried out in a professional manner, and not haphazardly!

As for the proposed pedestrian mall, the municipal council should convince us how it will benefit the public at a time of economic hardship like this.

T.H. LIM,
Penang.

Nine colonial buildings torn down for hotel

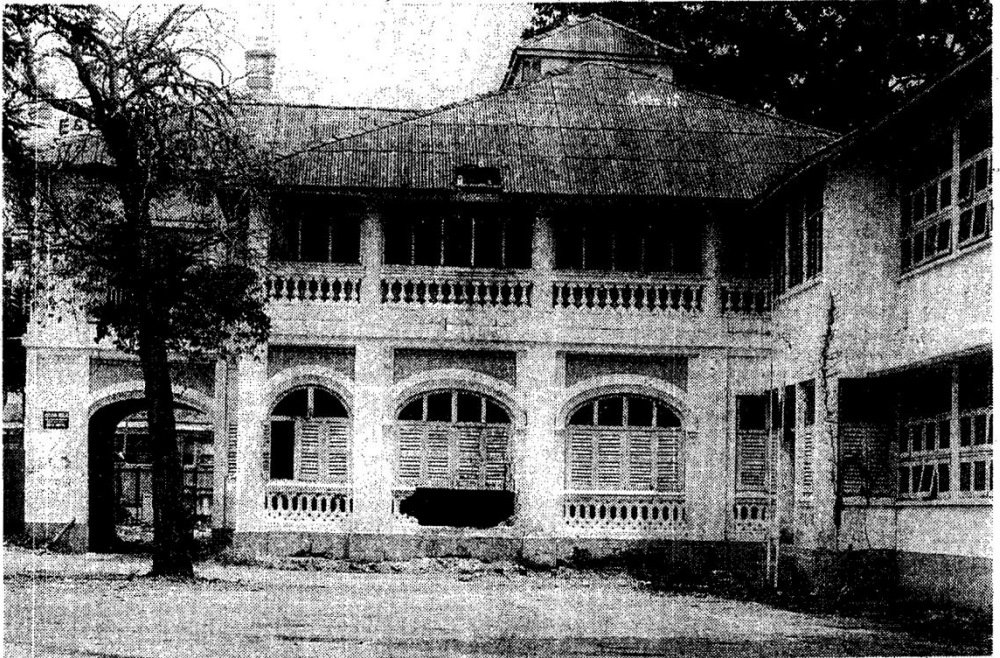
By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: Nine water-front colonial buildings near the historical E & O Hotel have been demolished to make way for a new hotel in the city.

Demolition of the buildings, which include the former Public Works Department (PWD) headquarters and terrace government quarters, took place last month but went largely unnoticed because of high zinc fence erected around the site in Farquhar Street.

It is learnt the area has been earmarked for the development of the Ritz Carlton Hotel under a joint-venture between the Penang Development Corporation and a private firm.

A check by *The Star* yesterday found the site bare except for an old bungalow which was formerly St George's Girls School and another dilapidated building near the sea.



TO BE RESTORED . . . the former St George's Girls School building will be preserved as the main building for the proposed new hotel.

THE STAR SATURDAY April 11, 1998

Amendments to plan accepted

By LIM AI LEE and
SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council has accepted several amendments to the draft: Penang Hill Local Plan and will gazette it soon.

Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan said yesterday the council had approved five amendments but retained the majority of original proposals

in the draft plan which would guide development on Penang Hill until the year 2005.

The decision, he said, was based on the recommendations of the three-man hearing committee set up by the state government to hear views from the public last August.

The council's development planning committee approved the amendments on March 6

and the decision was endorsed by the full council at its sitting last Friday.

The amendments include the revision of the hill carrying capacity from 10,000 visitors to 8,000 daily, Dr Teng said after chairing yesterday's full council meeting.

However, Dr Teng said the council had decided to stick to the original alignment for the proposed cable car sys-

tem. The proposed alignment would traverse a 1.2ha site within the Youth Park to the Penang Hill valley where the Public Works Department quarters are located.

Among those who gave their views on the draft plan were Friends of Penang Hill (FOPH), the Penang Ratepayers Association, the Penang Water Authority and the Penang Housing Developers As-

sociation.

Several groups had called for the carrying capacity to be revised, citing World Tourism Organisation's recommended density standards of between 3,000 and 4,000 visitors.

FOPH, which represents eight non-governmental organisations, had called for the proposed cable car system to be scrapped.

Koh orders probe into demolitions

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon has ordered investigations into the demolition of nine state-owned waterfront colonial buildings which has sparked a public outcry.

Penang Municipal Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan said yesterday the council would

make its findings public and announce the proper action to be taken.

He said Dr Koh had asked the council to conduct the probe "without fear of favour" even though it involved the Penang Development Corporation (PDC), the state government's development agency of which the chief minister was the board chairman.

"Dr Koh has also directed the PDC to conduct its own investigations and to submit a full report to him," he said in a statement.

Dr Teng was commenting on a report in *The Star* that the nine buildings beside the historical E&O Hotel bounded by Leith Street Ghaut and Farquhar Street were demolished last month to pave

the way for the Ritz Carlton Hotel, a joint venture between the PDC and the YTL Group.

Several public interest groups had questioned the state government's commitment in preserving the city's heritage following the demolition of the 80-year-old buildings.

Dr Teng said the council had started investigations into the demolitions.

THE STAR SATURDAY March 21 1998

1,000 sign petition against 'ugly' tiles

By JESSINTA TAN

PENANG: A *Save The Botanic Gardens* campaign has been launched, with over 1,000 people having signed a petition to oppose the laying of "ugly" interlocking tiles at the gardens.

Spokesman Pamela Ong said the petition bearing 1,009 signatures was despatched to Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon on Thursday.

The signatures collected in less than a week had among other things expressed protest over the "waste of public money and general unsuitability

of the alleged improvement".

Ong said the petition expressed regret to the announcement by Padang Kota assemblyman Teng Chang Yeow on March 8 that the repaving would continue despite public protests.

Teng said the management committee would select tiles with more "nature-oriented" colours to repave the gardens' upper road area.

The RM230,000 allocation by the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry to upgrade the pavements would be completed by year end.

Ong said: "We have urged the authorities to explain how such an important decision affecting a public place like the gardens was made in such a grossly insensitive manner.

"The management committee has indicated that it intends to brush aside all protests without attempting to justify its desecration of a park which is not only the pride of Penang, but also a Malaysian heritage."

She said complaint letters to *The Star* since January, one of them carried 61 signatures, had not received any response from

the committee.

"We thus feel obliged to appeal to the Chief Minister and custodian of our heritage to investigate the matter," she added.

The management committee, when contacted, said the laying of interlocking tiles was necessary to replace the old tarred road bearing potholes.

Ong said they were collecting more signatures from the public and would send another petition letter to Dr Koh if necessary.

Those with enquiries on the campaign can call Ong at 04-2268477.

Bigger Gardens in the pipeline

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: A total of 184ha of land surrounding the Penang Botanic Gardens will be gazetted by early next year.

State Culture, Art, Tourism and Women Development Committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen said yesterday the Gardens would then have a total build-up area of 213ha from the present 29ha.

Kee said this when refuting a claim made by the Save the Penang Botanic Gardens Ac-

tion Group on Friday that the state government was "dragging its feet" in gazetting the various parcels of land adjoining the Gardens.

She said issues on land matters belonging to the Penang Municipal Council and the Penang Water Authority had long been resolved but said the state was waiting for the Federal Government's reply over the 0.7ha plot leased to a private operator.

"Since the lease expires at year end, we are certain the

whole piece of land can be gazetted by early next year, depending on Federal Government's approval," she told a press conference.

She also refuted claims the state government failed to respond to a recent signature campaign to protest the laying of the multi-coloured pavement blocks in the garden.

"We agreed with the action group that there is a need to neutralise the colour of the tiles.

"We can either have it all black or all grey," added Kee.

She said the tiles were initially chosen by the Public Works Department.

"The management committee was not consulted on the colour of tiles to be used," she said.

Kee said the state had spent RM1.551mil since 1995 to improve the horticulture and a host of other facilities at the Gardens.

"The action group's allegation that the Gardens were

being neglected is therefore unfounded," she added.

However, Kee said, the management committee welcomed the group's constructive criticisms and urged the group to pin point the trees and plants it claimed to be sick and/or dying.

She also invited the action group to give the committee a list of its members who were interested in joining the seven sub-committees set up to look into the various aspects of the Gardens management.



Kee... 'we are certain the whole piece of land can be gazetted by early next year'

Don't rename roads abound with history

IT WAS announced recently that Cantonment Road was to be renamed.

We, the public, have been under the erroneous impression that the silly exercise of changing street names was, in fact, a thing of the past.

After 41 years of Merdeka, surely we no longer need to engage in these acts of assurance that we are truly free of our colonial past.

History cannot be changed to suit our present. The colonial era did happen.

We can learn and be the stronger for it without denying its occurrence or erasing its manifestations.

We are true Malaysians, all the stronger for having had a rich history.

Yes, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British were all here.

So were the Armenians, the Achenese, the Burmese, the Persians, the Arabs, the South Chinese, the Gujeratis, the Malabaris, and others too many to name.

Penang was a centre of the spice trade and one of the great bazaars of the East.

The richness of our past is reflected in the street names that abound

in our historic city such as Kampung Malabar, Armenian Street, Acheen Street, China Street, Malay Street, and Chulia Street (in direct reference to Tamil Muslims).

Many street names reflect significant activities or features of the area in the past.

To name a few examples: Cannon Square (to commemorate damage caused by a cannon in 1867); Dhoby Ghaut (where clothes were washed, a 'ghaut' means steps leading down to the water); Brick Kiln Road (where there were major kilns manufacturing bricks); Ayer Itam (originally Hitam); Batu Gantung (the hanging rock - site of the Hokkien cemeteries); Rope Walk (where rope was woven in the past); and Kelawei Road (from Kuala Awal, the first estuary).

Naming streets to honour individuals was something significant. New roads were named after esteemed citizens who had contributed to the development of the community and settlement.

The list is endless - from Light Street and Gurney Drive to Che Em Lane (Cheah Eam, fo-

under of Cheah Kongs) and Ah Quee Street (Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee).

Others are: Aboo Siti Lane (the founder of Bangsawan); Phuah Hin Leong Road to Soo Hong Lane (named after Khoo Soo Hong, one of the founders of the Khoo Kongs); and Logan Road (after lawyer James Richardson Logan, champion of the non-European communities).

Cities throughout the world - citing two examples here - Singapore and Honolulu take such pride in the historical names of their city streets that they sponsor publications highlighting the background and significance behind these names.

They also take great pains to retain these names.

The term 'cantonment' refers to a military compound.

This was directly significant in the whole zone, being connected to Sepoy Lines, Barrack Road, the Military Hospital (site of the Penang Sports Club), and Polo Grounds or otherwise known as Parade Grounds.

Given the much publicised promises of the politicians to be transpar-

ent, it truly confuses the ordinary citizens when such a significant change affecting hundreds of households and offices and thousands of citizens is only announced after a decision has been made.

The decision to change Scott Road to Jalan Ramanathan was highly unpopular but, nevertheless, it was rammed down the throats of the residents despite protests, appeals, spray painting of new road signs and letters.

While history may show up Scott as somewhat of an operator, still, he was most definitely a founding father, having come together with Francis Light and having certainly shaped our city in fundamental ways.

The changing of Brick Kiln Road to Jalan Gudawarajar has resulted in the loss of significant historical information for future generations.

Stationery, calling cards, plaques, and countless other personal items need to be altered. We cannot afford to enter into this kind of expenditure.

LOH-LIM
Penang.

Stop wrecking Penang's historical charm

HOW can we find a place in the World Heritage Map when our heritage buildings are being destroyed by the very people who are suppose to protect it?

Who needs another hotel? Who are we trying to attract - the tourists? After we have destroyed everything Penang has, what have the tourists to look forward to in Penang - highrises, theme parks and ugly shopping complexes.

It is amazing to know that even our chief minister who is the board chairman of the so-called state development agency is unaware of this destruction.

Is there any point in ordering an investigation by the chief minister and the council president? Isn't it a bit too late for this?

Maybe the culprits will be asked to reconstruct the nine state-owned colonial buildings all over again, as in the case of Metropole

Hotel.

It is a joke how one gets away with such destruction. How committed is the state to preserving the city's heritage? It is more like the Malay saying *Bagi Pagar Makan Padi*. One puts up a fence to protect the rice fields but the fence destroys the rice fields instead.

All these efforts to promote Penang seemed to be worthless.

As a Penang resident for 19 years and having worked in tourism and been exposed to complaints from tourists about the destruction, I am disgusted to see how this beautiful, historical, heritage city is being destroyed.

Each time I meet tourists or expatriates, the common complaints are:-

● IT'S sad to see Penang being destroyed and some go to Penang every year

for the so-called charm it has;

● MORE highrise buildings sprouting up and they did not travel all the way just to see a concrete jungle.

● THE apparent lack of government action to stem the tide of destruction and its lack of recognition of Penang's heritage potential.

The council should wake up and look around. We have enough of shopping complexes, flats and apartments. We are already sinking in the glut.

The council should not allow high-density development in the inner city of George Town at all.

George Town, with its cultural and historical significance, should be given special consideration for preservation.

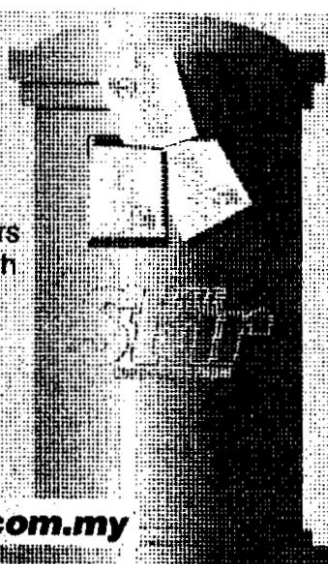
**TPC PENANG,
Penang**

Letters

Letters to the Editor must carry the sender's full name, address, telephone number and signature. A pseudonym may be included. Letters should preferably be typewritten with double spacing, and may be edited for clarity, objectivity, brevity and other requirements.

Letters to the Editor,
The Star, No.13, Jalan 13/6,
46200 Petaling Jaya.

e-mail: editor@thestar.com.my



FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 1998

Doing away with old road names hits at heritage

PENANG can no longer depend on its beaches and hawker food to woo tourists. Plans are afoot in making this former Straits Settlement island a heritage destination instead.

This latest development in local tourism has been unanimously accepted by no less than four major bodies in the tourist industry — the Penang International Hoteliers' Association, the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents Penang Chapter, the State Tourism Committee and the Northern Region Tourism Promotion Board.

When we speak of heritage, we think of conservation, keeping things as they are, preserving and not changing.

I refer to the change of road names, especially those which bear the names of persons long gone. A number of roads in Penang have been given new names and more may be in the offing.

In the light of the present circumstances, serious consideration should be taken before the next change.

Personalities after whom roads are named have contributed their services toward the development and progress of this State.

They have, as it were, left their mark behind for posterity. Does it really matter if they were British as in Northam, or German as in Gottlieb?

Western names on road signs are an indication of the country's link with the past and this is a point of interest to tourists.

If, for the sake of nationalism, a new name must be given to a road, the words "*Formerly known as...*" should be given below.

This would facilitate letters with old addresses reaching their destinations and, more importantly, enable tourists to find their way round.

Many of our tourists are no strangers to Penang.

Many have resided here before and are making sentimental trips back in droves to see the old place again. Former residents, their sons, daughters and even their grandchildren have in recent years been visiting Penang.

There is enough interest generated and attractions to draw them here.

When local tourist companies start operating their heritage packages, this is one category of visitors they can expect to see.

M. Lim
Penang