



PHT newsletter

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**PENANG
HERITAGE
TRUST**

*Persatuan
Warisan
Pulau
Pinang*

PHT

E D I T O R I A L

Greetings!

The Penang Heritage Trust has been in the limelight several times since the beginning of year 2001.

Laurence Loh and Loh-Lim Lin Lee welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Abdullah Badawi and UNESCO Regional Cultural Advisor for Asia & The Pacific Dr. Richard Engelhardt, who officiated the UNESCO Awards ceremony at the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion on 6 January. Restoration of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia has been selected as the "Most Excellent Project" from among the entries in the inaugural UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 2000 Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation. The next day, the Penang Chief Minister Dr. Koh Tsu Koon launched the completion of the pilot phase of the Loo Pun Hong restoration, a project for which Laurence and Loh-Lim had given substantial support.

Then on 4 February, the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed visited the Penang Heritage Trust station set up at 120 Armenian Street as part of the Chinese New Year Open House celebrations, where a new exhibition on Dr. Sun Yat Sen in Penang had been put up just in time by Khoo Salma with the help of Lim Gaik Siang. On 17 February, the Canadian High Commissioner, Jean C. McGloskey visited the Penang Heritage Trust office, and launched the project 'Heritage Community Revitalization through Women and Youth' which is supported by a grant from the Canadian High Commission.

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EXCLUSIVE GUIDED HERITAGE SITE VISITS



Site Visit #13

SUNDAY, 25 March 2001, 3.30 P.M.

**The Francis Light Protestant
Historic Cemetery**

This is the historic resting place of many of the island's earliest settlers, such as Francis Light, the early governors, Reverend Hutchings, founder of the Penang Free School and Thomas Leonowens, the husband of Anna of 'King & I' fame.

Early loss and untimely loss of their loved ones was the price many pioneer settlers had to pay. Unsanitary conditions and tropical illnesses such as malaria and cholera claimed the lives of both the young and old, including innumerable infants and mothers who died at childbirth. Francis Light himself died of frustration, overwork and fever, and was buried there in 1794.

The Penang Heritage Trust restored the cemetery in 1993-94 by repairing the wall, restoring graves and reinking blurred inscriptions. The Trust also documented all

Frangipani trees create a shaded isle through the burial ground which is full of timeless forms such as broken columns, Greek urns, Roman sarcophagi and structures emulating the canopied tombs of Indian Rajahs. ▼

tombs and erected a large explanatory signboard and map at the entrance to the cemetery. Join us for a picnic tea among the frangipani arbours and restive tombs. ■

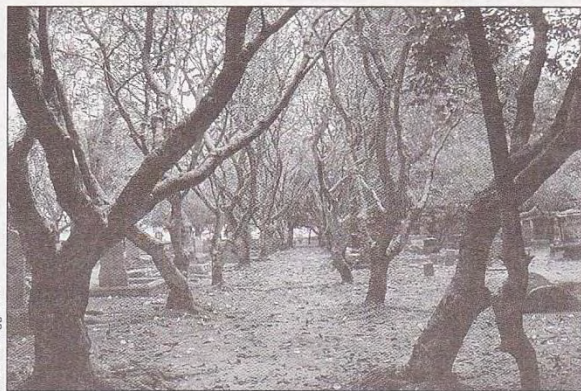


Photo: Gregg Curé

SITE VISIT REPORTS

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion (November 26, Site visit # 10)

Report by Woo Yee Saik



Khoo Cheang Jin

Ninety-two PHT members and guests showed up for this specially conducted tour of Penang's unique Cheong Fatt Tze mansion. In her own inimitable and lively style, our hostess and guide for the afternoon, Loh-Lim, took us round the grand Blue Mansion, and regaled us with witty anecdotes about

its former owner, the flamboyant tycoon Cheong Fatt Tze. The millionaire's stranger-than-fiction life story could compete with any best-selling novel. "It is a rags-to-riches saga," said Loh-Lim.

Although fond of Western concepts, Towkay Cheong Fatt Tze embraced the ancient principles of feng shui when building his home, which explains its slightly askew position in relation to the street. Loh-Lim says it was most important for a man of his stature to have the correct feng shui to ensure continued success. Geomancers worked out the proper alignment so that all wind and water flow lines were in close harmony with nature. Rainwater was brought into the house

through large pipes in the walls, and kept inside as long as possible before flowing out again. The front door still faces the sea and the building, with hills behind for protection, is on an incline, a position called "riding the dragon's back".

The feng shui alignments proved auspicious for the towkay who made ever more prosperous business deals in his elegant front hall, adorned with geometric floor tiles and art-nouveau stained-glass windows imported from England. While tea was served to business colleagues, wives number three, six and seven, plus several daughters, may have peeked at guests from behind a fantastic gold filigree screen, now restored to its former glory.

Four elderly carpenters, discovered in Penang, took over three years to repair by hand all the woodcarving on the timber beams and shutters. Skilled workers from China restored the fantastic Chien

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Khoo, Cheah & Tan Kongs (January 28, Site visit #11)

Report by Dr. Tan Chong Guan

Our January site visit took us to the Khoo, Cheah and Tan Kongs, all in close proximity in the inner city. Chinese New Year season notwithstanding, an enthusiastic crowd of over 70 showed up.

The visit started at Khoo Kongs with Khoo Salma giving a most interesting background on the history of the early Chinese settlement and their Kongs. Khoo Kongs is the most well known of all the kongs because of its magnificent architecture and intricate design. It is currently in the final phase of restoration work by a group of experts on heritage building conservation from India. We were very lucky to have the conservation team with us, besides giving explanations and answering questions, they also showed us photograph of beams, doors & walls before and after the cleaning work. Our heartfelt thanks to them



Photo: Gregg Curé

Listening attentively to Khoo Salma at Canon Square

for their time and we look forward to the fully-restored Khoo Kongs. Not forgetting Mai Loon, who gave a very detailed explanation on the meaning of the various painting and art work.

Two minutes away, tucked in a corner is Cheah Kongs. We were warmly greeted by a group of trustees who were obviously delighted to see so many of us visiting their Kongs. Khoo Salma again briefed us on the historical background of the kongs, while some mem-

bers and press were busy clicking away for group photos.

Our last visit for the day was the Tan Kongs, situated off Lebuhr Pantai. Although it was a 5 minute walk away from Cheah Kongs, we were late due to the warm hospitality by the Cheahs who provided us with cakes and bottled water. Our hosts were already waiting anxiously for us when we arrived. Dato' Tan Lip Sen and fellow trustees not only welcomed us warmly but they also prepared *nyonya kueh*, *kum* and bottled water for everyone. Mr. Tan Lye Hoe briefed us on the historical background of the kongs. A Q&A session followed with trustee Dr Tan Chong Teik answering most of the questions from the group. To a provoking question on what are the effects on their tenants following the Repeal of the Rent Control Act, the trustee replied they had not evicted a single tenant nor had they raised the rent up more than 50% to the great applause of the crowd.

The Kongs visit has proven to be most interesting. It gives the visitors an insight into the history of the early Chinese immigrants and also what is happening to the Kongs today. ■

CHEAH KONGSI, FIRST OF THE FIVE GREAT HOKKIEH CLANS OF PENANG

Flanked by early 19th century shophouses, it's unassuming gateway at Lebuhr Armenian belies a splendid interior of serene courtyards and a unique mid-19th century temple of Straits Eclectic-style architecture.

Cheah Kongsi is the oldest of the five main clans in Penang whose surnames are Cheah, Khoo, Yeoh, Tan and Lim. The five kongsi's are located in the same neighbourhood and make up the *Hokkien Kongsi* which were part of the Chinese Town Hall Organisation (formerly known as Peng Clan Association). Four Trustees from each of the five clans are selected to represent the *Hokkien Kongsi*.

Historical Perspective: The Cheah Si Hock Haw Kong Kongsi which was established in 1820 (Qing Dynasty Kar Kheng 25th Year) possesses a history that spans 180 years. Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and during the early years of Qing Dynasty, countless mainlanders from the coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (Hokkien), migrated overseas especially to the Malay Peninsula and other Asian countries, with the aim of searching for a better living. The Cheah Clan first landed in Butterworth, but eventually moved to Penang Island due to booming business and better opportunities there. Many set up businesses around George Town especially near the coastal areas. Strangers to the land, they encountered difficulties and obstacles in their normal dealings and attempts to make a living. A group of elders who had done well, decided to form an association which would offer assistance to newly-arrived clan members in Penang.

The foundation of Cheah Kongsi was based on a combination of racial mutuality, location and a common dialect. Members of the association consisted of descendants of the Cheah clan from Cheok Tong Village located in the Hai Teng District, Zhang Zhou prefecture. The present Cheok Tong village is in Fujian Province, in the designated Development Zone of Hai Chang, opposite Xiamen City in the Xin Ling Zone, Province of Fujian. All these immigrants were peace loving residents who had never violated the law. They had registered the association as a kongsi (not the usual trading company) according to the then distinctions of district organizations under the British rule. According to the records on the monuments in the building in 1858 (Qing Dynasty Hsien Feng 8th Year) Cheok Tong Seah in China had collected land revenue from its own villages, totalling 12,367 Yuan and together with the donations from the local Cheah Clan members started to build the ancestral Tsung Der Tang and later renamed it Sek Tek Tong in 1873 (Qing Dynasty Tung Ji 8th Year) when construction was completed. The Premier of the Chin Dynasty, Cheah Aun Kong, was

worshipped as the prime God, and two *Hock Haw Kong* were also worshipped. According to the early Kongsi Constitutions, the Kongsi was established by Cheah Han Yan in 1835 (the copy of the earliest land title showed registration in 1820, therefore the establishment must be earlier than 1835). After his demise (due to the tender age of his heir, Cheah Zi Chu), his wife Ong Sin Neoh was nominated to be in charge of the property and management of the Kongsi. In 1846, she appointed Cheah Su Yi as the Kongsi's only trustee. When Cheah Su Yi passed away in 1862, Ong appointed nine other trustee members to attend to the affairs of the Kongsi. They were Cheah Chi Ya, Cheah Pan, Cheah Shi, Cheah Tin, Cheah Yin, Cheah Hun, Cheah Pek Hai, Cheah Wu Chai and Cheah Zhen Huang.

The Origin of Hock Haw Kong: The two *Hock Haw Kong* were Governor Xu Yuan and General Zhang Xun who once guarded Sui Yan City during the Tang Dynasty (year 618-902), reign of Emperor Xiu Tsung who succeeded Emperor Hsuan Tsung. Sui Yan City was attacked by Yi Zi Gis (130,000 troop soldiers). With only 7,000 men for defense, Xu Yuan and Zhang Xun and their counterparts Nan Ji Yun and Lui Wan Chun swore to defend the city. Surrounded by the enemies, running out of food supply and without allies, Xu, Zhang and the others stood their ground for endless days. The enemies attacked daily and rescue

troops were delayed. Zhang Xun was filled with anxiety and hatred. He gritted his teeth, gnashed his jaws as was stated in a song in Wen Tian Xiang which dubbed him *Zhang Soon Yan Chi* and Xu Yuan killed his beloved spouse to feed the army. Nevertheless, when rescue finally arrived it was unfortunately late by 3 days. Sui Yan City had already perished. Xu and Zhang who had sacrificed their lives were awarded the title *Hock Haw* by the Emperor. In honour and memory of their loyalty and courage, they were dubbed *Shou Wei Shen* or God of Defence. The Liu Shaw temple (also called Liu Si Temple) in front of Cheok Tong Seah was built to offer prayers to Xu and Zhang to ensure a safe voyage and successes and prosperity in business. The Cheah ancestors brought the *Hock Haw Kong* to Penang, that is why the Kongsi was named Cheah Si Hock Haw Kong Kongsi or Cheok Tong Seah Sek Tek Tong.

Ancestral Cemetery: In 1917, Cheah Choo Yew and 13 other trustees decided to purchase a piece of land along Mt Erskine Road as the Cheok Tong Cheah Clan Cemetery to ensure that the descendants of Cheah Clan would possess a burial ground. A Trustees Board was formed out of the selected maximum 20 trustee members and the Board was responsible for the Kongsi's financial matters, asset management, running of the cemetery and welfare of the members. The purpose was to unite the clan members and devote offering to ancestors on each festivals and to award scholarships to the deserving children of the clan, help the poor and unfortunate and make donations to charity/education funds.

Cheah Kongsi Temple:
roof detail shows a siren at the gable.



Photo: Khoo Salma Nasution

Penang Chinese Recreation Club (PCRC): Sportswise, the PCRC was the early pioneer, especially with the help of the five clans which bought the land in 1903 to benefit those active in sports in the Chinese Community. The field of the club was called Victoria Green and the five clans appointed trustees to take care of its assets management. The PCRC was established in 1892 making it the earliest Chinese Sports Association in Malaysia. A part of PCRC, the ground was purchased by Cheah Choo Yew. ■

NOTE: The Penang Cheah Si Hock Haw Kong Kongsi not only plays an important part in uniting its clan members, but also contributes towards education, religion and sports. This special write-up is courtesy of the Board of Trustees of Cheah Kongsi, on the occasion of PHT's January site visit to Cheah Kongsi, for its members.

CONSERVATION . . .

it's
in
your
hands



On 28 January, I had the pleasure of joining the PHT site visit to the Khoo, Cheah, and Tan Kongsi. The tour was extremely interesting and enhanced my love and interest in Penang. However, I was upset by the behavior of PHT members and guests. I assumed that participants were attending the event because they support the heritage conservation efforts of PHT. Unfortunately many were seen touching wall paintings, artifacts, and carvings. This only contributes to the destruction of the treasures which we are all desperately trying to save.

Understandably, this need to touch comes all too naturally. As primates we are compelled to touch everything we see. Our reality is based on these two sensory experiences. The touch of a finger creates friction, which leads to erosion of the surface it comes into contact with. In addition, the oils and acidic sweat on our hands contribute to the deterioration of pigments. Conservation and restoration artists wear gloves if they must handle materials. Lasers are now being used in many parts of the world to restore damaged artwork, eliminating the need for human contact.

There are numerous overwhelming factors that seem beyond our control in our fight to save the splendid heritage of Penang. Air pollution, prolonged exposure to light, and the lack of government funding, will take a momentous effort from the community. In the meantime, you can make an immediate and personal contribution by not touching the precious evidence of your fascinating history.

Fiona Bower

LETTERS/EMAILS

Letters published under this section are open to direct correspondence by anyone who is interested in the subject matter, or who feel that she/he is qualified to offer help/advise in response to those who have written in to us.

Comments on Inner City Revitalization & Dirty Penang

Being born and brought up in Penang, I am pleased to hear that the Penang Heritage Trust is working on the revitalization of the inner city in Penang. It is time that we should try to work closely with the state government, particularly MPPP to better improve the condition of these areas.

As a tour operator specialising in bringing European tourist into Malaysia, particularly Penang, I have many comments from our clients about the "falling apart heritage buildings" in Penang. In our tours, our emphasis on Penang is basically heritage and culture but I get comments that we do not upkeep our heritage buildings and its surroundings. Our tours are mainly concentrated on walking tours within the inner city as by doing such walking tours will our tourist appreciate the beauty of our heritage.

I do not blame the landlords for not upkeeping these old buildings apart from their frustrations tackling the rent control problems, the conclusion is to sell their properties or tear them down and build new buildings that will generate more income. In actual fact, some of these landlords have been exploited by their tenants for the past 60 years with the outdated laws.

Recently the rent control act has been lifted but there has been a lot of damage done to our heritage buildings. I recently read in the papers that the State Government in conjunction with the Federal Government, has set aside a 100 million ringgit fund to provide as soft loans to landlords for them to renovate these buildings but are these incentives attractive enough for landlord to take it? There are many beautiful old buildings which perhaps the state government can take the opportunity to purchase from landlords who wish to sell and renovate them to pre-

serve our heritage. The state government can start a good example by doing so. I have noted that some old government quarters have been beautifully renovated along Burmah Road and been put to good use. What about purchasing heritage buildings from the private sectors and renovating them also?

To start off, the MPPP must do something about the cleanliness of the city -- drains are clogged; some roads especially side lanes, are full of rubbish along the edge of the roads. Why can't the MPPP send people to remove the rubbish regularly, or else see that strict enforcement is in place to curb the indiscriminate throwing of rubbish all over the place. I actually have more than 30 pictures of "Dirty Penang" with me and I really would like to meet the President of MPPP for his explanation. I think Dato' Kee has also taken note and actually acted on it but sadly her hard work to bring tourists into Penang is not taken seriously by MPPP.

Sometimes vehicles are parked haphazardly and disorderly, blocking traffic making the city look so untidy apart from hawkers trading at all corners of the road. Although the roadside stalls are really an attraction but someone must make sure that these are controlled and taken care off instead of making the situation worst. Therefore in conclusion, I really hope that the state government and MPPP must at least show a good example to the private sectors.

Please update me as I really want to do something to help Penang to gain back its beauty!

Eric Ewe (Kuala Lumpur)
Email: ee12pst@pc.jaring.my
Dated: 12 October 2000

Researching the history of Penang and some comment/ideas for improvement

I was travelling through the pages of Penang history on the Internet and perched upon your site. What beautiful graphics you have and what a splendid idea. Often as I have visited my place of birth, I lament the sad condition of those fabulous old homes. The Penang Heritage Trust deserves support and as we all get older, the work you do becomes more valuable.

Penang is a most unique city and I am sadly surprised not more has been done to enhance the island. I was there in August last year and the traffic was horrible especially around the Tanjong Tokong area, just after the roundabout at Gurney Drive. If I remember they were digging the roads when I was a young schoolboy in the late 60's, and they're still at it now!

I almost died when I saw how they lopped off the tops of some of the beautiful angasana trees around the Scotland Road areas. Murder! Whoever was responsible should have his head chopped off, also. Those giant trees are priceless. Many Penangites may have got so used to them and take them for granted but honestly to someone like me who hasn't seen them for a long time or a tourist, they are impressive. Trees must be regarded as an important natural heritage, which I am glad to note was an item included for conservation in your objectives. I guess, having been away from Penang

and looking at it with fresh eyes gives one a different purview. Whatever one's reason for loving the place, there is no doubt the old houses and architecture need to be conserved for posterity. Perhaps, one thing that could be done is to also include the old street names (in a different colour) under the Malay names. I appreciate it is part of the Malaysianization process to change street names to reflect Nationalistic values but honestly, some things just shouldn't be changed because of their historical value. For example, Armenian Street was historically the place of abode for the Armenians and Light Street was the first street to be created after the founder established his settlement. The history of Penang is an intangible valuable asset.

I am researching the history of Penang with a view to writing a novel based on the history and the island itself and was happy to learn Anna and the King was shot there but of course most people don't know that. I live in Australia but once a Penangite, always a Penangite. Please let me know in what ways I can do something to help your cause and the list of objectives you have sound impressive. I also think the Penang Botanical Gardens deserves to be enhanced. Does it come under your scope of responsibilities?

Steve Oh (Australia)
Email: abc@iinet.net.au
Dated: 16 January 2001

Great Job!

Thank you for the excellent PHT Newsletter of October-December 2000. The articles always make me wish I could visit all the sites that are described. Your organization is doing a fine job, and deserves plenty of recognition and support. We look forward to visiting Penang again in early August. Best regards to you and your office staff. And how is that nice cat?

Michael M. Stein (Herndon, Virginia, U.S.A.)
Email: jasmine-and-mike@erols.com
Dated: 15 January 2001



Mrs. Peel, PHT office cat

We need help...

locating the families of some prominent historical personalities of Penang.

We are working on a book project relating to Scouting history and development in Singapore and Malaysia. This deals with the beginnings since 1908 till present. For Malaysia section of the story, it would stop at 1965. However, you might be pleased to know that Penang was one of the first to have a Scouting Movement. We would like to locate the families of a few prominent historical personalities of Penang. Specifically, they are:

- 1) *Goh Guan Ho* - Prominent Penang lawyer and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He was originally from Singapore but settled in Penang after he was married. He was in the scout movement during 1908 - 1910s early days.
- 2) *Ong Joo Sun* - Prominent Penang councilman and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He joined Scouting at Penang YMCA around 1910.
- 3) *Zainal Abidin* - Founding member of UMNO Penang and a very early member of the Scout Movement. He was the first Muslim District Commissioner of Scouts in Malaya. He taught at St Xavier.
- 4) *Mr Oon Hoot Ewe* - A very early member of the Scout Movement.
- 5) *Mr Ong Ewe Siang* - A very early member of the Scout Movement
- 6) *Khoo Sim Theong* - A very early member of the Scout Movement. Hewas the first Chinese District Commissioner of Scouts in Penang and Malaya. He was a teacher at Penang Free School.
- 7) *Chan Seang Teik* - A very early member of the Scout Movement

Can anybody help us?

Dr Kevin Tan & Wan Meng Hao
Email: kevin@tecity.com.sg
Dated: 14 February 2001

PHT ABROAD

International Seminar on Traditional & Vernacular Architecture, Chennai, Tamilnadu & Hampi, Karnataka, 6-12 January 2001

Trust council member Loh-Lim Lin Lee's first-hand account of her participation and experiences at the seminar...

The Madras Crafts Foundation, organiser of the seminar, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of traditional architecture, crafts, performing arts and design. Their main project has been the Dakshinachitra Centre, located a little out of Chennai, a unique heritage centre made up of reconstructed period settings of 19th century streets, homes and working spaces of the Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka regions. Traditional crafts persons and folk artists work & perform (and some live as well) in the Centre. It is open to the public and acts as a demonstration & teaching tool.

The seminar was organised with a view of the vulnerability of traditional and vernacular architecture of Asia, to destruction in a period of rapid transition, migration, population growth and development.

The first part of the seminar was held in Chennai and focussed on the Rhetorical Use, Modalities and Technology of Expression of South Asian vernacular architecture and traditions. Main speakers included Seminar Director, Michael Meister, Pro-

fessor of Art & South Asian Regional Studies, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Miki Desai, architect and author of *Architecture & Independence*, New Delhi 1997 and Ismeth Raheem of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

A separate session was conducted on the Modern Agenda and Vernacular Architecture with papers from Adele Naude Santos, architect and professor from University of Berkeley, California, Paul Mikula, architect and co-author of *Traditional Hindu Temples in South Africa*, Durban 1982 and Kinya Murayama of Team Zoo, Tokyo, Japan, who spoke on *Design from Decaying Tradition*.

The second part of the seminar was conducted at Hampi, 16th Century world historic site and centre of the Vijayanagara empire. Hampi was granted world historic status in 1996 and as of 1999, has been put on the endangered list, due to lack of proper management and planning. The site is scenically magnificent, 550 sq km in size with a core zone of 26 sq km, and dotted with magnificent royal palaces, baths, temples, elephant stables, guard quarters, bazaars all giving evidence of the stone carving skills of the region. Two aspects of conservation were presented, one the self-evident need to authentically conserve a major world historic site and the other, the aspirations of the communities in place and how they can co-exist with international standards of conservation.

Workshops and discussions were held with the communities of Hampi and Anegondi, a historical village within a 5-minute boat ride, to look at the current situation at the sites, where highways and bridges were presenting intrusions of the 21st Century. Leaders of the sessions in Hampi included George Mitchell, architect and architectural historian and John Fritz, archaeologist, both of whom have spent the last



Popularly called the Lotus Mahal, this well-preserved two-storeyed structure probably once housed a senior military officer.

21 years of their lives studying just the central zone of Hampi.

Presentations at Hampi looked at questions of conservation and its linkages to people-movements & tourism and included Rahul Mehrotra of Bombay: *Bazaars in Victorian Arcades*, *Conserving Bombay's Historic Fort District*; Natish Nanda of Delhi: *Urban Villages of Delhi*; Maria Antonella Pelizzari of Canadian Centre for Architecture: *Conservation of Built Heritage*, *Directions of the CCA*; and Loh-Lim of the Penang Heritage Trust: *The Conservation Movement in the Historic City of Georgetown*.

In Anegondi, issued centred on people's participation in development within a historic site and their aspirations. Sharma Shapiro of the Kishkinda Trust introduced the group to the work the Trust had been conducting in the village of Anegondi. Village women had been involved in weaving, children's classes were conducted and low impact technology in raw sewerage disposal was introduced to the villages by the Trust.

A truly impressive participatory final session of the seminar was held with the community leaders and women of the villages as well as the representatives of the local government and the Archaeological Survey of India, the federal authorities in charge of the care of the historic site of Hampi. The groundwork was laid for the formulation and implementation of a management plan involving all stakeholders, while fulfilling the requirements of UNESCO. Citizens forums in small and medium towns which draw upon citizen participation and views were planned for the near future. ■

A city of ruins, Hampi is the Fabled Capital of the ancient Vijayanagara Empire.



CALL FOR COMMENTS

The following is an excerpt from a Memorandum sent by the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce (PCCC) to the Chief Minister of Penang, Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, dated 16 November 2000.

The memorandum lists several topics of contention, including housing, transportation, infrastructure, tourism, trade & commerce, etc. which are not covered here because it is beyond the scope of this newsletter.

This excerpt highlights the issue of the PCCC's view on Heritage Conservation in Penang, which it addresses from a rather skewed angle. The PCCC appears hostile towards the implementation of the Heritage Guidelines for the Inner City of George Town by the MPPP. It also contends that the poor response to the RM 100 million soft loans provided by the State/Federal Government for heritage conservation purposes (in response to the repeal of the Rent Control Act), shows a lack of property owners' commitment towards the policy. We welcome comments from readers and members of the Penang Heritage Trust, which we will publish in the next issue of our newsletter. You may email us at <phtrust@po.jaring.my> fax us at 04-2642631, or send your comments to 26A Lorong Stewart, 10200 Penang, Malaysia.

Heritage Conservation

1. The implementation of Heritage Guidelines for the Inner City of George Town has since aroused numerous criticisms from the public. The PCCC had organized a seminar to voice its concern over the negative impact of the guidelines, in which the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, two years ago. However, there has been affirmative action being taken to resolve the issues raised.

2. In essence, we have no objection to the conservation of certain well-known historical building, such as the State Assembly building, the Penang High Court, the State Museum, the Town and City Halls, religious buildings, clan houses and private homes. However, such conservation should be based on case-by-case basis. Simply freezing the development projects in the 425 acres of prime land just for preserving certain

heritage buildings is ultimately unfair to the affected property owners, developers as well as the residents in general. In fact, such implementation has evoked much controversy, as it is a challenge to private ownership, which is against the capitalistic economic system. The government should be selective when implementing the conservation and beautification of historical heritage instead of adopting an extensive guideline to have an overall control.

3. The property owners cannot be deprived of an economic gain by foregoing their land use and development potential. The ill response to the RM100 million soft loans provided for heritage conservation purposes shows the lack of property owners' commitment towards this policy, as there is no economic value for their properties.

4. Undoubtedly, without economic motivation these old buildings will definitely be left to suffer from both physical and functional obsolescence and thus, defeated the purposes of the state government urban modernization plan. As a consequence, the quality of living of the people of George Town will be further deteriorated due to aggravation of the existing unresolved problems, such as flood, traffic congestion, infrastructure bottleneck etc.

5. In short, the strict enforcement of Heritage Guidelines, in addition to the Repeal of Rent Control Act will result in the loss of population in town area and slowing down of commercial activities in the designated area. Without taking speedy remedy action to encourage flexible development, it will turn the once most prosperous area in Penang into a 'dead city' and such an attractive old building certainly will not make us proud in the eyes of tourists.

6. The future development of Penang is very much depended on its strategical adjustment. To achieve this, it should first and foremost, increase or at least maintain its population to generate commercial activities, to make it lively, active and economically viable. There should be urban rejuvenation, upgrading urban slums, making more efficient use of the land scarce land resources, ensuring compatibility of land use and accelerate the upgrading of all infrastructure.

7. Facing the scarcity and limitation of land in this island, instead of imposing rigid conditions on development projects, the state government should in fact give more flexibility for multiple-development by the property owners and/or joint venture between government and private sector, such as building more low-medium cost housing and converting the old buildings to commercial blocks. The prerequisite for implementing these projects is to maintain vigorous commercial activities. ■

PROJECTS

Three New Projects for Penang Heritage Trust

The first project focusses on women and urban governance, the second on waqf and Muslim heritage as an educational resource, and third project combines the two concerns by focussing on inner city Muslim community, in particular Muslim women and young women. The 3 projects are in line with 2 of PHT's new strategic visions: "Strengthening Traditional Communities through Women & Children"; "Youth & Heritage".

1 Local-Local Dialogue on Women in Urban Governance. Supported by AWAS and HAWA Penang.

The purpose of this project is to explore how to improve housing conditions and urban governance in the historic inner city of George Town through greater representation and participation by women in decision-making. The multi-stakeholder dialogues will help to build women's capacity to negotiate with local government, and to re-educate city governments on the principles of good governance in relation to the priorities and needs of women and the community. These dialogues are all the more important considering that this is the period when public inputs are being gathered for the long overdue Local Plan for George Town, the most important long-term instrument for protecting the living heritage city. UNDP has commissioned AWAS (Asian Women and Shelter) to organise structured dialogues on Women in Urban

Governance in 8 cities in Asia. The dialogues were originally part of a UNCHS programme for Localizing Habitat Day 2000, which has its theme "Women in Urban Governance". AWAS has appointed PHT to take up this project with a sponsorship of USD4,000. HAWA under the chairmanship of Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen has agreed to support this project with a further sponsorship of RM10,000, in order to enlarge the participation. The theme of the Local-Local Dialogue will be 'Women and the Changing City: Housing & Urban Governance of Inner City George Town after Rent Control Repeal', exploring sub-themes such as:

- Women & Shelter.
- Women & Inner City Neighbourhoods.
- Women Access to Services & Amenities.
- Women, Urban Environment & Public Safety.
- Women, Planning & Urban Development.

2 Heritage in Youth Education: Urban Muslim Community, Culture & Heritage. Supported by UNESCO.

Participation Programme George Town boasts a unique urban Muslim community, historically made up of Tamils and other Indian Muslims, Acehnese and other Sumatrans, as well as Arabs and Malays. Their cultural resources in terms of built heritage, religious culture, lifestyles, food, languages, printing press and literary history, business skills and so forth contribute tremendously to the cultural and economic diversity of George Town. These resources have the potential to play an important role

in the tourism development of Penang and the cultural education of young Malaysians. PHT has been awarded a USD17,000 grant under the UNESCO Participation Programme for a proposal submitted through the Education Ministry. The Penang Heritage Trust project consists of several strategies to develop and promote Penang's urban Muslim community, culture and heritage through the following components:

- Heritage education kit for presentations in schools.
- Educational heritage tours for schoolchildren.
- Week-long intensive heritage course for young leaders.

Japanese Visitors to Penang 23-26 March 2001

Mr Taro Ryotaro Katsura, Vice-Chairman from Nara Machizukuri Center will bring 8 members from Nara University. They will stay at Cititel Penang. Khoo Salma, Lim Gaik Siang & Junko Tanaka will show them around Penang. PHT members who wish to meet with the visitors or help with hosting, please contact PHT Office Tel: 2642631.

3 "Women & Waqf": Heritage Community Revitalization through Women & Youth. Supported by the Government of Canada.

This is a community development project conducted by the Penang Heritage Trust and targetted at Muslim community living in the historic inner city, which faces certain challenges after the Repeal of Rent Control. PHT was awarded a RM 30,000 grant by the Canadian High Commission from the CIDA Women's Initiative Fund. The project aims to:

- strengthen community through women and youth initiatives and networking.
- enhance the role of women and youth as custodians and interpreters of their heritage and historic environment.
- engage women in urban governance and improving housing conditions and urban environment.
- promote the development of a historic cultural community, whose heritage, prosperity and well-being are important to the cultural diversity of inner city George Town.

The year-long programme will fund skills development, community talks, cultural training & development, surveys, Muslim heritage tours, exhibition and documentation.

Note: The second and third projects strive to continue some of the initiatives started during the PHT's project 'Community Participation in Waqf Revitalization' with a grant from UNESCO-LEAP (programme on integrated community development and cultural heritage site preservation in Asia and the Pacific through Local Effort) in 1999.

PENANG HIGHLIGHTS

Blue Mansion grabs Top International Award

*Presentation ceremony of the prestigious
UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Award 2000
on evening of 6 January 2001*

The historical 38-room Cheong Fatt Tze mansion of George Town, Penang was recently awarded the inaugural UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Conservation Award 2000 as the *Most Excellent Project* in the region. The RM 7.6 million (USD 2 million) restoration was led by Penang-based husband and wife team, architect Laurence Loh, and Lin Lee Loh-Lim.



Photo: Gwynn Jenkins

Lin Lee & Laurence receiving the coveted award.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was the guest of honour, while Richard Engelhardt of UNESCO officiated the award ceremony. Also present were Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, State Tourism Exco Mdm Kee Phaik Cheen, Badan Warisan Malaysia President Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji, and of course Penang Heritage Trust President Dr. Choong Sim Poey.

About 200 guests were invited for the event and the press and media were well represented. The weather was wonderful and the choice of the main inner courtyard for the venue of the award ceremony was an excellent one. The glow from the setting sun lent a certain rustic charm to the whole event. To add to the authenticity of the grand Chinese mansion, hostess Lin-Lee

looked resplendent in her black velvet *cheongsam* while hubby Lawrence cut a dashing figure in a white *kungfu* costume. Cikgu Baharoodin's dancers performed a traditional dance in their colourful costumes. This was followed by an equally interesting demonstration of a *ku chen* performance by students of the traditional Chinese musical instrument. Thereafter, there was a dinner reception. The newly opened archives room was a popular side attraction and guests who wandered into the side-wing got a chance to peek into the newly restored suites which would soon be available for rent to the public.

The evening was a grand success and even Cheong Fatt Tze himself would have smiled in approval... ■



Photo: Gwynn Jenkins

The Campbell Street Mall ...Does it Work?

The two German ASA students who worked out of the Penang Heritage Trust office from September to December 2000 gave a presentation of their findings on December 6 of last year. They have pursued their research with a high degree of professionalism and thoroughness and the conclusions are rather convincing.

Their excellent 47-page report describes the short history of Campbell Street since the 1950s and the planning background, analyses the traffic situation, the structure of businesses and reasons for Campbell Street's decline, and reviews the new appearance of Campbell Street Mall. The report is a must-read for local government officers as well as private consultants involved in urban design and streetscape design.

The subject of the Campbell Street Mall is still drawing much interest, most recently at the Signage Seminar organised by MPPP on 20 February, featuring speakers Australian conservation architect Elizabeth Vines and Malaysia's top graphic designer William Harald-Wong.

One Year After -- An Evaluation of Campbell Street Mall by Peter Welk, Diane Dochnahl, ASA Team 2000 is available for viewing at the PHT office.



*Support this
Petition...*



Protect Malacca's Heritage

If you are concerned with the changes that have affected the integrity and authenticity of Malacca's heritage environment, and if you believe it must be safeguarded as a shared responsibility, please come to the PHT office at 26A Lorong Stewart, Penang to add your signature to a petition which will be delivered to the relevant authorities in an effort to raise awareness for the need to protect Malacca's heritage.

This alert has been prepared by conservation-minded architects and individuals who are concerned with saving old Malacca.

URGENT ALERTS!

Heritage Conservation in Malacca

The letter of Professor Fukuda Kishino (NST, Nov 8) was among a considerable number of letters written to the press in recent months, expressing concern with heritage conservation in Malacca.

All the letters were written following the demolition of Nos. 90, 92 and 94 Jonker Street, and most made specific reference to the incident. Other problems and pressures - physical, social and economic - afflicting Malacca's heritage environment were also highlighted in some of the letters, many of the comments made in the context of the city's application for Unesco's World Heritage status. Professor Fukuda's letter offered a perspective on the matter from a country that is internationally acknowledged as one of the most developed and well-informed in the conservation of architectural and cultural heritage, and which has had at least nine sites successfully listed by Unesco since 1992 (seven of which are cultural heritage properties).

Badan Warisan Malaysia is of the opinion that the concerns expressed must be viewed collectively and constructively, and should not have been dismissed before a proper and thorough comparison was made with the very real situation that exists in the city.

The variety of opinions shown in the correspondence may be because the full extent and intention of the Malacca Enactment (1988) has not been implemented and enforced. The observations of Professor Fukuda and the other authors have underlined the urgency with which

the need for enforcement must be addressed. The changes that have occurred in the old part of Malacca have clearly affected the integrity of its architectural fabric to varying degrees, in many cases altering original architectural features irrevocably. There are extensive examples of highly insensitive works which have jeopardised the aesthetic merit of individual buildings, groups of buildings and streets. Private initiative, when left unguided and motivated by the misinterpretation of heritage value, can have highly damaging results. Equally, public initiative, when misguided, sets a dangerous precedent and example for others to emulate.

The role and responsibility of the local authority and its statutory and non-statutory advisors in the conservation of Malacca's historic areas and heritage zones has been brought into question. Despite the presence of legislation, it is the scope of influence and involvement of the local authority and its advisors that becomes the point of reference for any changes that are made to heritage buildings in Malacca. This highlights the urgency for the need of official guidelines for the conservation of heritage buildings. In the context of architectural heritage, physical change and the appropriateness of use naturally become the criteria for judging the interests of those involved, as well as the level of commitment and credibility of those who are entrusted to offer advice and guidance.

Badan Warisan hopes that these agencies will adopt the correct methodology and contemporary

'best practice' in the monitoring of conversion and conservation of heritage buildings in the old quarters. If, as suggested in Assoc Prof Syed Zainol Abidin Idid's letter (NST, 13 Nov 2000), PERZIM indeed is severely constrained by resources and expertise, in the final analysis this task of monitoring the conservation of the old quarters must be reviewed.

Badan Warisan Malaysia welcomes constructive criticism from all sources and respects it as part of an ongoing process to develop a framework within which different aspects of conservation can be shared and explored. It is only with the exchange of resources, knowledge and experience that conservation programmes and conservation legislation which has popular support, and aims to preserve whole urban or rural precincts, can be successfully implemented and our architectural heritage protected.

Press Release
Badan Warisan Malaysia
www.bwm.org.my

Papan: The Case for Conservation

The recent reports in the newspapers of houses in Papan being sold literally for the value of the bricks with which they are built is a reflection of how our heritage buildings are valued purely on commercial lines.

Papan's story is the story of tin-mining in the Kinta Valley with all the colour of a frontier town. In 1881 it was a multi-ethnic town with 13 mines run by Chinese and Mandailing miners; these two culturally divergent communities co-existed in peace for more than a century and the Papan *changkat* is probably unique in Malaysia for having a Muslim cemetery on one side and a Chinese cemetery on the other.

It is ironic given that Perak which built its wealth from tin mining now discounts the economic history of Papan and is only focussing on a few sites in Perak for their tourism potential. Papan, which has its own story to tell, is dismissed. The many noteworthy buildings in Papan including Raja Bilah's mansion (built 1896), the Bagas Godang (built 1882), the brick

shophouses (originally around 60), the timber houses (around 20), the timber mosque and the Chinese temples, plus the disused tin-mines collectively are representative of life in an early mining community.

Badan Warisan Malaysia believes that a heritage law is urgently needed to prohibit the destruction of such heritage buildings. Guidelines are needed which are sensitive to and encourage conservation of the fast diminishing number of heritage properties. These guidelines must be to internationally accepted standards and there must be management mechanisms formed to ensure implementation and encourage best practice. The business of conservation is not only one in which the government plays a role, but one where the community participates to preserve their cultural traditions and the buildings in which these are lived out.

Press Release
Badan Warisan Malaysia
www.bwm.org.my

... continued from page 2 [Cheong Fatt Tze site visit report]

nien mosaics rarely seen in such abundance in private houses. This ceramic shard, a Hokkien art form, decorates the gable ends, doorways, and edges of the tiled roof and the verandahs like mantle of rich embroidery. 12,000 coloured pots were snapped into small pieces and intricately pasted together to form vivid patterns and mythological creatures.

Then we proceeded into the main courtyard, the largest of five, framed with eight Corinthian columns and a balcony of cast iron from MacFarlanes of Glasgow, combined with Chinese timber lattice work and wood-carved, gilded doors. We were also ushered into the newly-opened Archives Room, which contains documents, photographs and original items belonging to Cheong Fatt Tze and his family.

Pointing to the side wing of the house, Loh-Lim explained that if Cheong Fatt Tze was slightly displeased with a family member, the object of his disgruntlement would be moved to a room there. In what must have been a tumultuous ménage, of wives, concubines, children, distant relatives and servants, Cheong Fatt Tze maintained order by room assignments. Current favourites always resided in the centre of the mansion toward the front. Those a bit out of favour were pushed into one of the wings. If the tycoon was really angry with an occupant, it meant exile across the road in the servants' quarters.

The Towkay's will stipulated that his property could not be sold until the death of his last son. Over the years, the Blue Mansion fell on hard times as

the trustees of the estate provided little money for its upkeep. When rooms were rented out, the mansion slowly began to crumble.

Because of the primitive lighting, large amounts of electrical wiring were rigged up on the outside of the house; walls were blackened from cooking with charcoal and gas; clothes lines draped from intricate carvings and the tycoon's once-elegant halls became a racetrack for tenants' motorbikes.

When Cheong Fatt Tze's last son died in 1989, the mansion seemed certain to be lost. But Fate was to play a hand when Loh-Lim and her husband, architect Laurence Loh decided to devote themselves towards restoration of the Blue Mansion. ■

Save Historic George Town — Listed on 100 most endangered sites 2000, World Monuments Watch.

Inner City Trails of George Town



Organised by the Penang Heritage Trust in collaboration with KEN AIR PHT

*Please help us to
promote!*

*PHT will be conducting
these three trails:*

Tuesday
Little India, Spice Trail

Wednesday
Heritage Trail 2 &
Cheong Fatt Tze

Thursday
Street of Harmony &
Historical Enclave.

*Those interested to join can
contact Priscilla at Tel 264-2631
at least a day before for any of
the tours. The fees for the trails
are RM50 per pax (3-10) and
RM40 per pax (11 & above).*



EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Prayer/Blessing Ceremony to Commemorate the Completion of the Pilot Phase of Restoration Works at the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple Love Lane, morning of 7 January 2001

The recent completion of the restoration of the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple at Love Lane, represents the Penang Heritage Trust's largest project to date.

A great part of Penang's Chinese, Straits Chinese and eclectic architectural heritage was built by the artisans of the Carpenters' Guild. Today, these artisans still continue to play an important role in restoring Penang's heritage buildings. Their contributions throughout the ages should not be forgotten. The restoration of the historic Carpenter's Guild temple at Love Lane is the first step towards preserving this tradition of local craftsmanship.

To mark this milestone, PHT together with the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild, jointly organised a special prayer ceremony to bless the temple and also to commemorate the completion of the pilot phase of the restoration works.



Photo: Yeoh On Bee

YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon unveiling the commemorative plaque. Looking on are Guild President Mr. Teoh Teik Yew, and PHT President Dr. Choong Sim Poey

The event was graced by YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chief Minister of Penang, who unveiled the commemorative plaque. Also present were YB Mr. Teng Chang Yeow (Adun of Padang Kota & Political Secretary to CM), Mr. Teoh Teik Yew (Carpenter's Guild President), and Dr. Choong Sim Poey, President of Penang Heritage Trust.

Members of the press, PHT members, as well as the public, turned up in full force to witness the event. There was a tea reception afterwards, followed by guided tours as well as an exhibition which showcased the Guild's excellent Craftsmanship. ■



Photo: Yeoh On Bee

◀ From left to right: YB Teng Chang Yeow, Mr. Teoh Teik Yew, YAB Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, performing a special prayer ceremony to bless the newly restored Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple.

Wonders of Chinese New Year 2001 Street Party at Love Lane, Sunday 14 January

*Organised by Nanyang Folk Culture Society
and the Penang Heritage Trust*

Despite the scorching sun and sweltering heat on that particular Sunday morning, it was estimated that an enthusiastic crowd of over 8,000 people turned up to participate in the celebrations.

A stage was set up in the middle of Love Lane at the Muntri Street/Steward Lane junction, where performers entertained the crowd with song & dance. A lion/Chingay procession really livened up the party and hordes of tourists were seen gaping in wonder and busily clicking away with their cameras. Highlights included a specially guided tour of the Carpenters' Guild by our very own Council Member, Goh Mai-Loon.

Hardworking beauties manning the PHT booth take time off to pose for a photo. Clockwise from left are Mai-Loon, Khoo Salma, Gaik Siang, Oon Bee and Teresa Capol ▼



Photo: Yeoh Oon Bee

▲ Love Lane at 9.30 am -- Street Party in full-swing, filled with CNY revellers thronging the street & sampling the delights being offered.

Thank You, PHT Volunteers!

On the same day as the Love Lane Street Party, PHT held a Volunteer's Luncheon at the premises of PHT office where all volunteers were invited to meet with our Council Members, staff, and other members of PHT. About 30 people showed up including a dozen volunteers, and there was a delightful spread of food & drinks, courtesy of staff and council members of PHT. The cool interior was a welcome respite from the heat and madhouse outside and everyone had a great time as the photo below will attest to...



Photo: Yeoh Oon Bee

Hi-Tea at the Hilltop, 29 January 2001

As a show of appreciation, twelve well-deserving PHT Volunteers who really busted their back for us this past year, were invited by Vice President Ahmad Chik & wife Joan to have tea at his lovely "cottage" perched atop Bukit Bendera.

by Raja Abdul Razak

Even Alice's tea party with the Mad Hatter, March Hare and Dormouse wasn't half as fun or as picturesque.

Imagine the scene: an English-styled cottage on the cool heights of Bukit Bendera, and people having tea in the garden whilst taking in the awesome view of George Town some 2,000 feet below. Lush tropical trees and shrubs grow just feet away from the neatly kept lawns.

This particular occasion was an afternoon tea party organised by Ahmad Chik and Joan Shorie for twelve Penang Heritage Trust volunteers at their aptly named residence *Bukit Pinang*. Joan was an excellent host, and made sure that every one was having a good time and had their fill of grub, which was in abundant supply.



illustration: John Tenniel

Little round tables with their distinctive red and white chequered tablecloths were laid out with freshly baked English pies and sumptuous curries. Fresh *tosei* and *apom manis* hot-off-the-griddle and steaming teh tarik were made to order. In one corner, an electric ice shaver was set up in case anyone wanted to cool off with some *ais kacang*. It was a scene that simply begged to be captured, but alas, no one remembered to bring a camera!

EGM

In conjunction with our April Site Visit, PHT will be holding an EGM on Sunday, 29 April 2001 at the Leong Yin Kean mansion, Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, at 3.00 pm.

Basket Restoration Workshop

David Yeoh will be conducting this workshop on Saturday 24 March 2001. Venue at PHT office.

Please bring your own old or damaged baskets for restoration. All kinds of baskets, eg. teochew, nyonya, etc. If you don't have any please call Priscilla at 2642631



Join our... Bead Workshop

Conducted by Michael Cheah, new classes will start on Tuesday 6 March 2001, 10.00 am. Venue at PHT office. For further info please call Priscilla at 2642631



Tramways & Trolleybuses of Penang

Talk by Ric Francis, 30 January 2001, 5.00 pm at INTEC College
Fiona Bower reports...

If Ric Francis had his way, the streets of Penang would re-introduce the use of tramways and trolley-buses. Mr. Francis, a retired engineer from Australia, gave a lively and fascinating account of the transportation history of Penang from 1880 to 1963. The presentation attracted over 30 people to Intec College on the evening of 30 January, including a fair representation from the press.

Ric's extensive research about this intriguing era, too him from Australia to sources as far away as the United States and the UK. Virtually no records exist in either Penang, or other parts of Southeast Asia. With very short notice, Gaik Siang prepared the powerpoint presentation. The majority of images that were shown, were sourced from old postcards. Ric described these wonderful photographs in the minutest of detail. Many in the audience were quick to recognise streets and buildings from decades ago.

Penang's first tramway opened in 1888, running a route from the prison to Waterfall. By 1905, fourteen electric trams were traversing the roads of George Town. The system was profitable until the trade depression in 1922. For the next 40 years the government struggled to retain the system, until 1963 when the last bus took it's final journey.

In 1925, Penang had twenty-four trolleybuses, running on five miles of single and double track each. The body of these handsome vehicles was appropriate to the climate. Wooden slat seats replaced upholstered ones, windows dropped down and were fitted with sunblinds to protect passengers from sun or rain.

In 1956, two double-decker busses arrived from London. First class passengers sat in the lower level, second class passengers rode on the top. Fares during this period were 10 cents for adults, and 5 cents for children. Transporting people around Penang was not the only task of these vehicles. They also transported tin ore to the smelting plant, returning with cargoes of tin ingots.

Recently, there has been a trend in Europe and Australia, seeing the return of these vehicles. Governments and populations were realising that they are an economical method of mass transit. They are environmentally friendly, and provide passengers with a much smoother and quieter ride.

Ric fielded many interesting questions from the audience. In closing, he reminded us that keeping even the smallest momentos from our past is integral to preserving the heritage of Penang. ■



◀ Municipal Trolleybus plying Penang Rd, in front of the Central Police Station in the early 60's

**Dr. Mahathir's visit to Sun Yat Sen Base
in conjunction with Armenian Street/Cannon Square
Chinese New Year Open House. Sunday, 4 February 2001**

Seen through the eyes of an American visitor to Malaysia...

Negotiating my way through the throngs of people (estimated at 40,000!), to Armenian Street and the Yap Temple, at the cultural core of the festivities, I was experiencing a tradition far older than anything I've known from my home. It was at once, humbling, enlightening, colourful. The entertainments were varied, traditional, a delight to the senses, even to one who does not ordinarily feel comfortable among crowds of people. A blending of carnival midway barker, community, religious observance, secular revelry – all accented with a vast array of food aromas and the fleeting scents of Jasmine and Oolong tea in the shophouses. Truly, *Gong Xi Fa Cai*.

I arrive at 120 Armenian Street (Sun Yat Sen Base), displaying the banner, *Persatuan Warisan Pulau Pinang*. Teresa Capol and Joanne Khaw were at the entrance to welcome visitors and distribute PHT flyers and literature. Just inside the entrance, PHT had also set up a merchandise booth, where I had volunteered my services. The shophouse, like most others, is long, somewhat narrow, with a large airy

atrium in the middle of the house, filled with exotic plants and a gold-fish pone. I read about Dr Sun Yat Sen from the displays on the walls. Chinese tea was served. The exhibition was well-attended, crowded, really. Very warm; ceiling fans turned, providing little relief from the heat. Evening, and a red sunset, and now a capricious breeze from the street... heaven. Darkness descended, lights blazed forth, the streets came alive.

I was told we would be receiving a very important visitor to the shophouse: the Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister. "The Prime Minister?", I asked. Shortly after 10 pm, the Prime Minister's arrival was heralded by a collection of what I referred to as *Paparazzi*, jockeying for position, flashbulbs popping, and the PM's entourage and security people entered the shophouse.

Enter the Prime Minister himself. Calm, studious, urbane, he and his wife graced the shophouse and was shown around the exhibits while host Khoo Salma explained. I observed, and took mental notes of the procession. The PM signed the guestbook with a flourish. Shaking hands with all who were present, he made his way to where I was standing. "It is an honour to meet you, sir," I said, as I shook hands with him. "Are you helping to take care of this place too?" he asked me. "Yes, indeed." I replied. This brief exchange of a few words. From but one location on this small, blue world, far away no longer.

My life has changed its course. ■

Gregg Curè [February 2001]

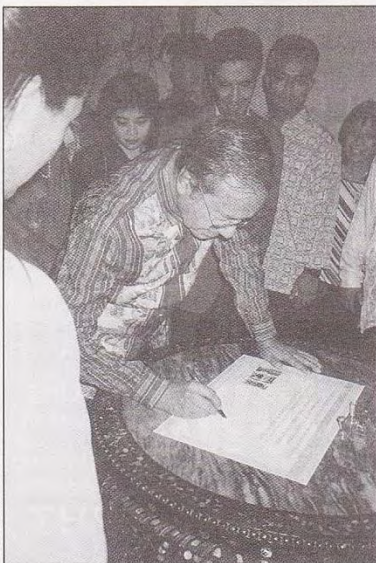


Photo: Gwynn Jenkins

◀ The Prime Minister of Malaysia adding his signature to a document commemorating his visit to 120 Armenian Street.

... continued from page 1, Editorial

2001 promises to be a good year for the Penang Heritage Trust. Our site visits have been incredibly successful and popular, with Priscilla and her children energetically making sure that subscriptions are collected. Three new grants for PHT have just been announced (see page 8).

We will miss Sujatha d/o Athimulam, who worked as Research Officer with PHT during the last seven months, as she is leaving for greener pastures in Singapore. Sujatha was working on the Endangered Trades project, Property Watch & Heritage Alert, and had also started working on PHT's new project on Women in Urban Governance. We hope to announce the arrival of two new staff at PHT in the next newsletter. Faiz Izwan Anwar, a Tourism Management student at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) is interning with PHT for two months from mid-February to mid-April and will help us to manage and market our PHT Heritage Tours.

I am sure you will agree William Chow has brought the PHT Newsletter up to an unprecedented standard, both in terms of form and content. This issue of the Newsletter brings in many new contributors, which goes to prove that PHT is not short of talented writers. Keep writing!

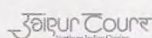
Khoo Salma Nasution

Special Discounts!

13 retail outlets in Penang & other cities have become our pioneer "discount" givers in our new effort to bring more value to your PHT membership card! Look our for PHT stickers at these outlets, which have kindly extended 10% discount or special rates if you present your card.



21A Codrington Avenue
10350 Penang



11 Leith Street
10200 Penang



Old China Cafe
No. 9 Beach Street
10300 Penang

WHITE RAJAH RESTAURANT & BAR

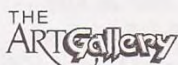
4, Jalan Telawi, Bangsar Baru
59100 Kuala Lumpur



2, Jalan Bukit Jambul
11900 Penang

*Linen
&
Things*

Lot F-9, 1st Floor KL Plaza
Jalan Bukit Bintang
55100 Kuala Lumpur



368-4 Bellisa Row
Jalan Burma
10350 Penang



M-K1 Mezzanine Floor
Island Plaza, Tg. Tokong
10470 Penang

The Garage
2 Penang Road
10000 Penang



Desa Tanjung
Jalan Tg. Tokong
10470 Penang



Jalan Bukit Merah
Semanggol
34400 Perak

A31, The Garage
2 Penang Road
10000 Penang



Purser's Choice
26, Jln Pudu Lama
50200 K.L.

MERCHANDISE CORNER

All items listed here are available from the PHT Office. Please note that 10-20% of the proceeds goes to PHT, so your kind support will be much appreciated...



PENANG SHOPHOUSE CARDS

Set of 6 blank Greeting Cards
each illustrating a different
Penang Shophouse
by Alan Flux. Price: RM 10.00

PENANG HILL MAP

A delightfully & innovatively
illustrated map & brochure
full of useful information
about Penang Hill

Price: RM 4.00



FACES OF GEORGE TOWN BOOKMARKS

Khoo Cheang Jin Watercolours
Set of 8 bookmarks

Price: RM 6.00



VICTOR CHIN POSTCARDS

32 watercolours of urban scenes
in Penang, Kuala Lumpur
Melaka & Singapore

Price: RM 15.00 (set of 4)



CHEONG FATT TZE MANSION CARDS

Set of 8 blank cards
depicting the splendor of
the magnificent mansion

Price: RM 12.00

"Save Historic George Town" Car Sticker: RM 2.00 each

Save Historic George Town

LISTED ON 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES 2000, WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

website: www.pht.org.my • email: phtrust@po.jaring.my

**PENANG
HERITAGE
TRUST**
Persatuan
Warisan
Pulau
Pinang
PHT

CM: Viable to restore 'old' buildings

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said yesterday that supporters of conservation efforts are not "idiosyncratic dreamers" as it was economically viable to restore heritage structures.

He said the value of property in established heritage enclaves appreciated tremendously.

"In fact, many great cities of the world are adorned with heritage buildings and such heritage structures exude a sense of history and culture," he said.

He said destroying heritage buildings for "short-term monetary gain" would have an adverse impact on Penangites' livelihood in the long run.

"We have a winning formula in the form of heritage charms, friendly people,

hawker food as well as impressive scenery," he said.

Concerted efforts among the public and private sectors were needed to ensure Penang secured global recognition as a heritage centre, he said.

He added Penang had become part of the international heritage conservation movement as more and more "rejuvenated" old buildings adorned the cityscape.

Dr Koh said among the impressive old buildings that had been restored were Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Syed Alatas Mansion, Acheen Street Mosque, Khoo Kongsi Temple, Hotel 1926, E&O Hotel and The Garage.

Dr Koh said this at a function to commemorate the completion of the pilot phase of restoration works at the 145-year-old Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild Temple in

Love Lane yesterday.

"This is a good example of how the private and public sector, as well as a non-government organisation made concerted efforts to restore this oldest carpenters' guild in Malaysia," he said.

The Penang Heritage Trust and the Loo Pun Hong Carpenters' Guild raised a total of RM105,369 for the restoration work, while the state chipped in another RM13,000.

It took five years of fund-raising and efforts to complete the first phase of the project by artisans from China using imported materials to retain the authenticity of the structures.

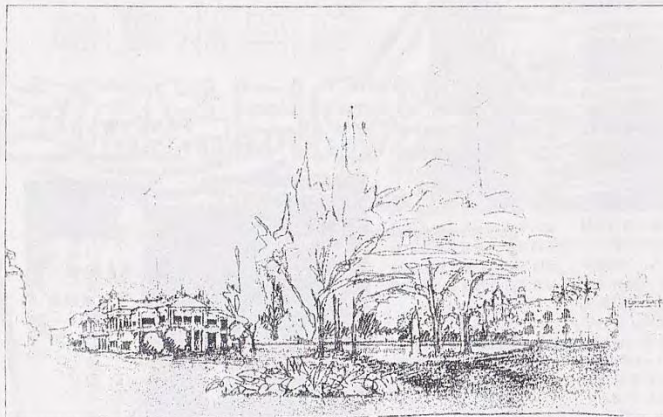
Dr Koh said the initiative undertaken by PHT and the guild was commendable as they managed to complete the first phase of the project despite financial constraint.



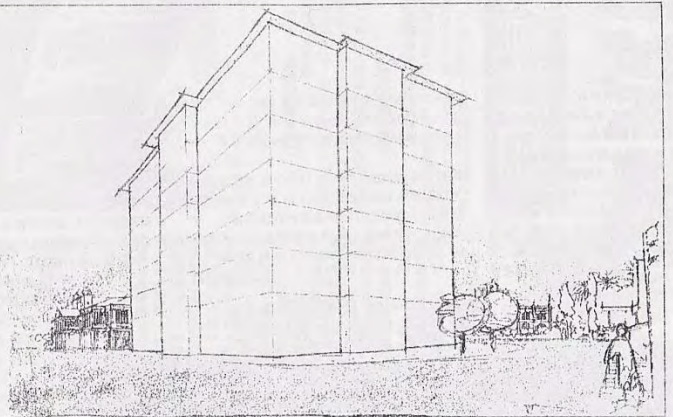
POETIC HARM ... Dr Koh admiring the restored artisan painting which adorns the wall of the courtyard.

NATION

SATURDAY November 11 2000 THE STAR



Pedestrian view of revitalised civic precinct of courthouse.



Pedestrian view of proposed site for new court and office building.

'Respect feelings of people'

By ONG JU LYNN

PENANG: The federal government should respect the feelings of the people when approving federal projects within a state, said Penang Ratepayers Association president Datuk Eddy Choong.

"It may be the legal right of the federal government, but it should also consider the wishes of ratepayers," he said.

Choong was referring to a federal proposal to put up a seven-storey office within the precinct of the historical High Court building at Lebuhraya Farquhar.

He said the federal government should consider the state government's proposal to erect the block on an alternative site. The state had offered a 2,800 sq m piece of land beside the Dewan Sri Pinang, which is just across the road from the court-

house.

SOS secretary Ong Boon Keong voiced his disappointment that the state government had not made a definitive stand against the federal project.

"The state should stand up for the wishes of the people who have elected them to office," he said.

Several organisations, including the Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Tourist Guides Association, have

voiced their disapproval of the federal project claiming the seven-storey block would mar the courthouse vista and jeopardise Penang's nomination to the Unesco's World Heritage Listing.

Heritage tour guide Teresa Pereira said that the courthouse was among the heritage buildings covered in the American Express Heritage Trail.

"As tour guides, we are directly in contact with tour-

ists. How do I explain to them what a modern seven-storey block is doing next to a historical building that is almost a hundred years old?" said Pereira who has been a heritage tour guide for nine years.

She added that tourism in Penang would be affected if efforts to conserve them is reversed by a project that would destroy the heritage harmony of the historical vicinity.

A lesson on history of kongsis for Penang Heritage Trust members

By A. Sangeetha

sangeetha@thesundaymail.com

GEORGE TOWN, Sun: The heavy gates of three Hokkien kongsi swung open to visitors, who marvelled at the rich history and intricate designs of age-old clan houses.

The visitors, who are members of the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT), took a walk through the Khoo, Cheah and Tan kongsis situated at Armenian Street and Cannon Square, before being served a sumptuous nyonya kuih spread this afternoon.

PHT secretary Khoo Salma Nasution gave descriptive narrations of the history and

background of the kongsis and the neighbourhood, which left many visitors awestruck.

Despite the hot sun, the visitors enjoyed the tour as well as the wide food spread.

Khoo, who later spoke to reporters, explained that the visits, which are planned monthly at different locations, are organised by the

PHT, mainly for its members, to allow them to learn about the clans and kongsis, which have existed since the 1800s.

"We want to show them how united the kongsis were in those days, their social ties and kinship. Even today, they remain intact, including the buildings and heritage," said Khoo.

She said the two-and-a-

half-hour walk was aimed at educating members on how the 19th century organisations have come to exist until today, although they started as social associations and enclaves.

"It is amazing how they managed as non-profit associations and have remained so to date," said Khoo.

She said the PHT, which

last year started with the monthly visits to various historical locations including Hindu temples and mosques, hopes to introduce the diverse cultures and communities of Penang to its members.

Khoo said a course in preserving and maintaining heritage buildings and the sharing of resources will be planned in the near future.

Objections against courthouse project

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STAR NOV 9



Dr Choong ... 'the project will block the courthouse vista.'

By ONG JU LYN
and BERNARD SEE

PENANG: The federal project to build a seven-storey block housing a new courthouse and carpark bays within the existing courthouse precinct will destroy the heritage harmony of the historical vicinity, said Penang Heritage Trust president Dr Choong Sim Poey.

He said the project would block the courthouse vista, the definitive design as one entered the historical enclave of George Town.

Built in 1905, the Penang courthouse is one of seven monuments that have been gazetted and protected under the Antiquities Act 1976.

"The courthouse is a landmark within the historical vicinity which includes other heritage buildings such as the St George's Church, the Penang Museum and the Light Street Convent," he told a press conference in Intec College recently.

"The project, approved in 1997, would also mean the removal of the Logan memorial which now stands in the compound of the courthouse," he added.

The monument was built in recognition of lawyer and ethnologist James Richardson Logan who championed political autonomy for the Straits Settlement in the early 1800s.

Dr Choong added that extensive conservation work had been done on these protected buildings and allowing the project to go on would reverse efforts to put George Town in the World Heritage List.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia would be invited to take a tour of the historical building.

"We are against the project as it would damage the century-old building. I hope the minister will be able to see the beauty of the building and keep it as it is."

"If the federal government still insists on the project, the state government will ensure that the style of the carpark is similar to that of that period to reduce the damage," he said.

Dr Koh added that preferably a block 'no higher than the original building' should be allowed within the court

grounds.

State Tourism, Culture, Arts and Women committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen also expressed her disapproval of the federal project.

"We understand that there is a lack of space in our existing courthouse, hence, we have offered an alternative site to build the new block. "Unfortunately, the federal government still insists on the original plan," she said.

The alternative plan proposed by the state was to build the seven-storey block beside the Dewan Sri Pinang, just across from the courthouse.

Penang is in the process of seeking nomination on the UNESCO World Heritage List jointly with Malacca.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, Penang would be accorded heritage status by December 2002.

The six other monuments gazetted under the Antiquities Act 1976 are Fort Cornwallis, the Kapitan Keling Mosque, the Lebuah Acheh Mosque, the Sheikh Omar Basheer Mausoleum, the Clock Tower, and the Batu Bertulis Ceruk Tok Kun in Province Wellesley.

Opinions

Ban hammer-driven piling on historical sites



PENANG Heritage Trust is deeply concerned that hammer-driven piling is still being permitted by the local authorities within George Town's historic enclaves, particularly on sites adjacent to century-old buildings which sit on shallow strip footings or frail mangrove piles and have load bearing walls.

The ramifications are foregone conclusions as highlighted in several high profile incidences such as the Hen Gail Mosque, the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Leith Street and the historic Convent School in Ipoh.

Some 350 pre-war houses were also affected by water-table changes in the Prangin Mall earthworks which caused, among others:

- > severe cracking of structural brick walls, architraves, lintels and tiles;
- > uneven subsidence and upheaval of the ground as constant vibration and displacement of earth occurs;
- > dislodgement of roof, wall and floor tiles;
- > traditional built-in windows and doors being forced out of alignment, rendering them uncloseable;
- > noise and dust pollution; and
- > traffic congestion due to narrow streets being blocked by equipment for pile drivers and cranes.

Some current issues of concern are:

- > the recent collapse of a pre-war building in Beach Street due to new earthworks in an adjoining site which claimed a worker's life;
- > the hammer-driven piling currently taking place in King Street and Kongsi Street, sites of many significant heritage buildings;
- > the submission of plans for the multi-storey extension of yet another hotel directly behind the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion; and
- > the on-going earthworks at several other sites deep within the heritage zones.

The director general of Unesco's Aug 4 announcement of Malaysia's first natural world heritage site stressed the importance of taking adequate measures to preserve the value of a heritage site.

The Malacca state government has stepped in to stop new building works in the historic core of Malacca.

If George Town is to succeed in its application for Cultural World Heritage listing, the state and local governments must be proactive in enforcing its existing laws, as provided for under the Streets, Drainage



and Building Act, for the protection of adjoining properties.

On Dec 16, 1986, the then Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) president Dr. Teng Hock Nan announced that the council would be very cautious in approving earthworks in inner city to protect adjoining sites.

Developers would be required to specify their piling methods and that bore-piling was recommended.

Teng had also said the hammer piling system would not be allowed for construction works within George Town or other dense residential areas because existing houses may be affected, adding that this policy had been effective since August 1986.

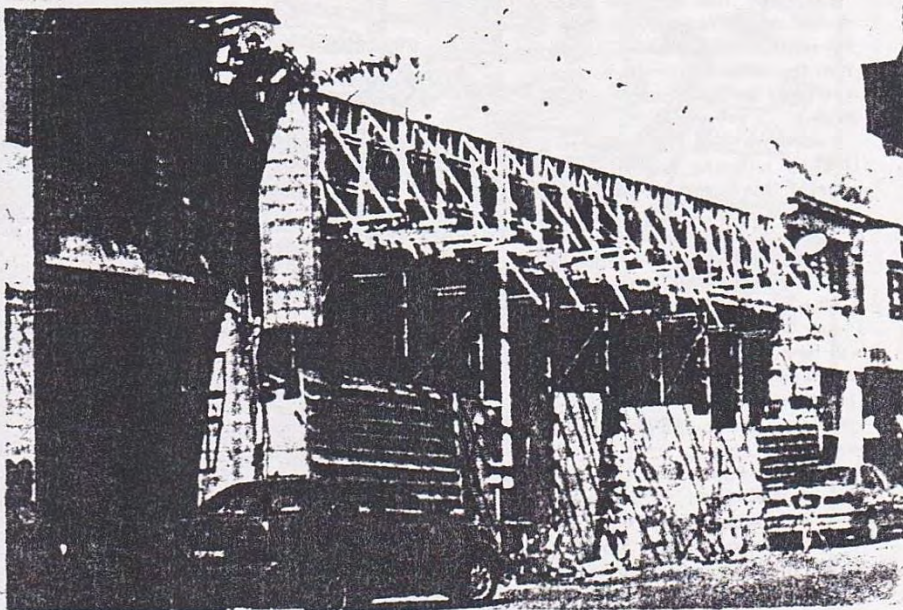
The public wishes to know if the MPPP and the state have now reversed this policy and why.

We urge the MPPP to show commitment to the historic city and to enforce its existing laws and guidelines.

Imposing height and design guidelines for new structures within inner city (respecting and harmonising with neighbouring historic buildings) are completely futile without ensuring that damage and loss are not caused upon neighbouring buildings.

Applying for World Heritage Listing is futile with such scant respect for the buildings and people within the heritage site.

If we wish to profit from being a world heritage site, we have to ensure that the site is protected by laws, by enforcement of those laws and by pro-active measures and vigilant commitment.



The collapse of this pre-war building in Beach Street was triggered by earthworks on the adjacent site. — Courtesy by Anita Mo Hassan



Heritage buildings such as the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion should be adequately protected. — Sunara

Letter

Need to look into problems posed by schoolbuses

SINCE time immemorial, schoolbuses have been providing an invaluable service to the community ferrying children of mostly poor families to and from school, their operators eking out a meagre living in the process.

But, while in bygone days where schoolbuses came in a motley collection of derelicts with a capacity averaging less than a dozen seated passengers, in today's affluent society, it is common to see air-conditioned coaches capa-

ble of ferrying 30 and more passengers seated comfortably on upholstered seats.

However, progress has its share of disadvantages.

> the hitherto low risk of injury to, especially kindergarten and primary school pupils while boarding and alighting from schoolbuses is now in reverse;

> the problems posed by the staggered times of fetching and returning the children to and from their homes and schools, causing many to

wake up very early in the morning and being sent home late in the evening; and

> these veritable "bugbears" of a coach invariably cluttering up the narrow service roads of our housing estates where most poor schools going children live, posing real accident hazards to all and sundry.

The new requirement by the municipal councils that planning for housing schemes with 1,500 units or more has to include a school

adds to the dilemma. Recent and mounting accidents involving loss of life or limb among students demand a decisive remedial action without delay.

The authorities concerned, as well as our City Fathers must put on their thinking caps to help resolve a nasty problem which is fast threatening to get out of hand.

Ng Moon Jeng
Penang

STAND UP AND BE HEARD

The Sunbailand is a free, independent, and non-profit-making publication. It is published weekly, except on public holidays. It is a platform for the expression of views and opinions on local and international issues. It is a forum for the exchange of ideas and information. It is a voice for the people.

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by CHOONG KWEE KIM

Fading of past glory

THE DAYS of the century-old Prangin wholesale market in Penang are numbered but time seems to stand still as a wrinkled trader laments away at his abacus.

Through the years, fewer customers have ventured here where he smells of spices and fresh greens mingle with the pong from the Prangin ditch which cuts through the market.

Like the flow of the refuse-baked water, business is slow at the market which had flourished from the banks of the ditch, once a waterway for the transportation of goods.

Called the *Sia Boey* market in Hokkien meaning "tail end of the society," this legacy of early Straits settlers will soon be demolished when its 200-plus traders are relocated to a spanking new RM62mil market complex five streets away.

Making way for the Komtar Phase V project, the old market will become another casualty of both development and the repeal of the Rent Control Act that has caused a population flight from the inner city.

Since negotiations on its relocation started some 10 years ago, there has been resistance but now that the new complex at Macallum Street Ghaut is ready, the traders have no choice but to move within a few months or close shop.

Despite the miasma of despair at the old marketplace, traders, especially the old timers, feel a deep attachment to the market which had filled the family rice bowl for generations.

Taking his eyes off his abacus and his accounts book, Chan Thuan Soon, 78, recalls the time when the market used to be *lei it chut nua* (the most famous).

"*Sia Boey* used to be number one. Retailers would cycle all the way from rural Balik Pulau and Butterworth in the mainland to buy goods from us.

The bicycles — with large baskets at the back — used to be lined up in a row, waiting to be loaded with goods," says Chan in his chinaman Hokkien as he sits cross-legged on a stool surrounded by gunny sacks of dry goods.

Chan, who hails from China, came to work in the market not long after World War II which destroyed the vegetable section of the market.

"When I came, this building was already here and so were those decorative imported wrought-iron brackets supporting the roof outside," says Chan, pointing to the heritage features on the market building.

Only the dry goods, fish and meat sections are housed in a concrete building with minimal decorative iron pillars and brackets, while the other stalls are a conglomeration of tin roof, wire mesh and wood.

Wooden bridges in the centre linking both sides of the market are littered with salted fish, onions and all things sundry.

Salted fish wholesaler Chuan Teong Hoo, 58, and his son Hock Hin, 28, welcome the move to a cleaner and more spacious market.

Hock Hin feels it is time to move on since the population in the inner city has dwindled because of the repeal of the Rent Control Act and decent rental spiralling.

Traders at *Sia Boey* rent lots

Going soon ... aerial view of Sia Boey market taken from the top of the new Prangin Mall. The market is bounded by Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong on the left and Maxwell Road on the right.

— Picture by Goh Galk Lee



acts like *hare kue* (prawn paste), belacan, sambal rojak, and imported dried shrimps and anchovies from Thailand to supplement his income.

Fish wholesaler Kung Thean Seong, 46, recalls the glory of three decades ago when *Sia Boey* was the best around with all the concrete slabs at the market fully occupied, a far cry from the miserable three today.

"But now, I get to occupy all the empty space and face less competition. I still prefer it here because I'm not sure if business will survive at the new place which is not in the town centre," says Kung.

Vegetable wholesaler Yeoh Chip Hin, 54, remembers the heyday of the 1950s when truckloads of vegetables would arrive from neighbouring states and other parts of the island throughout the day and night.

Indeed many traders and locals can recall an exciting past when all things organic spilt onto the road under a haphazard extension of canvas shelters and a swelling crowd drawn by the rock-bottom prices.

The action never stopped even after sundown. The market was lighted like a beacon. The din of loading and unloading activities and the drone of lorries held still of the night while the sun slept on.

Before the crack of dawn, all the goods would have been distributed to other markets in time for the early birds out marketing.

The hawkers have also seen better days when all the tables were packed, despite the stench from the ditch.

The lure of food like the famous *teochew porridge* and other cheap and tasty local delights attracted not just hungry customers almost round the clock but also stray cats and dogs conveniently dumped there by their owners.

For *hoay tou* (thing seller) Lam Hock Seung, 37, three generations of toil in front of a hot stove here has come to an end as he has not purchased a stall at the new market.

"One hawker stall costs over RM27,000 and it is not as big as the present place. I'm looking for another place nearer home to start anew," says Lam.

Also among those not moving is the *tau sar piah* and *Tambun* biscuit maker whose fingers work non-stop on the dough even if speaks of the dying family trade.

● TURN TO PAGE 4

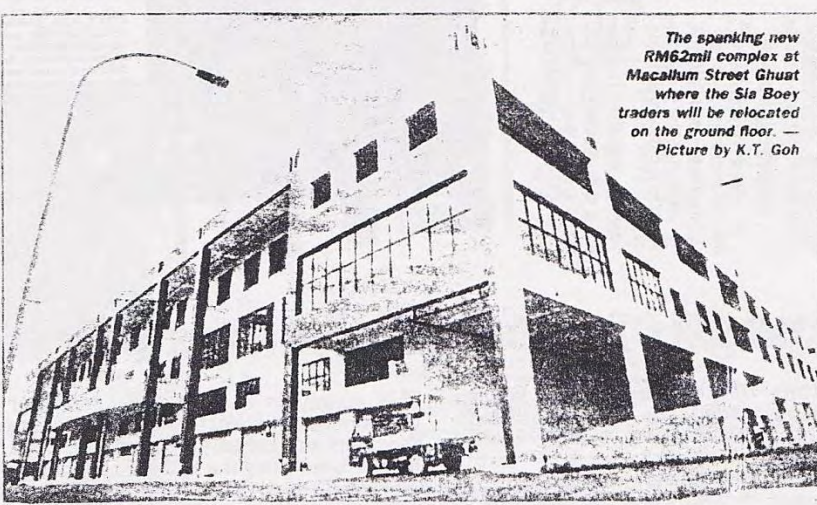
from the local council (at RM50 a month) but at the new place, we can buy up the lots which is better since the stalls belong to us now," says Chuan Teong Guan, 44, Hock Lai's uncle.

Teong Guan, who helped his father trade salted fish since he was 22, is now a distributor serving retailers in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong.

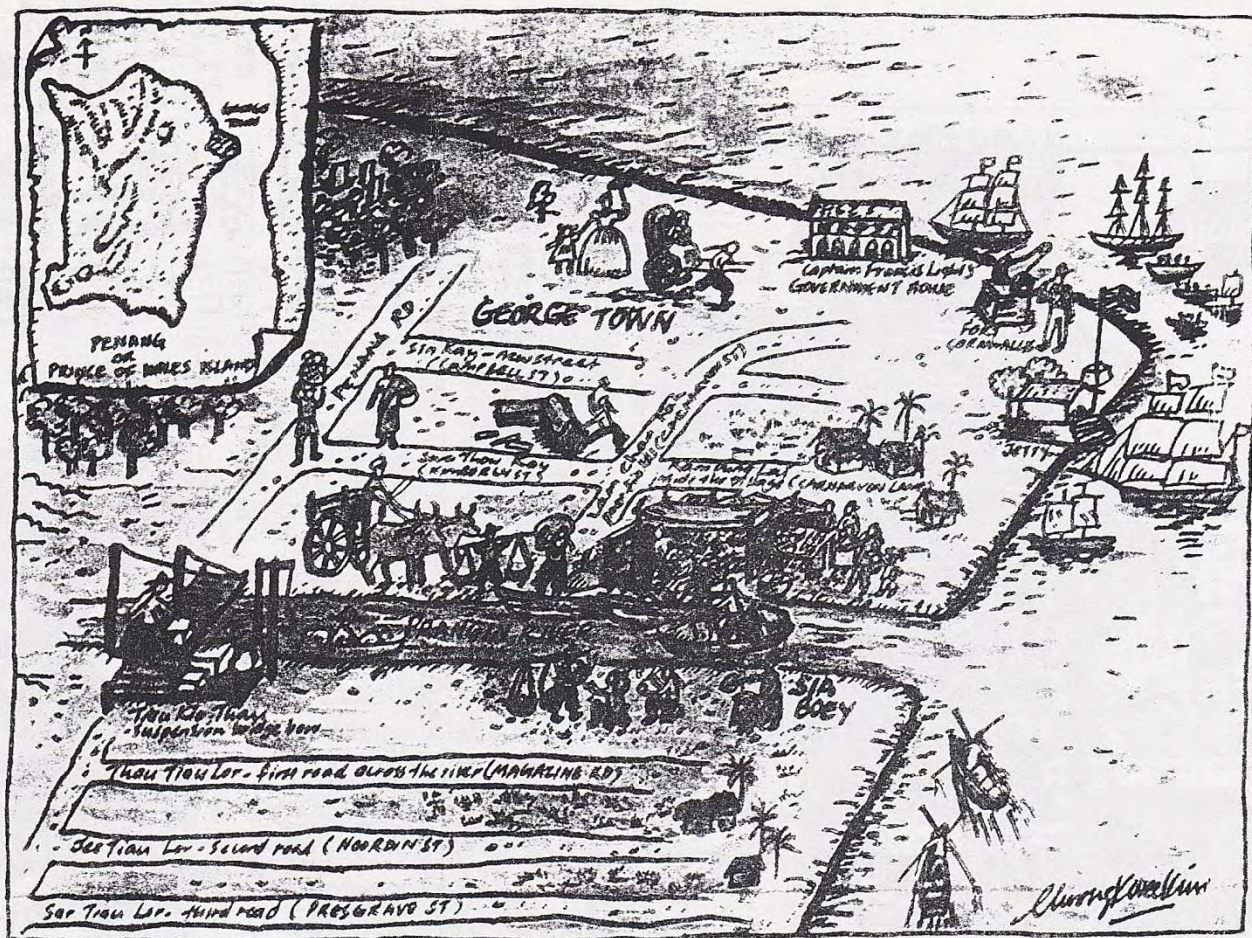
He has not forgotten the hardship his 77-year-old father, Ewe Peow, went through to build a trading foundation for two generations of offsprings at *Sia Boey*.

Teong Guan remembers how his father, who came from China at the age of 17, used to ride an old bicycle to the Weld Quay waterfront to view the cargo of salted fish that came on small wooden ships from Burma.

After Penang lost its free port status in the 1960s, Ewe Peow diversified and included local prod-



The spanking new RM62mil complex at Macallum Street Ghaut where the Sia Boey traders will be relocated on the ground floor. — Picture by K.T. Goh



Back to the past ... an impression of Sia Boey market in its early days in 19th century George Town. — Illustration by Choong Kwee Kim

Paths of yesteryear

ONE OF the darkest moments in the history of the Prangin wholesale market was during World War II when the Japanese launched an air strike in the heart of George Town just next to the market.

As some locals vaguely remember, the target was a row of bullock carts or rickshaws parked along Prangin Road, now Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong.

Thinking that the vehicles, with handles facing skyward, were anti-aircraft machines, the Japanese launched an attack that wiped out the vehicles and the vegetable section of the Sia Boey market as it is popularly known among the locals.

As the warplanes came swooping low, firing a hail of bullets, people on the ground ran helter-skelter with some diving into the Prangin ditch for cover.

"The 3rd day of the 10th lunar month is a significant memorial day to many families because that date in 1941 (Dec 11) was when many people, including my great-grandfather, were killed in the attack on the market," says Datuk Yesh Chup Tong, chairman of the Prangin Market Traders Association.

Yesh's great-grandfather was killed at the vegetable section but his father was, luckily, not in the market at that fateful moment.

The market building was apparently spared and the damaged stalls were rebuilt by surviving traders and the municipal council.

"The origin of the market can be traced back to more than 150 years ago. The old breed of traders recall that it was already called a century-old market when they first arrived there from China before World War II."

Malaysia Chinese Historical Relic Survey deputy research director Ong Seng Hunt said maps dating back to the 1860s showed there were large pockets of swampy land south of the Prangin River and to the north around the present Carnarvon Street.

"Nobody knows whether Sia Boey already existed then, but the river was already an important channel for tongkangs and sampans to bring agricultural goods from the mainland or other rural parts of the island via sea route to the inner town," says Ong.

Some rags-to-riches legends told of a number of early Chinese settlers who found their fortune from the activities along the Prangin River, including Khoo Soo Hong, co-founder of the Khoo Kongsi established in 1851.

"Khoo came from China, a poor boat boy and filial son with a mother to feed. He got his big break from working at the river, though it was not clear what he did exactly," says Ong.

"It was said that an *ang nur* (Westerner) was instrumental in helping him make his fortune. Khoo later prospered, becoming an important leader, and he co-founded the Khoo Kongsi, one of the richest clanhouses here."

"If this legend is true, then we can only suspect that a market could have existed at the present Sia Boey site even earlier, before the Khoo Kongsi was set up."

During the 19th century, Ong said the Chinese settlers were largely concentrated on the northern side of the river, while the southern side was swampy and unpopulated.

Ong said Sia Boey market, literally meaning "tail end of the society or community" was called thus because of its location by the Prangin river which was at the edge of town in those days.

However, another version has it that the name meant a place where scraps and all things sundry and cheap were sold.

After 1890, the southern part of Prangin ditch became more populated with the arrival of many Chinese immigrants from Hui An district in China.

"They stayed along Kuay Kheng Ah, meaning 'across the river' (now the area around Jalan C.Y. Choy) and this population is believed to have supported the market activities and retail business at Sia Boey," says Ong.

In his article, *Of Cattle Pens and Poor Fields in the Pulau Pinang magazine*, Dr Goh Yian Lee, former associate professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia's Centre for Policy Research, wrote that beyond the southern part of the Prangin River was a large Chinese settlement known as Kuay Kheng Ah.

As the settlement expanded southward, the roads were serialised, from *Thau Tian Lor* (first road over the river) at Magazine Road, *Jay Tian Lor* (second road at Nordin Street) up to *Chit Tian Lor* (seventh road) at Cecil Street.

He also wrote that the Penang Road (Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong) junction was known as *Tian Kio Thau* meaning "suspension bridge" named after a bridge across Prangin River.

Carnarvon Street on the north-eastern side of the Prangin River was called *Lam Chan Nah* meaning "poor quality fields" as the place was swampy before it was reclaimed.

And so it was within this historical backdrop that Sia Boey market slowly crept into the scene, starting with some humble shacks and eventually getting its own proper building.

Oral history has it that the market probably started with a few squatters selling agricultural goods on the Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong side.

On the other side, hawkers peddled cooked food carried in containers hung from both ends of a pole balanced on the shoulder.

The present concrete building housing the dried goods, fish and meat sections was said to be built by the former British municipality.

Khoo Soo Hong's great-great-granddaughter Khoo Su Nin alias Khoo Sidma Naitson noted that the decorative structures of iron and wood in the Sia Boey buildings were similar to the original Chowrasta Market building erected in 1890.

In her article *The Historical Market Place* published in *Pulau Pinang* magazine, Khoo said the activities at the Prangin waterway in the old days were similar to that of a floating market. Khoo, who is the Prangin Heritage Trust secretary, wrote that the Malays used to call Sia Boey market *Ulu M. Besar*, also meaning the end section of town. — By Choong Kwee Kim

Tug-of-war over Penang Town Hall



THE Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) has been asked to "return" the Penang Town Hall at the Esplanade to the people instead of converting it for administrative use.

The building, which has not been used by the MPPP for about nine years, was specifically designed to serve as a "civic and cultural centre" in George Town when it was built in 1880.

The town hall has been gazetted under the Antiquities Act to protect it from demolition or improper alterations.

Any significant changes to its structure are subject to strict regulations administered by Muzium Negara.

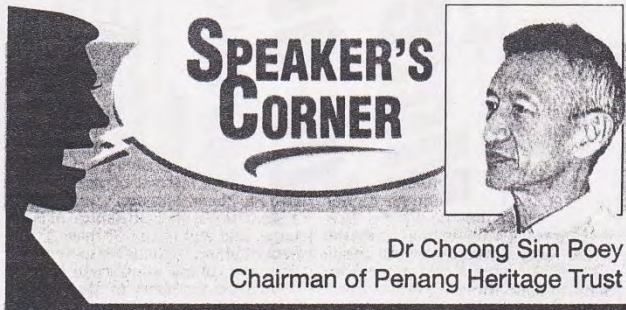
It is likely that major alterations to convert it for administrative use will contravene these regulations.

Recently, 26 organisations wrote a letter to the MPPP to appeal for the return of the town hall. The following is a copy of the letter:

“Declared open in 1880 and upgraded in 1890, the town hall was built to fulfil social functions, having within its spacious interiors, an assembly hall, a library, and a ballroom where weddings, parties and other events were celebrated.

For over 64 years, from 1890 to 1954, it also maintained a town band, for the pure enjoyment of the citizens of Penang, holding open-air concerts in the bandstand at the Esplanade as well as the Botanic Gardens.

When the City Hall was completed in 1903 to accommodate the municipal offices, the town hall was again upgraded, emerging as one of the first buildings in Penang to be completely fitted with electric lights and fans, for the added comfort of its public users.



Dr Choong Sim Poy
Chairman of Penang Heritage Trust

It is clear that the people of inner city George Town require the use of a public building that has been custom-made for civic and cultural usage.

It should be noted that the proposed civic centre at Komtar phase 4, promised to the public more than 25 years ago by the Penang government, has never materialised.

A large number of citizens, arts and professional groups wish to urge the MPPP to return the town hall to the people of Penang to be used as a civic centre.

Its restoration and refurbishment to meet the needs of the Penang public in general and the downtown urban community in particular, would be one more factor justifying the recent selection of the city George Town as a United Nations Development Programme 'lead city', and 'one of the six most liveable cities in Asia'.

The following plans are enclosed as preliminary concept proposals for usage of the space. These are based on perceived needs as well as viable financial returns to the MPPP.

In general, they encompass:

➤ a medium-sized venue for the per-

forming arts;

➤ a venue for public meetings and functions that is disabled-friendly and accessible at street level to all, including the elderly;

➤ a location for the State Art Gallery (currently inaccessible to many), transient exhibitions, an information centre and a cafe;

➤ a venue for receptions and *kenduri* for the downtown population; and

➤ a specialist "Malaysiana/Penang" collection library/reading room.

The town hall would continue to remain under the guardianship of the MPPP.

The successful management of the town hall as a civic and cultural centre would be ensured with the setting up of a management committee comprising of the MPPP and some of the arts, civic and community organisations utilising the premises.

We thank you for your consideration and we trust you and your councillors will very seriously review this request.

A favourable response will be met with great appreciation by many sectors of the public.



Contested space ... the Penang Town Hall at the Esplanade. — SUNPIX

300 Khoo Kongsi tenants face eviction

By ONG JU LYNN STAR, Thus
and SYLVIA LOOI 1 Feb 2001

PENANG: More than 300 long-term tenants of about 100 pre-war houses belonging to the Khoo Kongsi in Cannon Square will have to vacate their homes to make way for a tourism project.

SOS secretary Ong Boon Keong said yesterday the tenants would gradually be evicted after the one-year lease they had been asked to sign recently expired.

Ong was referring to the proposed plan to turn the Khoo Kongsi heritage enclave in Cannon Square into a "tourism complex" which had been approved by the Penang Municipal Council.

It is learnt that planning permission had been given to convert the Khoo Kongsi Temple square houses into commercial lots consisting of antique, and souvenir shops, bookshops and food outlets.

Ong added that 20 tenants within the Cannon Square had been given the ultimatum of signing a final one-year tenancy agreement at 100% to 200% increase in rentals, or face eviction if they did not leave by March 31.

"The Khoo Kongsi development typifies the unpopular mass displacement of George Town's original inhabitants after the coming into effect of rent decontrol last year," said Ong.

He added that throwing out the people to convert houses into tourist haunts is a blend of tourism development that is "unimaginative" and "misguided."

Ong said it appeared that the repeal of the Rent Control Act 1966 had been exploited to justify heartless eviction of inhabitants in favour of a multi-million heritage development project.

Penang and Malacca are jointly seeking the Unesco World Heritage Listing, and barring unfor-

seen circumstances, will be awarded the status by December 2002.

The affected residents ad-hoc committee assistant secretary Loke Saw Sim said residents had been trying to meet the trustee of Khoo Kongsi since receiving the eviction notice in March 1999.

She said that initially, the residents had asked for a compensation of RM30,000 but it was lowered down to RM20,000 after the trustee had offered a flat rate of RM5,000 to the residents.

Describing the residents as being caught in the middle, Loke said they were either forced to take the compensation or signed a new tenancy agreement.

Most of the residents do not have alternative housing.

The committee's secretary Goh Hun I g said the residents were "helpless people" and hoped that the authorities would step in to help them.



PENSIVE MOOD... (from right) Goh, Loke and Ong speaking on the plight of the affected tenants at the press conference yesterday.

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HomeNews

PHT project to empower inner city residents

Programmes to be conducted for women and youths in George Town

By **Christina Gurunathan**
chrisg@thesundaily.com

PENANG, Sun: The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) will conduct a year-long development programme in an effort to strengthen and empower Muslim community dwellings in the inner city of George Town.

The RM30,000 project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency under its Women's Initiative Fund, will target some 100 women and 80 youths in the precincts surrounding Acheen Street and the Kapitan Keling mosque.

"The women and youth play an important role as custodians of their

heritage and historic environment," PHT secretary Khoo Salma Nasution told a press conference on the project at the trust's office on Jalan Stewart yesterday.

Khoo said following the repeal of the Rent Control Act, many of the residents had to move out and now live in poor conditions.

"Through the project, we want to engage the women in urban governance and improving housing conditions and the urban environment."

Khoo said heritage conservation is incomplete without developing the community socio-economically and instilling in them the pride of living in the area.

"We want the women and youth to be interpreters of their history. Their

heritage, prosperity and well-being are important to the cultural diversity of inner city George Town which is being nominated for World Heritage status," she said.

She said PHT will conduct a survey to gauge the socio-economic status, literacy rate and educational needs of the community members.

Several skills development programmes in business, management, information and education, community talks, cultural training and development will also be conducted for the women and youths.

The High Commissioner of Canada, Jean McCloskey, said the fund is to strengthen the capacity of women to take part in social, economic and political decision-making in Malaysia.

PHT acts to preserve, spur traditional trades

By HWA MEI SHEN

STAR, Tuesday
12 Dec 2000

PENANG: Worried that effects of the repeal of the Rent Control Act will kill off traditional trades in George Town, the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) has launched a project aimed at protecting these activities.

Project coordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee said the PHT had embarked on the project with a small grant from the state government as it was vital to preserve trades that form part of Penang's heritage.

"Under the project, we are collecting data, identifying possible endangered trades and suggesting solutions for the continuance and revitalisation of these trades," she said yesterday.

According to her, the repeal of the Act was not the only reason why trades were in danger of dying out.

"Some of them may not be attractive to the younger generations because of the nature of the job or the low returns," she noted.

Loh-Lim said the project, which started

in September, involved the identification of streets in the inner city and the recording and photographing of all commercial activities.

"We are also recording other buildings - residential, derelict or vacant - in order to present realistic direction for relocation or retention in future proposals," she said.

Other aspects include extensive discussions with traders during the data collection process and the identification of core or nucleus buildings integral to the surrounding trades such as markets, places of worship or banks.

The final part of the project calls for recommendations for proactive moves to retain and aid endangered trades.

Those interested are invited to provide the PHT with cases and addresses of individual trades or particular trade-areas which they feel are endangered as well as suggestions for revitalisation of such trades.

For details, call Sujatha at the PHT (☎ 2642631/2645487).

THE SUN, THURSDAY 22 FEB. 2001

Pedestrian mall plan flawed, says Unesco rep

By Agnes James
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GEORGE TOWN, Wed: Although attempts by the Penang Island Municipal Council to turn Lebuhraya Campbell into a pedestrian mall were "noble", the plan seemed flawed, said Unesco Asia Pacific representative Elizabeth Vines yesterday.

"I would caution against more Campbell Streets," said Vines who is also a conservation architect.

She said fully pedestrian malls around the world have reverted to allowing limited vehicular activity as they bring life and activity into an area.

Among the flaws in question are the covered drains. Vines said open drains are part of the unique character



Vines ... cautions against more Campbell Streets

of Penang and that covers would only lead to blockages.

"The issue should be to educate people not to litter drains and to clean up these drains more frequently."

Vines also said the tiles used on the street would start to look "shabby" with time, and that the seats at the mall

were simply not conducive.

"The seats are very difficult to use. Seats must be made comfortable to make people feel welcome and want to engage in conversation."

"Campbell Street should be reassessed as the open spaces are taken up by seats which no one can sit on," she said, adding that "well-selected" plants could be placed around the mall.

Vines said this in her talk on Authenticity and Conservation - New Development, Signage and Commercial Reality Issues at the Town Hall.

Earlier, she said Penang had reached a crossroad and the challenge at hand was how to manage the rapid growth and at the same time retain its unique character.

"The challenge now is to meet these changes, which are inevitable, but at the same time retain the unique characteristics of Penang."

Project 'may not comply with Act'

PENANG: The approved seven-storey block extension to the 95-year-old Penang High Court in Lebuhraya Farquhar may not comply with the 1996 amended Town and Country Planning Act, said Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution.

"In approving the project, the federal government may have overlooked crucial sections of the law pertaining to the erection of buildings in the vicinity of historical buildings and monuments," she added.

"Section 22 (5)(i) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1996 states that where the development concerns the erection of a new building, permission may be refused by the local authority if conditions to ensure compatibility with the architecture, character or appearance depicted in the buildings located in the surrounding area are not complied.

"In the case of the High Court extension, the proposed seven-storey block is clearly incompatible with the surrounding landscape. The erection of the block would mar the High Court vista, dominating the High Court which has been a significant landmark within the historical enclave of inner-city George Town."

Khoo Salma added that the local

authority, which the Penang Municipal Council (MPPC), was empowered to exercise that right to refuse permission whether it was a small time developer or, in this case, the federal government.

The Penang Municipal Council Town Planning Department director Tan Thean Siew, however, refused to comment on the matter.

The controversial federal project has been vociferously opposed by the state government and non-government organisations.

The Penang Heritage Trust, Save Ourselves (SOS), and the Penang Tourist Guides Association have come forward to object to the project.

They pointed out that the erection of the block would break the harmony of heritage architecture in the vicinity, comprising historical buildings such as the High Court, the Light Street Convent, the St George's Church and the Penang Museum.

The Star on Nov 14 reported that the state government, fearing that the project would jeopardise Penang's application for the Unesco World Heritage Listing, had offered an alternative site opposite Dewan Sri Penang for extension project.

Incongruous to build high-rise in old enclave

BADAN Warisan Malaysia is deeply concerned with the proposal to build a seven-storey carpark-cum-office block in the forecourt of the historic High Court Building in Farquhar Street, Penang.

Based on any known conservation guidelines, a seven-storey building of this magnitude and mass is incongruous within the two-storey scale of Penang's oldest historical enclave.

Badan Warisan and Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) had previously objected to a similar proposal and had recommended an alternative which took cognisance of the whole urban setting in terms of orientation,

relationship to adjoining buildings and scale.

PHT in a statement issued on Nov 8 had raised several valid objections to this proposal. We applaud the forward thinking of Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who has endorsed the views of PHT and for his support for conservation legislation.

Badan Warisan strongly supports the views of the state government and the PHT in these matters.

This is even more so within Unesco's preceding views on Penang's historical context. The erection of this seven-storey building will undoubtedly jeopardise Penang and Malacca's joint submission for World Heritage

Listing

This latest incident effectively demonstrates the urgent need for a comprehensive heritage law with conservation guidelines and management mechanisms according to internationally accepted standards.

Badan Warisan Malaysia is actively pursuing this by developing a working relationship with planning authorities to promote viable guidelines on heritage conservation of the very limited and diminishing stock of heritage buildings in our cities.

BADAN WARISAN MALAYSIA, Penang.

STAR 27 Nov 2000

Monday

THE SUN Monday 19 February 2001

Committee still waiting for word over relocation of Lebuhr Campbell wet market

By **Christina Gurunathan**
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GEORGE TOWN, Sun: Relocating the 111-year-old Lebuhr Campbell wet market will only burden the people who routinely patronise the market for their daily provisions.

Kapitan Kelang Mosque restora-

tion committee member Muslimah Naim said although the committee submitted its opposition to the move to the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) last year, the council had yet to reply.

"We wrote to the MPPP last year urging it not to relocate the market as it will only make it difficult for us to do our marketing."

"However, until now, we have yet

to get a reply," she said after a press conference on heritage revitalisation through women and youth projects at the Penang Heritage Trust's office in Jalan Stewart yesterday.

She said this in response to a proposal made two years ago to convert the wet market into a handicraft centre or a dry market to harmonise with the street's semi-shopping mall concept.

The then MPPP president Dr Teng Hock Nan had said the wet market "did not fit in" with the shophouse concept of the RM2.2 million pedestrian mall.

Teng had said: "Since the wet market is part and parcel of Carnarvon Street, we need to look into harmonising the area so that tourists will be attracted to it."

"However, the MPPP will have to

undergo consultation and planning before executing any plan for it."

Muslimah said there are many other outlets in the state where tourists can obtain souvenir items or even jewellery.

"If they (tourists) want to purchase jewellery, they can always visit the jewellers in Lebuhr Pitt. And there are many other places they can buy souvenirs from."