



PHT Newsletter

Issue No. 95/ April 2009

Support Conservation Efforts in Your Community!

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**PENANG
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TRUST**

**Persatuan
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PHT

Editorial (1) - Vision Without A Plan?

Almost a year since the listing of George Town and Malacca as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, sadly there has been little to show for this historic achievement except controversy in Penang. Plans to build four high-rise hotels, two in George Town's heritage core and two in the buffer zone have raised concerns about the management of George Town as a World Heritage Site. Arguing that three of these projects were approved before the 8th March 2008 general election and the other one between the election and before the UNESCO listing in July 2008 is missing the point. Finger pointing over dates merely obscures the reality that these projects if allowed to proceed would seriously compromise the integrity of George Town's historic cityscape and perhaps even jeopardize the city's World Heritage listing.



This is particularly true of the two hotel projects on Weld Quay. Not only would they be out of character with the late 19th and early 20th century agency houses lining this historic harbourfront road but in one case would overshadow the elegant clock tower of the imposing former Malayan Railways building (the present Wisma Kastam). Built in 1907, this edifice stands out in the city's skyline as seen from ships and ferries in the harbour. Surely this classic heritage building deserves a better fate than to be submerged in a hotel and condo complex.

Of the two controversial hotel projects in the buffer zone it is ironic that one of them is an extension for a famous hotel that lays special claim to heritage status. The recent decision of this hotel, however, to suspend work on the proposed extension pending

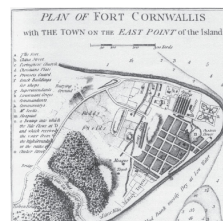
clarification of the height issue is to be welcomed. Such corporate responsibility should be emulated by developers of the other hotel projects instead of resorting to public threats of legal action as one of them has done. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's announcement of the stand of the State government and Municipal Council on height restrictions for the four controversial hotel projects has been applauded by PHT. This makes it clear that no developer should be allowed to pursue its short-term interests at the expense of the long-term public interest and the future of George Town as a World Heritage Site.

Another controversy is the eviction of inner city tenants in George Town by property owners who think every shophouse can be turned into a boutique guesthouse, up-market coffee house or souvenir shop. Accompanying this human tragedy, with its echoes of an earlier eviction following the repeal of rent control, is the loss of local trades and small businesses that provide a livelihood for city dwellers whose presence is essential if George Town is to remain a city of living cultures rather than become a tourist theme park.

Although the vision for George Town as a World Heritage Site may be clear, implementation of a master plan for its management lies at the heart of these issues. The Penang Heritage Trust is urging the authorities, federal, state and municipal, to work together to negotiate a reasonable and rationale compromise that will safeguard the World Heritage Listing -- not only for George Town but also for Malacca and for all Malaysians -- while meeting the legitimate interests of developers in this quandary.

Guest Editor

**CITY OF GEORGE TOWN
WORLD HERITAGE SITE**



SAVE THE PENANG HILL RAILWAY!

As this issue goes to print, we have learnt to our dismay that the authorities intend to proceed apace with plans to destroy the Penang Hill Railway and replace it with a new system.

The idea of replacing the almost one hundred year old two-stage funicular railway with a single system that would dispense with the requirement for passengers to change trains at Middle Station was mooted in 2006. We thought the idea had died a deserving death. The historic Penang Hill Railway is one of the symbols of Penang. Surviving war and enemy occupation this marvel of early twentieth century technology draws tourists from around the world. Their

interest is not to get up Penang Hill ten minutes more quickly but to enjoy the views while experiencing the thrill of traveling in an engineering classic. If the old railway needs repair and maintenance then by all means do what is necessary but do not spend millions to destroy something that should be cherished for what it is – a vital and beautiful part of Penang's heritage. Guest Editor

**UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE~ ISSUES**

The Sun 26 March 2009

'High-rise projects will threaten Unesco status'

By Opalyn Mok
newsdesk@thetribune.com

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) has urged the state government to negotiate with developers who want to pursue high-rise projects in the heritage city of George Town.

The president, Dr Choo Beng Siu, said the current vertical high-rise projects, if allowed to proceed with their original plans, will threaten the city's Unesco status as conferred on July 7 last year.

"It is possible to negotiate with developers to not build high-rise and corporate social responsibility as the original action is taken," he said in a statement.

He said it is important for the state to establish the principle that no developer should be allowed to pursue the short-term interests over long-term gains of the city as a world heritage site.

"The Unesco recognition should be a matter of national pride, and damage to our image in the international community will be enormous if we lose our world heritage site status."

He addressed the nomination dossier approved by Unesco in granting World Heritage Listing to George Town and Malacca, has specified new constraints in George Town be capped at 18 metres.

Planning permission for highrises withheld

theSun | TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2009

by Himanshu Bhatt
newsdesk@thetribune.com

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang government has withheld planning permission on four controversial high-rise projects in the Unesco-listed heritage city of George Town in order not to pre-empt or contravene any notice of the world body.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPC) was mulling over cautiously until a Unesco decision on the status of the projects in June.

He said the state had been advised by the UN body as well as the Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry not to publicly discuss the matter but to deal with it confidentially.

"Until this is resolved, we want to proceed carefully," Lim said, stressing that the state was concerned about preserving and protecting the city's heritage.

Unesco had first expressed concern over the projects in November.

Three – developed by Eastern & Oriental Hotel Sdn Bhd (84m high), Bequest Holdings Bhd (51m) and Asian Global Business Sdn Bhd (AGB) (51m) – were approved by the former Barisan Nasional state government.

The fourth, by Bintang Holding Sdn Bhd (84m) – located on the edge of the heritage zone – was approved on June 26 last year, 10 days before George Town's World Heritage Listing.

It is understood that the nomination dossier approved by Unesco in listing George Town and Malacca had capped new building projects in George Town at 18m.

AGB has reportedly said it is considering legal redress against the state government and MPPC.

"I sympathise with the developer because their project was approved by the previous state government," Lim said at a press conference on Sunday.

"Because of our commitment to heritage, we have refused to allow them to proceed. Naturally, the developers concerned are unhappy."

"This shows we have not given preferential treatment. This is a legacy of the past. We will face it."

Lim urged the parties involved in drafting the dossier to come forward and cooperate with the state government "so that we can present a good case to Unesco".

He said there were amendments in the dossier that were not recorded by some agencies and that his administration approved one project based on records left by the previous government.

Lim also called on civil society and heritage groups not to make allegations against the state based on approvals issued by the former BN government.

"Heritage groups, in a way, also expose themselves, have done heritage conservation a disservice."

"Now that a developer wants to sue us for millions, do you hear the heritage groups saying anything?"

NIO NATION THE STAR, SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2008

Heritage rules for new projects

Guan Eng pledges to protect, preserve and promote George Town zones

GEORGE TOWN: All new projects proposed in the heritage core and buffer zones will from now on have to abide by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) guidelines.

This is the assurance given by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng following concerns raised over the approval of four high-rise hotels exceeding the maximum 18m height set by the WHC.

"George Town belongs to the people and the country. Thus, we have to protect, preserve and promote the existing heritage sites. The (WHC) guidelines are there to be followed," Lim said yesterday after unveiling five new multilingual street signs in the inner city.

The Penang government recently found itself in a quandary after it was revealed that the four proposed

hotels violated WHC guidelines. The projects were all approved before George Town was recognised as a Unesco world-heritage site on July 7.

Meanwhile, the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) Penang expressed concern over the increasing restrictions imposed on development in the heritage core and buffer zones.

Rehda Penang said in a press release yesterday that the many conditions, such as the 18m height control for new buildings, affected development potential and economic value of properties within these zones.

It said these conditions and guidelines were being justified by heritage bodies on the basis of the listing of George Town as a Unesco World

»George Town belongs to the people and the country«

LIM GUAN ENG



Heritage City, and the potential loss of the listing, unless the conditions were adhered to.

"Application for listing was made without any public participation, input or consultation, and no public forum as to the meaning and conse-

quences of a successful listing was held or conducted.

"The dossier and the management plan submitted to Unesco by the heritage consultants remain privileged and confidential documents," read the press release.

Rehda Penang said it was part of a group in the late 1990s that drafted guidelines for the inner city, with height controls that took into consideration locations and plot sizes with due thought for existing neighbourhood character and use.

It said the public needed to know the contents of the dossier and the management plan submitted to Unesco.

"Their property rights are affected, and as long as there is no disclosure, the public is left to grope in the dark," it said.

The Pier Hub project, which includes the Rice Miller Hotel in Weld Quay, was made known to the WHC well before George Town's inscription in July this year, said its developer Asian Global Business Sdn Bhd.

Director Dr Noraini Abdullah, in a statement, said the 12,950sq metre project was also presented to the state planning and tourism committees, and was received and endorsed by the previous state government.

The 51.7m Rice Miller boutique hotel is one of four high-rise hotels in the heritage core zone.

► See StarMetro

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Sun 23.12.08

Longtime tenants told to move out

by Himanshu Bhatt
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

GEORGE TOWN: George Town's cultural heritage faces a new threat as traditional communities across the inner city are forced to vacate their premises to make way for businesses like boutique hotels, pubs and restaurants.

It is learnt that age-old tenants in at least five neighbourhoods, who have been plying their trades since before the Second World War, have been told to move out by their landlords following Unesco's recognition of the city as a World Heritage Site.

Residents interviewed by theSun confirmed that they had been issued notices to vacate, some having to move out as early as the end of the month.

Affected areas include the historic Armenian Street, Carnation Lane, Beach Street, Campbell Street and Stewart Lane.

A source said most evictions were in order following an escalating trend among property owners to jack up rentals and commercialise their premises.

Ironically, Unesco's evaluation of George Town and Malacca has emphasised the critical importance of preserving living cultures, while warning against the negative impact of commercial tourism on the sites.

When contacted, the representative of a terrace block owner on Armenian Street — where the movie *Anna and the King* was shot — said the property had been transferred to an Australian who plans to develop it into a boutique hotel.

"We would like to encourage the development of tourism in Penang to boost the economy," the representative, who declined to be named, said.



Narayanasamy has been operating his scrap business on Armenian Street for more than 60 years.



He stressed that the project, supported by a leading bank, would abide by heritage guidelines imposed by the Penang Island Municipal Council.

However, all residents have been told to vacate by the end of the year.

S. Narayanasamy, 58, who operates a traditional scrap business on Armenian Street that began more than 60 years ago, said he was looking for another shophouse on the same street but new rentals were too high.

"Our customers know we have been located here for years. If we move out, it will be very hard for us," he said, adding that his sons and daughter also work at the shop.

Traditional wine dealer Tan

Seok H'ng, whose business has existed on Carnation Lane since 1940, has been asked to vacate by March.

Tan plans to either move to a new industrial area in Jelutong or shut down his business.

Housewife Chew Joon Long (right), 68, whose family has resided on Armenian Street for at least five generations, said they still prefer to stay in the inner city.

"I feel very sad. This house holds so many fond memories," she said.

Also affected are several iconic shops along the financial artery

of Beach Street. These include the Green Silk Store, founded in 1947, and EJ Motiwala, established in 1886.

A spokesman for Green Silk Store said the family business, once patronised by royalty and figures like Tunku Abdul Rahman, cannot sustain the surging rental.

Abuli Motiwala, a partner at Motiwala, said it was the most popular stationery shop in George Town before Merdeka.

Although told to move out, the company is trying to find alternative premises within the inner city, he said.



22 April 2009

Statement by Friends of Penang Hill.

On the 16th April the Federal JKR invited contractors to tender for the upgrading on the Penang Hill funicular railway system. The tender closes on 11 May, giving interested parties a mere 21 days. As we understand it the new system will do away with the middle station, the total replacement of the entire machinery, the cables and carriages and entails extensive modification of the existing tracks. The budget for the project is RM 40 million and the contract is expected to take about one year.

We are calling this press conference to record our serious reservations about two aspects of this exercise.

As a preliminary we wish to emphasise:

1. We are not against upgrading the existing funicular system, provided it is done in consultation of all stake holders and in a transparent manner.
2. We welcome any Federal fund for Penang, and we are aware of the need of economic stimulus during these difficult times.
3. This press conference is not called to cast any aspersions on any party.
4. The Friends of Penang Hill is a citizens group which is not aligned to any political party. It is our hope that the response to these views will be apolitical and in the same spirit that these comments are made.

Having said that, our two reservations are:

1. The non-transparent and hasty manner in which the tender exercise was conducted does not conform with the desire of the new PM for a more open honest and transparent administration. The very short tender period also reinforces the impression of non-transparency.
2. The new system will destroy a valuable heritage asset, which is the only one in all of Asia. It was planned without consulting the stake-holders and without considering the serious implications for hill residents. It is also our view that it may not be the best way to improve the hill railway.

Hasty Tender Exercise.

It is safe to say that none or very few Malaysian contractors have the necessary skills and experience to undertake this contract on their own, and will have to form a joint venture with an established foreign supplier of funicular railway equipment. In the 21 days provided it is impossible for a contractor to contact a suitable foreign party, establish a working arrangement and invite him here to inspect the site, calculate the prices and submit a bid.

Such a short tender period is a farce and a mockery and will not produce the best results, but it will also raise suspicions that all is not well. This is something that we all wish to avoid.

Usually for complicated and specialised contracts of this nature, the international best practise is to do it in two stages.

- In stage one; interested contractors are invited to pre-qualify themselves.
- In stage two, only those contractors who have been pre-qualified are invited to submit their bids. For a contract of this nature the tender period should be 90 days so as to give all parties enough time to prepare a good bid. That way the government is assured of getting a well qualified contractor who has put in a competitive price.

We are aware that the contract may be part of the economic stimulus package and must be awarded before the end of this year. Doing it in accordance with the international best practise will cause a delay of at most 5 months, so there is still time. In any event the need to award the contract before the end of the year is purely administrative, and can be waived in this instance. Also for the economic stimulus to yield the maximum benefit the money must not only be spent quickly, but it must be spent carefully.

It is even more important that the company that gets the job does it well and completes on schedule. If delays occur, the damage to the tourism industry will offset any stimulus that this package will create.

Hence we are calling the new Federal Cabinet, and especially the new minister in charge of the JKR to walk the talk, establish his credibility and show that the Federal Government is serious about making reforms to the method of awarding contracts, and to avoid any hint of impropriety. He must review this tender.

Similarly we are calling upon the Penang State Government to be true to its CAT principles and also ask for a review.

Destruction of a Valuable Heritage Asset.

As we stated earlier the existing funicular railway which is almost 100 years old is a valuable heritage asset and is the only one left in the whole of Asia. It has been extensively written about and all the tourism literature mentions it. The latest report is in the PHT newsletter. (Copies are available)

Apart from being a tourism product it serves the hill residents as a means of transport. For residents living on the middle part of the hill it is their only means of transport. It is our belief that the upgrading works will take about a year, which means that for this period these people will have no access to the city.

The new system was planned without consulting those who are most affected, ie those in the tourism industry and residents. Coming so soon after the 6 month breakdown last year, the implications on those who depend on the tourism trade, such as hawkers, will be serious.

The planners are all KL based and have failed to consider:

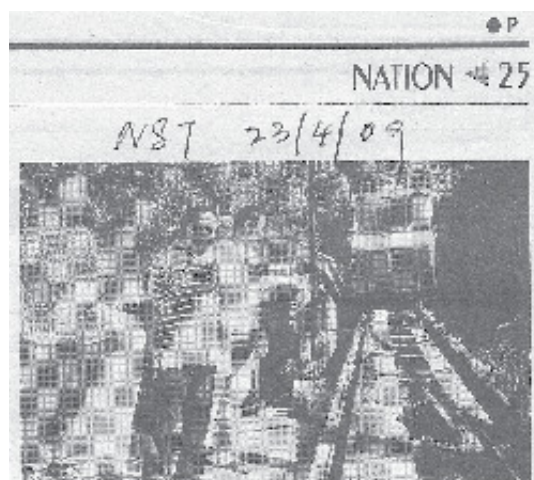
1. The feelings and sentiment of Penang people.
2. The immense heritage value of the existing system.
3. The impact of the contract on the hill residents and small businesses.
4. The option of upgrading the present system without removing the middle station.

In conclusion we strongly request:

1. The Minister concerned to review the manner the tender has been called, and for the state government to make a similar request.
2. Require tenderers to submit alternative bids based on retaining the middle station and on preserving the existing buildings and equipment as far as possible, for their heritage value.
3. Give preference to the contractor who will least disrupt the lives of hill residents and traders.

The Friends of Penang Hill.

The FOPG was formed in the early 1990s in response to the proposal to develop Penang Hill by the Berjaya Group. It is made up of several NGOs and individuals, chief among them are Persatuan Penduduk Bukit Bendera, Aliran, CAP, MNS, SAM and PHT.



Friends of Penang Hill spokesperson Ahmad Chik (second from left) and Penang Hill Residents Association chairman M. Arunasalam @ Raja (third from left) with their members at the Penang Hill funicular railway track.

Anger over hill railway project

GEORGE TOWN: A non-governmental organisation is calling for a review of a tender to upgrade the Penang Hill funicular railway.

Friends of Penang Hill (FOPH) is also calling for the RM10 million project to be reviewed.

The group comprises the Penang Hill Residents Association, Aliran, Consumers Association of Penang, Malaysian Nature Society, Sahabat Alam Malaysia and Penang Heritage Trust.

FOPH spokesperson Ahmad Chik said the tender period of three weeks, currently ongoing until May 11, was too brief.

"The non-transparent and hasty manner in which the tender exercise was conducted does not conform with the ideals of the new prime minister for a more open, honest and transparent administration," he said here yesterday.

In just three weeks, it would be impossible for a contractor to contact a suitable foreign party, establish a working arrangement and invite him to Penang Hill to inspect the site, calculate the cost and submit a bid, Ahmad said.

He added the project required a highly-qualified contractor, noting that no Malaysian contractor on his

own could carry out the upgrading project.

Ahmad said he was made to understand that the new system would do away with the middle station, the total replacement of the entire machinery, cables and carriages, and would entail extensive modification of the existing tracks.

"We are not against the project, but there was no proper consultation with the stakeholders in planning for the new system and no consideration of the serious implications for hill residents."

"We want a review of the project and a recall of the tender for a longer period, and we ask the state government to support us on this."

Penang Hill Residents Association chairman M. Arunasalam @ Raja said there was a need for an open forum to inform the public on what the contractor would be doing.

Neoh Phaik Hong, 71, who has lived on Penang Hill for over 50 years, said when the railway was closed previously for five months, she had to walk up and down to buy her groceries with each journey taking about two hours.

The tender for the upgrading project was called by the Public Works Department on April 16.

HISTORIC CENTRE OF MACAO

~ WORLD HERITAGE SITE ~



Ruins of St Paul's

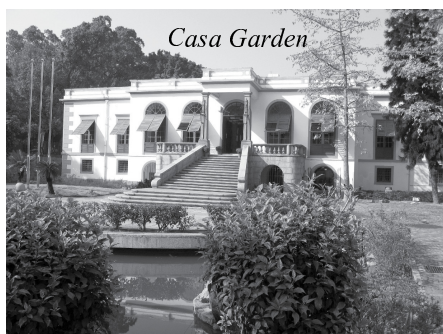
At first glance the former Portuguese colony of Macao, since 1999 a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, does not look as though it should be a World Heritage Site. With its 31 casinos and myriad blocks of ugly high-rise apartments, offices and condominiums Macao is not among the most attractive of Asian cities. Amid its forbidding modern urban landscape, however, there are many examples of traditional Chinese and colonial Portuguese architecture that reflect the unique history of this territory as a bridge between China and the West over almost five centuries.

Inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005, the "Historic Centre of Macao" boasts 25 designated buildings, structures and

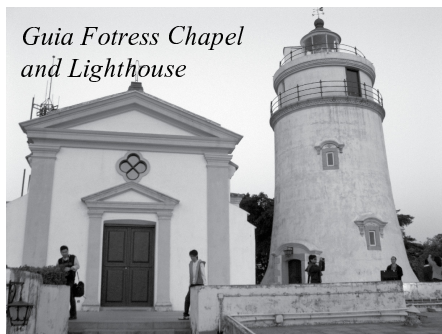
streetscapes that encompass "East-West cultural pluralism and architectural traditions." Among these are the famous façade of the ruined St Paul's church, the Senado Square, the A-Mau Temple, St Dominic's Church, the Guia Fortress, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library and the Casa Garden and Protestant Cemetery. The Casa Garden comprises a restored house built in 1770 for a wealthy Portuguese merchant which was leased for many years to the English East India Company to serve as its headquarters on the China coast. The adjacent Protestant Cemetery is beautifully preserved and in addition to an Anglican Chapel originally built in 1821 contains many tombs with memorial inscriptions attesting to the importance of Macao as an early trading port on the China coast. The most prominent grave is the interesting tomb of George Chinnery (1774-1852), the famous British China-trade artist who spent many years in the Portuguese colony. The chapel is also known as the Morrison Chapel, named after the first Protestant missionary in China. Robert Morrison (1782-1834) translated the Bible into Chinese and compiled the first Chinese dictionary.

The 25 sites of the Historic Centre of Macao form a chain running the length of the peninsula that was the old Macao before land reclamation increased the size of the territory considerably. Exploration of these sites on foot makes for several enjoyable walks punctuated by rest stops at the many restaurants Macao has to offer, Cantonese cuisine being the most common. Although some of the former hill-top strategic sites like the Mount Fortress and the Guia Fortress have been denied their commanding view of the sea by the construction of modern high-rise buildings on the reclaimed land, they remain imposing examples of military architecture of a bygone age.

Text & photographs by Leslie A.K. James



Casa Garden



Guia Fotress Chapel and Lighthouse



Street sign in Macao

UNESCO Workshop for Cultural Heritage Guides

Programme *Macao, 12 -16 January 2009*

From 12th -16th January 2009 UNESCO sponsored a Regional Training-of-Trainers Workshop for the Cultural Heritage Guides Programme conducted by the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT) in Macao. Delegations participated from China, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The Chinese delegation consisted of a representative from Mount Lushan, a cultural property in Jiangxi Province inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1995. The Indonesian delegation represented the temple complex of Borobudur in Central Java inscribed in 1991. The Philippine delegation represented the historic city of Vigan in the Province of Ilocos Sur. The delegation from Malaysia included two representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Siti Nur Hajar Abu Bakar, Assistant Secretary, Event Management Branch, and Mohd Sabri bin Zakaria, Licensing Branch, as well as Mark Gibson, Communications Director of Badan Warisan Malaysia, and Leslie A.K. James and Ho Sheau Fung from PHT. Unfortunately, there was no representative from Malacca on the Malaysian delegation. Apart from the Chinese delegation which for visa reasons consisted of only one person, all delegations included a broad mix of government and NGO participants.



IFT Campus

Although initially conceived as a workshop for training of trainers of cultural heritage specialist guides for World Heritage Sites, the main focus of the workshop was to design a curriculum for the training of cultural heritage specialist guides. Thus, participants in the workshop contributed their local knowledge, experience and ideas to devising a curriculum based on standards that would provide the highest level of visitor experience through improved site interpretation while raising awareness about conservation issues and fostering the long-term sustainability of the sites. UNESCO envisages that the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme will complement existing national training/certification courses. In the case of Malaysia this would mean that such specialist guides would already have to be tour guides licensed

by the Ministry of Tourism and that training for specialist certification would have to be conducted by the Ministry or by institutions approved by the Ministry. (In comparison with the other countries represented at the workshop, Malaysia with a qualifying course of 500 hours has the longest training programme for tour guides.) It was announced at the Macao workshop that a follow-up workshop hosted by Indonesia would be held in August 2009 at Jogjakarta. In the meantime national groups would continue their preparation of national curriculums. Discussions among the delegates from Malaysia resulted in an undertaking by



Delegates from Malaysia

the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism that a preparatory meeting would be held in Kuala Lumpur with participation by Badan Warisan Malaysia, PHT and counterparts from Malacca as well as representatives of the tour guides association.

The Macao workshop provided an opportunity to promote a better understanding of the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme and to clarify the relationship it is expected to have with existing national tour guide training and certification schemes.

The success of the workshop was due in large measure to the skill and dedication of participating staff of the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT). The Institute occupies a modern purpose-built campus on Mong Ha San, the site of a former Portuguese military establishment.

Leslie A.K. James

P A P A (Penang Apprenticeship Programme for Artisans)

AN APPRENTICESHIP / TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINING TRADITIONAL TRADES & CRAFTS IN GEORGE TOWN, PENANG, UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

PHT-PAPA Penang Apprenticeship Programme for Artisans

Program Perantis 檳城传统手工艺授徒计划

APPRENTICESHIP IN TRADITIONAL TRADES & CRAFTS
IN GEORGE TOWN- WORLD HERITAGE SITE 传统手工艺学徒
PROGRAM PMBELAJARAN PERTUKANGAN SENI TRADITIONAL





How long? Minimum six months to one year 至少六个月至一年
Who is eligible? Anyone who is determined to learn and passionate about traditional trades and crafts 谁有条件? 热爱传统手工艺者
Advantages of being Apprentice? 学徒将享有...
 a) Being paid while learning 有薪训练
 b) A chance to learn from the few surviving artisans and acquire a skill that is price-less which may become a promising career or business opportunity. 有机会跟独技一门的手艺人学习而拥有一技之长

Types of Apprenticeship
 Songkok Making 马六甲(宋谷)制作 * Nyonya Kebaya 娘惹传统服装
 Gold/Silversmith 打金/银手工艺 * Sculpture for Indian Temple 印度庙雕像
 Traditional Chinese Lantern 传统华人灯笼 * Handmade Joss Stick 手搓香
 Hand Carved Signboard 手雕牌匾 * Nyonya Beaded Shoes & Accessories 娘惹绣珠鞋及装饰品
 Rattan & Bamboo Weaver 手织竹藤家具 * Mid Autumn Festival Lantern 中秋节灯笼 * Others



How to Apply? 如何申请?
Please contact 任何询问, 请联络
Penang Heritage Trust (PHT)
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Tel: 04-264 2631
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Ms Fidel Ho
何慧芳小姐
Tel: 012-456 5867
Email: fidelhoho@gmail.com

The Penang Heritage Trust has initiated PAPA, a programme that actively promotes intangible cultural heritage, viewed as integral in the World Heritage Site's universal values. This involves assisting artisans whose skills are considered traditional and core to our Penang cultural heritage. Because of increasing difficulties in maintaining and passing on these skills, we feel that the time is right for rendering assistance and building capacity by promoting apprenticeship.

The programme also views promotion, product development and assistance with marketing as integral in achieving sustainability of the skills. The skills should be viewed as a viable life choice career for young people.

It is planned that as far as possible these artisans be sited in individual shop-houses within a common area, in the heart of George Town. This would make promotion and marketing in terms of a value added site for visitors, much easier to manage. It is envisaged that accommodation is possible on the upper floors if so required for either artisan or apprentice. The targeted locations are properties of the Khoo Kongsi Temple and Acheen Street Malay Enclave,

Penang's most famous heritage attraction, who have undertaken at their own expense the restoration of their clan houses and shop-houses, and are now interested in contributing their efforts to the diversity of urban spaces by forging community partnerships and creating projects which promote sustainable development and are socially relevant for the city's World Heritage status.

We have been very fortunate in getting sponsorship, in these difficult times, from several individual and corporate supporters. We have hired a part-time co-ordinator, Ms Fidel Ho, whom you may contact at PHT to find out more about the PAPA Project.

To date, Khoo Kongsi has agreed to rent a few of their shop-houses at Acheen Street to PHT for this project. Artisans who have agreed to participate in this project are the signboard maker, the songkok maker, the gold/silversmith, sulam and kebaya tailor, the joss stick maker, the rattan weaver and a sculptor for Indian temples. The signboard maker, the songkok maker and the silver/goldsmith will teach the apprentices at their original sites. The other artisans are willing to be relocated if the terms and conditions are favourable to them.

In order to reduce the burden of artisans who are moving to the new shop-houses, we are seeking from PHT members and others, good condition furniture like tables, chairs, cupboards and fans, be it on loan or for our permanent use.

As this is a long term project, we are only looking for apprentices who are really committed and passionate about heritage and traditional craft. It is hoped that after the apprenticeship they will carry on the trade be it on their own or continue on as employees of the artisans. If you know of any worthy artisans that we may not know of, or any young person interested to be an apprentice, please contact PHT.

Loh-Lim
PAPA Project Convenor

PHT ART EXHIBITION ~ BATIK PAINTING

From 8th – 22nd February 2009 an art exhibition, *Batik Painting -- An Evoluton, Past, Present and Future*, was sponsored by the Penang Heritage Trust with the cooperation of Galeri Seni Mutiara at 118 Armenian Street. The organizing chairman of the exhibition was Dr Tan Chong Guan. The official opening was by PHT President Dr Choong Sim Poey and took place at the gallery at 6.00 p.m. on Sunday, 8th February.

Fourteen participating artists exhibited 22 paintings of which two were sold at RM2,500 each with a commission of 15 per cent going to the Penang Heritage Trust. The artists whose works were sold were Mohd Bakeri Ab Rahman (Title: *Behind the Eyes*) and Rozana Bt Mohamed (Title: *Jejak*).

Koay Soo Kau
Galeri Seni Mutiara



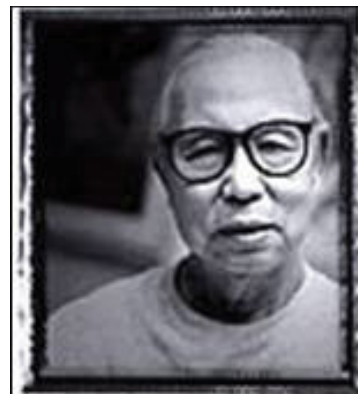
Dr. Tan Chong Guan at opening ceremony

OBITUARY

Dato' Chuah Thean Teng (1914 – 2008)

Dato' Chuah Thean Teng, one of the most prominent artists of Malaysia, passed away on November 25, 2008 at his Tanjung Bungah home in Penang. He was aged 94.

Teng was born in China in 1914. He came to Malaysia during his teens. He worked as teacher, trader, labourer, baker and hawker during those years. But his passion was art. Although he had very little formal education in art, he excelled in woodcut, oil and Chinese brush painting.



What set Teng apart from the other artists was his adventurous spirit which led him to experiment with the batik medium of using wax and dye and successfully turning it into a fine art. His batik paintings were first exhibited in Penang in 1955, the next year in Singapore, and 1957 in Kuala Lumpur. Batik paintings have been widely accepted as a form of fine art. The credit and honour go to Teng. Many artists have been using this medium to produce batik paintings all over the world.

With the passing of Teng, Penang has lost the last of its pioneer artists. This group of artists was most active in the 1950s and 60s. Their lives were full of struggles and are still awaiting serious documentation by future art historians.

PHT recently organized an art exhibition entitled "Batik Painting – An Evolution of Past, Present & Future" at the Galeri Seni Mutiara from February 8 to 22, 2009. The exhibition showed clearly that this art form is continuously evolving, with potentially more innovative forms developing in the future.

In 2005, Teng was selected as a Living Heritage of Penang, an honour he justly deserved. Penang is indeed privileged to have been culturally enriched by the presence of this man.

Teng is survived by three sons, two daughters and many grandchildren.

By Dr Tan Chong Guan

52ND GEORGE TOWN CITY DAY CELEBRATION

In the closing days of 2008 the Municipal Council of Penang Island (MPPPI) sought the assistance of the PHT in preparing background material for celebrations on New Year's Day 2009 planned to mark the anniversary of George Town's attainment of city status. George Town was declared a City on 1st January 1957 by Letters Patent granted by Queen Elizabeth II, thereby becoming Malaysia's first and oldest city.

The form of celebration eventually decided on was a gala dinner at the E&O Hotel for VIPs and select guests. Each guest received a souvenir coffee mug and a commemorative booklet, the preparation and publication of which were assisted by the Penang Heritage Trust. It is hoped that future celebrations of George Town City Day will involve the wider community.

The originator of the movement for city status was the last expatriate President of the Municipal Council of George Town, J.S.H. Cunnyingham-Brown, who first mooted the idea in 1954 and later drafted the petition that was submitted by the Municipal Council to Queen Elizabeth II on 31st August 1956. For a portrait of Sjovald Cunnyingham-Brown we are pleased to re-publish the article on the following page by PHT member Roy de Fries which was first published in the Penang Club magazine in April 1989.

Editor



N16 NATION THE STAR, THURSDAY 23 DECEMBER 2009

City Day revelry for Penang

Celebration on Jan 1 will start off on a small scale, says Guan Eng

GEORGE TOWN: After a lapse of 50 years, the state will revive the long-forgotten tradition to mark George Town's City Day on Jan 1.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the celebration, to be held with the collaboration of Eastern & Oriental Hotel, would be held on a small scale for a start.

"However, there are bigger plans to commemorate the event the following year," he said.

The celebration is relying on a 1957 conferment of city status from Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, as the Federal Government has not officially proclaimed it a city.

Penang Municipal Council (MPPPI) president Zainal Rahim Seman said a dinner with similar dishes served at the 1957 celebration would also be offered at the hotel ballroom at 8pm.

"We are celebrating the event with a small budget of not more than RM50,000. However, a bigger celebration will be held at the Esplanade the following year."

He said performances depicting the 50s era would also be held to entertain the crowd at the dinner.

Zainal Rahim said this was the second time the celebration was being held to mark the occasion.

"The event will definitely bring back nostalgic memories as there was a three-day celebration on Jan 1, 1957, to celebrate George Town's elevation to a city," he said.

Zainal Rahim said a replica of the memento presented by Queen Elizabeth II on the city status declaration would be handed over to Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas and Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng to commemorate the event.

"We are also inviting former chief ministers, former council presidents, the mayors of Adelaide and Xiamen and Datuk Nicole David to grace the celebration," he said.

He said E&O Hotel was picked to host the occasion as the first celebration was held there in 1957.

Zainal Rahim said an exhibition would be held in January and February to showcase George Town's long journey since 1957.

The exhibition, he said, would be held at City Town Hall, Queensbay Mall and Gurney Plaza.

SJOVALD CUNNYNGHAM-BROWN - THE ETERNAL PILGRIM

Sjovald Cunyngnam-Brown, sailor, administrator, scholar, writer, historian and humanitarian, there is little to add to the eulogies written by the International Press since his death at the age of 83 on 21st April 1989. I first met Cunyngnam-Brown at a New Year's Party when he was in his late seventies, a distinguished figure, with white hair that appeared to have been brushed by the wind; the face of a kindly viking. He was elegantly dressed in a bespoke suit, with suede shoes and a silk shirt and tie that proclaimed Jermyn rather than Bishop Street. He smoked cheroots and at midnight presented me with the depleted box explaining that he restricted his annual smoking to the month of December. I was unable to pronounce his strange Nordic given name, Sjovald, and he graciously accepted my version "SALT", rather than the less familiar C.B., as he was generally known. He was an excellent conversationalist, encouraging one to contribute equally and like all wisemen learning something from every contact. We discussed writing and he told me that he had published two works, "The Traders" and "Crowded Hour". Later in 1988, he was to contribute to and introduce "Tales from the South China Seas", one of a series of nostalgic reminiscences written by Charles Allen. Prior to his death, Sjovald was writing a biography of Francis Light, a guide book to Penang and a slim volume about Penang Hill.

I believe that "Crowded Hour" is the best of his published works, it is wonderfully descriptive; one can feel and smell the dank atmosphere of the public bar of the London seaman's pub, he entered looking for a berth. From "Gin Clear Seas of the East" one feels the exhilaration of sail and longs for sun-down to join him in a cool setengah. Like Winston Churchill, Sjovald took more from alcohol than alcohol ever took from him.

Sjovald never passed his prime and lived each day, each hour to the full. "Oh evil day"! If I were sullen while earth herself is adorning, this Sweet May Morning". I used to consider him spendthrift with no control over his finances. At the Club, one had to elbow him aside to prevent him from signing more than his share of cheques. Each profitable shipment of cloves brought a party at which the quality and variety of the food and drinks were excelled only by the conversation. He lived every penny to the full by dispensing pleasure and philanthropy. During the years that I enjoyed his company, we both moved houses; gradually becoming closer together and even when in considerable pain, prior to his most recent hip replacement, he would cheerfully mount the three flights of stairs to my apartment for a chat, or I would descend to his villa, where we would sit on the floor and read poems out loud.

He arose at seven each morning and read the Chinese newspapers, he was an accomplished linguist and had some 2,000 Chinese characters. He then descended to the Penang Swimming Club where he swam eighteen lengths, by using a simple back paddle. Then back home for a curry puff and writing. He lunched late frequently at the Swimming Club before returning home for a lie-over. Evenings were for conversation with some of his many friends, to watch the sun go down and follow its course with a setengah.

Sjovald always looked to the future, to that "Sweet May Morning". He was planning this year to visit Portugal. I had expected him to live at least into his 80th year, so the news of his death was a surprised shock and I wept by his graveside. But I realised that the grief was for myself because of my loss; one cannot grieve for Cunyngnam-Brown, for I have known no one else so sure of the after-life and that Le Bon Dieu will be there to welcome him.

To quote a few lines from one of his favoured poems by William Wordsworth :

*" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."*

I picture Sjovald Cunyngnam-Brown in paradise, engaging the Saints in conversation and reaching for the Angkorura.

Roy de Witte

April 1989

Emily of Emerald Hill

Suffolk House came alive on Friday evening 27th March. Almost exactly two years after the completion of the long awaited restoration of Penang's "Great House" some 200 lovers of heritage gathered for a special dramatic production. The event was a performance by Pearly Chua in the brilliant one-woman play *Emily of Emerald Hill*. Preceded by an Open House, tours and a reception on the ground floor of Suffolk House, this special performance was organized by PHT to raise funds for PHT activities and projects. Approximately RM27,000 was raised.



Emily of Emerald Hill has been a favourite of audiences in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore for several years although it had been five years since *Emily* was last seen in Penang. Written by Stella Kon and directed by Chin San Sooi, the play portrays through the words and actions of the Nyonya matriarch Emily Gan the good times and bad of a prominent Straits Chinese family during the course of the twentieth century.



Through dramatic devices such as conversations on the telephone, intimate asides to the audience and one-sided exchanges with her family, friends, tradespeople and servants, we follow Emily's fortunes and misfortunes. We learn about her humble origins and her marriage as a young girl to a man twice her age. We see how she comes to terms with her relationship to her mother-in-law, gradually increasing her own influence and position in the family through clever and subtle machinations. The Gan family prospers and Emerald Hill is the scene of great parties like her son Richard's twentieth birthday party. But tragedy is not far away. Richard abandons his law studies in England and commits suicide after being confronted by his mother. Emily is devastated. When Emily's husband takes a mistress and goes to live with her, Emily copes with the situation, briefly regaining the upper hand and her dignity, but is rejected by him when he is dying. Times are changing for families like the Gans. The young people move away from Emerald Hill and as the play ends we witness Emily alone

and in her old age recalling days gone by. Pearly Chua captures this transformation of Emily and the world around her with consummate skill and empathy – an outstanding performance!

The evening provided an excellent example of the kind of event Suffolk House is suited for. Those present for the performance of *Emily* were unanimous in expressing the hope that a decision would soon be made in favour of a management plan that would see Suffolk House opened to the public for other events in keeping with its dignity as Penang's premier heritage house.



Text by Leslie A.K. James
Photograph by Christopher Dai

HISTORIC PRANGIN CANAL AND SIA BOEY



On Sunday 4th January 2009, 30 members and friends of PHT gathered at the Sia Boey Market Building for a tour of the old Prangin Canal and the area known as Sia Boey. The site visit was led by PHT council member Timothy Tye.

Prangin Canal is a waterway that used to mark the limits of George Town. The canal was originally a river that flowed into the swampy coastline as it emptied into the sea. After George Town was established, the Prangin River became a vital waterway where sampans and perahus brought goods from the harbour into the hinterland. Indeed, as recently as the 1950's, tongkangs and perahus were still going up the Prangin Canal to bring produce to the Sia Boey Market. The original river ended at the junction of Jalan Sungai Ujong (the name means "river end") Over time, it was turned into a canal, and extended to the junction of Transfer Road, which was created around 1867.

In the 19th century, George Town reached only to the Prangin Canal. The edge of town along the Prangin Canal was called Sia Boey in Hokkien, meaning "Town's End". Across the river, where Maxwell Road is located, there was a Chinese village called Kuay Kang-nga, meaning "across the river". A few plank bridges crossed the Prangin Canal, connecting the "town side" to the "country side". It should be remembered that none of the shophouses we see today in the area beyond the Prangin Canal existed until the late 19th century, when they were built to replace the attap huts which were there. When George Town extended across the Prangin Canal, a new set of nine parallel roads were built in the Kuay Kang-nga settlement. The Hokkien names for the nine roads follow a numbering system according to their proximity to Prangin Canal. Ergo, Magazine Road was "First Street" (Thau

Tiau Lor, an abbreviation of Kuay Kang-nga Thau Tiau Lor meaning "First Street across the River"). The last one, Sandilands Street, is Kau Tiau Lor ("Ninth Street") in Hokkien.

At the seaward end of Prangin Canal was Anson Bridge, named after Archibald Anson, Lieutenant Governor of Penang from 1867-1882. The bridge is gone, but the name lives on elsewhere as a major road in Penang. Anson Bridge linked Beach Street to Bridge Street, which continued into the hinterland. Until the land reclamation of 1880, these two streets were located by the sea shore, and the Malays called this area

Hujung Pasir. At the other end, there was a drawbridge across Prangin Canal at Penang Road, and the Hokkien called that area Tiau Keo Th'au (meaning "head of the drawbridge"). The Malays called it Titi Papan, and the name is commemorated by Masjid Titi Papan nearby.

The Prangin Canal connected to another ditch at Transfer Road. That ditch emptied into the sea at North Beach, creating an island out of the inner city of George Town. At the time, small sampans could come down from the north all the way to Keramat Dato Koyah. The area marked by the Prangin Canal and that long-gone ditch is the approximate location of the present-day core zone of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The name Sia Boey became synonymous with the wholesale market that existed along the Prangin Canal through the 20th century. The Sia Boey market was relocated a few years ago to Harbour Trade Centre at Macallum Street Ghaut, while the area along the Prangin Canal, which the market used to occupy, is awaiting redevelopment.

Today much of Prangin Canal has been filled in. The small section that is still visible is located where the Sia Boey market used to be. The redevelopment of the area around the Prangin Canal area may spell the end of the historic canal. As I pointed out during the site visit, the Prangin Canal area is sufficient for the government's green lung. It should be rehabilitated, cleaned, widened, with the sides planted with grass and trees, pedestrian bridges, benches and lamp posts placed for public use, and then properly maintained.

Text & Photograph by Timothy Tye

UPPER BEACH STREET

Guided by PHT Council member Timothy Tye some 36 members and friends of PHT braved the hot afternoon sun on Sunday, 1st February to explore northern or upper Beach Street, that stretch of this historic street between Light Street and Chulia Street. The northern end of Beach Street was regarded in pre-war days as the European commercial centre of George Town.

As its name implies, Beach Street originally ran along the seashore. Unlike Light Street which is straight Beach Street bends slightly indicating where the shoreline once was. As land reclamation was carried out to the seaward side of Beach Street beginning in the late 19th century, the roads intersecting with it from the town side were called ghauts (or ghats) as they were extended from Beach Street down to the shore. The term “ghaut” is a Hindi word brought from India by officials of the East India Company. It signifies a landing place or path leading down to the shore. George Town is the only place in Malaysia that has streets called ghauts.



State Islamic Affairs Department

As we began our walk south along Beach Street from the roundabout at Light Street the first significant building to be noted on the east side of the street was that which houses the State Islamic Affairs Department. Before the Second World War this building formed part of the Government administrative buildings, a U-shaped complex that ran along Beach Street, King Edward Place and Weld Quay. This government complex was also described as a quadrangle with an open side on the aptly named Downing Street which runs from Beach Street to Weld Quay. Those parts of the complex along King Edward Place and Weld Quay were destroyed by wartime bombing, leaving only the Beach Street wing standing.

On the opposite side of Beach Street from this

building are two buildings that house the Immigration Office and the police station. These were both originally police buildings.

The next part of Beach Street is dominated by banks. The HSBC branch at the corner of Beach Street and Downing Street is the second building on the site to be occupied by the bank. The first building with a famous turret was demolished after the Second World War to make way for a more modern structure built in 1947.

On the western side of Beach Street, opposite the HSBC branch and facing Downing Street, is the Penang branch of what was originally the Chartered Bank of India,



Standard Chartered Bank Building

China & Australia, now the Standard Chartered Bank, designed by the architectural firm of Stark & McNeill and built about 1930. The Chartered Bank first opened a branch in Penang in 1875, making it the oldest bank in Malaysia. The HSBC and the Chartered Bank were the leading exchange banks in the country.



RBS & HSBC Buildings

Next to the HSBC branch is the ABN-AMRO bank branch built in 1888, originally the bank of the Netherlands Trading Society and now the Penang branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). In the early years of the current decade ABN-AMRO leased the building to USM for use as a cultural centre.

Continuing along Beach Street we viewed other notable buildings such as the 1936 Ban Hin Lee Bank building with its huge arched entranceway and the 1937 India House that once housed the US Information Service. On the opposite side of the street are the late 19th century Logan's Buildings, reduced from three to two storeys in the 1930s because of safety



Logan's Building

*Whiteaways building**Kongsoo House**Former OCBC building*

considerations. Next along the western side of the street, is the elegant and partially restored building that was the home of Whiteaways department store in the 1930s. On the corner of Church Street and Beach Street is Kongsoo House, built in 1914, and along with the next two buildings was recently restored by the owners, Singapore's OCBC. The third of these three buildings was built in 1886. Probably the oldest building on Beach Street it stands between the former OCBC building with its art-deco façade and the current OCBC bank premises of more modern design.

As we proceeded south along Beach Street we were made aware of the street's position along the former shoreline. Early land reclamation resulted in the construction of buildings, mainly low-rise godowns or warehouses, between Beach Street and the new shoreline. The fragility of this area is marked by cracks visible on the sides of buildings fronting the eastern side of Beach Street – a warning to modern developers with grandiose plans for constructing multi-storey hotels and condominiums along Weld Quay that even after a century such reclaimed land may not be stable.

Text by Leslie A.K. James

Photographs by Leslie A.K. James & Timothy Tye

GURNEY DRIVE

Gurney Drive – from beach to mudflats

How ironic that the sad destruction of the North Beach bordered by Gurney Drive has apparently become a point of pride. As a result of ill considered land reclamation at Tanjong Tokong the once beautiful two kilometres of shoreline along Gurney Drive has become an ugly mudflat extending at low tide for almost a kilometre offshore. In a recent editorial we noted that mangroves had even begun to appear. Local newspaper articles have also drawn attention to the presence of hundreds of amphibious mud-skipper, reporting the claim of some experts that the huge numbers of these strange creatures are evidence of the cleanliness of this stretch of shore. Cleanliness! They must be joking! Anyone with a normal sense of smell who walks along Gurney Drive can attest to the fact that the storm drains emptying into the sea along Gurney Drive are little more than open sewers.

Editor



Say cheese: Lucette taking a photo of the mudskippers at Gurney Drive.

Amphibian draws crowd

Mudskipper galore at Gurney Drive

HOUSE OF YEAP CHOR EE

On 2nd November 2008, 80 PHT members turned out for the special in-house guided tour of the House of Yeap Chor Ee at 4 Penang Street. PHT members Goh Mai Loon and Joanne Khaw helped to give the guided in-house tour.

The House of Yeap Chor Ee was officially launched on 16th October, the anniversary of the birth of Yeap Chor Ee. Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat dedicated this first residence of his grandfather to celebrate the life and achievement of the legacy of Yeap Chor Ee. Yeap Chor Ee was a prominent Penang businessman who founded the Ban Hin Lee Bank. He arrived in Penang from China virtually penniless but left a vast financial empire on his death. His life epitomizes the true rags to riches story.



Yeap Chor Ee is remembered as a philanthropist who contributed greatly to education in Penang. As part of his legacy the Yeap Chor Ee Charitable Trust set up the Kolej Disted Stamford in Penang. In further support of education, "Homestead" and other properties under the Yeap Chor Ee Endowment Trust were vested in the Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) as a campus for the Wawasan Open University. When "Homestead" was put to its new use, the contents of the great house on Northam Road were moved to a private family gallery called the House of Yeap Chor Ee in his former residence in the section of Penang Street traditionally known as the Kau Kheng Choo.

With a special interior design by Datin Seri Irene Yeap, the original two-storey shop house, which fronts King Street as well as Penang Street, has been converted to four gallery floors. The gallery displays the grand collection of Yeap family antiques, treasures and photographs illustrating the story of Yeap Chor Ee and his wife Lee Ching Kin. The tour of the gallery tour was very compelling and interesting in how it revealed the life and times of a rich and famous Penang pioneer entrepreneur whose legacy still benefits people in Penang today.



The King Street front of the House of Yeap Chor Ee has been turned into a new and old fusion restaurant called The Sire. From Monday to Saturday, after dining in the beautiful ambience of this refurbished heritage building, restaurant guests are welcome to view the family gallery at their leisure.

PHT would like to thank Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat for allowing us to make a special visit to this House during the rest day of the Gallery. Mr. Richard Long, the restaurant owner of the Sire Restaurant had specially called in their staff to arrange delicious snap food for our members.

Report by Goh Mai Loon

SNAKE TEMPLE



1930s postcard

One of the tourist gems in Penang is also located closest to one of the main gateways into the island, how convenient! So, on 1st March, 2009, some 29 PHT members and friends, led by PHT council member Timothy Tye and PHT Trustee Dato Anwar Fazal, visited the recently restored Snake Temple.

After a brief introduction by Timothy Tye on the uniqueness of the temple, members were ushered into the adjacent hall to be greeted by temple pit vipers and a python! Dato Lim Eng Soon, Chairman of the Hokkien Kongsì, and Mr. Tan Lye Hock, secretary of the Kongsì, then welcomed PHT's entourage before giving a briefing on the temple history.

The Hokkien Kongsì is the umbrella body of the Penang Hokkien clan Associations. In addition to the Snake Temple, the Kongsì also runs four other temples. Even before the listing of George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it has always been the Kongsì's main objective to restore all the temples under their custodianship to their former glory, both for Penangites and also for visitors to appreciate.

According to Timothy Tye, the Snake Temple in Sungai Keluang, Bayan Lepas, is probably the only one of its kind in the world. It was built in 1850 to venerate a deified Buddhist monk named Chor Soo Kong. There are in fact three temples dedicated to Chor Soo Kong in Penang; apart from this famous Snake Temple, the other two are the Chor Soo Kong Temple in Batu Maung and another in Balik Pulau. However, only this temple in Keluang River is home to slithery residents.

The actual name of the Snake Temple is Ban Kah Lan in Hokkien, or Temple of the Azure Clouds. As Chor Soo Kong's birthday falls on the 6th day of the first lunar month, it's traditionally a temple to visit during Chinese New Year.

In addition to spiritual enlightenment, Chor Soo Kong also acquired extensive medical knowledge, enabling him to provide medical services to the needy in the surrounding communities.

Mr. Tan Lye Hock said that a monk arrived from China, bringing with him the statue of Chor Soo Kong. The monk then built a temple dedicated to Chor Soo Kong in a clearing by the Keluang River. This plot of land belonged to David Brown, the largest land owner in Penang. Brown donated the land for the temple after he

was healed of an ailment. During that period, the area was surrounded by jungle, coconut trees and paddy fields. After the temple was erected, snakes, particularly pit vipers, started coming to take shelter there, inhabiting various parts of the temple. Rather than harming the snakes, the pious monk provided shelter to them, hence the birth of a snake temple.



Snake Temple Interior | 1930s postcard

Since its construction in 1850, the Snake Temple has undergone numerous works -- in 1880, 1907, 1971 and 1980. Dato Lim lamented that these works were not properly carried out. Sloppy workmanship and improper material caused a major deviation from the original craftsmanship of the temple. To rectify the situation, the Hokkien Kongsì embarked on further restoration work to the temple in 2007-08. During the year-long restoration, the roof ornamentation, consisting of broken pottery pieces, was cleaned and repaired. Damaged figurines were also repaired or replaced. The stucco work, roof ridges and gables were repainted while within the temple itself the gilded pelmets and filigree screens were coated with a fresh covering of gold leaf. During the restoration process, the snakes were moved out of the way and were only returned to the altars when the temple reopened. During the briefing, Dato Lim also shared details of some of the techniques and materials used, like the covering of the wooden doors with a plant fibre mesh prior to painting to avoid splitting or cracking in the future. Recommendations from master craftsmen from China together with old temple committee meeting manuals dating as far back as 1918 were used as guidelines for the RM750,000 restoration works. The Snake Temple was reopened in January 2009 in time for the Chinese New Year festivities.

A trivia shared by the Hokkien Kongsì committee was that another prominent temple dedicated to Chor Soo Kong, was built in Genting Highlands. It was built by

the late Tan Sri Dato Seri Dr Lim Goh Tong (founder of the Genting Group) who was a devout devotee of Chor Soo Kong. Lim was a contractor involved in the construction of the Ayer Itam Dam. During that time, he would regularly patronize the Snake Temple to worship Chor Soo Kong. To build the temple in Genting Highlands, Lim brought the heoh hueh

(sacred relic from the altar) from the Snake Temple as a blessing for his temple.

Timothy also mentioned that within the Snake Temple grounds are two wells called the two Dragon Pure Water Wells. Dug in the 1850's, these wells were completed together with the original temple. According to legend, the two wells represent the eyes of a mystical dragon which descended from the heavens during the consecration of the temple.

The snakes in the temple are the poisonous Wagler's Pit-vipers, also called Temple Vipers. They are fond of inhabiting coconut

trees and can be found in South Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo, Sumatra, Sulawesi and the southern islands of the Philippines archipelago. (Another place to find them in Penang is in the harbour over the patio of the Bellevue Hotel on Penang Hill. – Ed.) When young, they are light green with narrow pale bands. On reaching adulthood, the snakes take on a darker green with thicker yellow bands. However the snakes are usually sluggish and seldom bite.



Continuous development of the surrounding areas in Bayan Lepas has today enveloped the Snake Temple, resulting in a loss of habitat for the snakes, and a general reduction in their numbers. The jungle behind the temple has long disappeared, and it is now part of the Bayan Lepas Industrial Zone housing various multinational corporations.

Contrary to popular belief, the vipers are not attracted



to the temple due to the joss stick and incense fumes. In fact, the fumes and continuous human handling shorten the lifespan of the snakes, whose life expectancy is only about 5 years. For the welfare of the snakes, the temple prohibits the burning of joss sticks within the prayer pavilion. According to the temple committee, the joss stick fumes not only irritate the snakes, they also pollute the temple. The Snake Temple was one of the first Taoist temples in Penang to prohibit the burning of joss sticks within the prayer pavillion. So, what attracts the snakes to the Snake Temple? It is the deity himself, Chor Soo Kong! His medical knowledge was a result of trial and error experiments on himself with the use of herbs and other natural jungle produce. With his constant forays into the jungle, snakes were already attracted to his presence long before and more so now as a deity, or so the devotees believe.

With that million dollar question answered, PHT members were then invited to tea, sampling one of the best curry puffs around before going on a tour of the Snake Farm. The Snake Farm is located within the Snake Temple grounds. In exchange for renting the premises, the Snake Farm, which is managed by Mr. Chew and his family, provides care to the snakes of the Snake Temple. The Snake Farm opened in 2006 and contains over 50 species of snakes, including the rare Albino Cobra. In addition to snakes, the farm also rears rabbits, macaques, guinea pigs, iguanas, and other animals. As Mr Chew believes in the 'yin' and 'yang' principal, rabbits which carry the 'yang' forces, are kept to balance the 'yin' forces by the snakes. Mr Chew with his extensive knowledge of snakes is always eager to dispense Chinese beliefs regarding the snake. According to him, some Chinese believe that the skin of the snake, when placed in the wallet, helps a person keep his money - as though the snake offers protection to the cash. Snakes shed their skin, and remnants of skin are displayed in the farm. Snakes that are healthy shed their skin whole while the skin shed by ailing snakes is brittle and breaks into many pieces.

PHT members and friends were then treated to a snake show where Mr Chew and his assistant showed their prowess in handling a couple of cobras, mangrove snakes, and lastly, the king cobra! Throughout the show, fascinating facts and figures were shared about the snakes. After much touching, stroking and kissing, between Mr. Chew and his snakes of course, the show ended with a thunderous applause. But a word of warning from Mr. Chew, 'Folks, don't try this at home!'

With a final tour and photography session by members within the prayer pavilion, the site visit ended around 5.15pm. It was indeed one of PHT's more enjoyable and educational site visits to date. For anyone suffering from ophidiophobia, head over to the Snake Temple - confronting your fear might just be the cure for you and furthermore, you can stare it right in the eyes, literally!

Text by Eric Yeoh

Photographs by Timothy Tye

Postcards from 1930s courtesy L. A. K James

Photo Courtesy Rebecca Wilkinson



19th January 2009

Dear PHT members,

Re: A Defamation Suit against the PHT, its President and Council members

We wish to inform our members of the above legal suit. This came as a result of our press conference held on 13th November 2008 at the Loke Mansion, the heritage building standing next to Hunza's 'Paragon' project on Kelawai Road, on the site of St Joseph's Novitiate (previously occupied by Up-lands School).

We had called the press conference to highlight the progressive damage to the Loke Mansion, a recognised heritage building, due to construction work on the site. This problem had been brought to our attention by Ms Rebecca Duckett-Wilkinson, the present caretaker of Loke Mansion.

This PC was well attended and pictorial reports of the damage to Loke Mansion were widely reported in both the English and Chinese press the next day. Our statements expressed our concern both for Loke Mansion and the Chapel of St Josephs Novitiate whose very foundations have been hollowed out to build a car park.

We questioned the wisdom of the MPPP in approving the plan and supervising the construction work which had failed to ensure the proper protection of adjacent buildings and the heritage building on site from unnecessary damage.

Dr Choong Sim Poey

RUSSIAN WAR GRAVES

In Penang harbour in 1914, at the start of WW1, the Russian cruiser Zhemtchug was sunk by the German cruiser Emden, with serious loss of life. Many Russian sailors went down with their ship, whilst others amongst the wounded died later in Penang General Hospital. A grave with a memorial plaque was put up in the Western Road Cemetery, where it can be seen to this day.*

Every year in October a small Russian delegation meets at the graveside to honour their fallen sailors.

A talk organised by the Penang Heritage Trust and a later article in "Heritage Asia" magazine (March-May 2005 Vol 2 No 3) drew attention to an additional grave on Pulau Jerejak where the bodies of two sailors from Zhemtchug were buried. Presumably the bodies had floated down on the current and were washed ashore at that spot. The old TB hospital which was once located there was put up at a later date; so the two sites are unlikely to be connected. At the time the area was visited by PHT members it was scheduled for redevelopment and the grave was all but obliterated.

The Russian Embassy responded to this information by allocating some funds to landscape the Pulau Jerejak grave and this work was completed three years ago. The scheduled redevelopment has meanwhile been abandoned and the site is quiet and peaceful once more.

The Russian Embassy is anxious to know of any more sites, perhaps along the east coast of Penang, or the shores of Pulau Jerejak, where other Russian bodies might have been washed up. Rumours and folk-tales amongst boatmen and fishermen suggest that there may be others.

Anyone able to give any information leading to the discovery of further bodies of Russian sailors from Zhemtchug can contact the Penang Heritage Trust of- fice, or directly contact the Russian Embassy (Deputy Military Attaché Captain Ivan Stadchenko at ivanna- vysu_ru@yahoo.com or Tel. 03-4257 1120).

Text & Photographs by John Robertson

*Editor's Note: Sad to say, the memorial in the Western Road Cemetery has recently been desecrated by the theft of the large anchor and chain that adorned it.



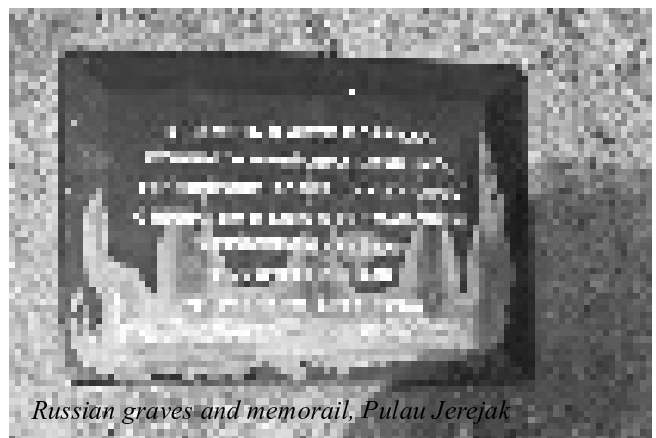
Cruiser Zhemtchug



Russian graves and memorail, Pulau Jerejak



Russian graves and memorail, Pulau Jerejak



Russian graves and memorail, Pulau Jerejak

MEDIA COVERAGE

Firm: We followed all the rules

Star 3/12/08

Approval for revised order for Penang's 23-storey hotel given in June

KUALA LUMPUR: The developer of one of four controversial projects within the Penang Heritage Zone in George Town said it has adhered to every requirement of the law.

Bintang Holdings Sdn Bhd, which is constructing a 84m-high 23-storey hotel, said that it had strictly followed and complied with all procedures, guidelines and regulations laid down by the relevant state authorities.

"Our original development order (DO) was approved on June 30, 1995 and the revised DO approved on June 26, 2008," Low Yat Group architectural and property services director B.S. Wee said in a statement yesterday.

Bintang Holdings is a member of the Low Yat Group of companies.

Wee said that the development site was acquired in 1968 and was

»We would continue to cooperate and work with the relevant authorities«

B.S. WEE

located at the fringe of George Town's heritage buffer zone.

"As a responsible property developer investing in Penang since the 1960s, we would continue to coop-

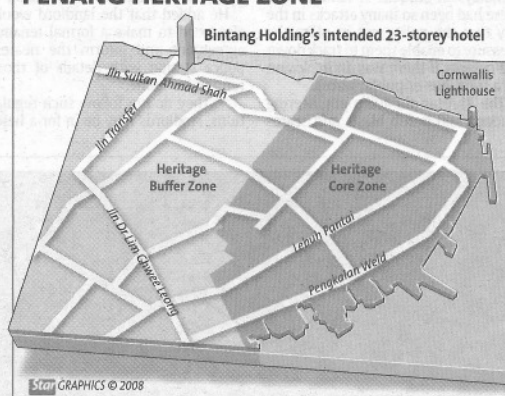
erate and work with the relevant authorities towards the progress of George Town and Penang," he said.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said recently that the state was in "damned if we do, and damned if we don't" situation because four proposed hotel projects were located in the heritage core and buffer zones which violated the guidelines of the World Heritage Committee.

The guidelines state that new buildings could only have a maximum height of 18m or roughly five storeys if they are located in the two zones.

Besides Bintang Holding's hotel, the other three are the Rice Miller boutique hotel and the Boustead Royale Bintang Hotel in the core heritage zone; and the E&O hotel extension in the buffer zone.

PENANG HERITAGE ZONE



More can be done for Penang

The Star
30 January 2009

IT IS the time of the year where I return to my hometown, Penang, to visit family and friends. Seeing Penang once again was a great relief, and I must say how proud I am of the state.

Great improvements have been made to the public buses; they are now clean, and drivers drive safely. Congratulations to all who have dared to dream for a better Penang.

Yet, more can still be done.

Priority must be given to making Penang Island traffic jam free, and turning it into a greener, healthier place.

Increasing public transport services in areas of high demand by workers and better punctuality of these services must be made a priority.

With a better public transport system, the traffic on major roads in Penang can be reduced.

In greening Penang, there is need for greater awareness on recycling

and for more parks in housing areas.

Preventing global warming begins in very simple ways; let it begin in our local communities, in our backyards and in the Unesco-proclaimed George Town as a Heritage City.

Together in simple, small ways, we Penangites can make an impact and contribute towards a healthier Malaysian society!

KENNETH GAN,
Toowong, Australia.

Review Penang Hill railway plan

StarMetro 22/4/09

MCA Penang wants the state government to review its plan for a single-track funicular railway system on the Penang Hill.

Banker Rendani MCA division chief Tang Deep Seng said the state recently called for an open tender to revamp the system comprising a single track up and a single track down.

"This means there will no longer be a dual station. How are those living in the area going to commute daily?" he asked when

speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Penang state legislative assembly sitting here yesterday.

Tang said there were a few hundred residents living on Penang Hill, noting that it would be ridiculous to force them to use the jeep trek daily.

He said the Federal Government had recently approved an allocation to upgrade the funicular railway system.

"Instead of coming up with a totally revamped funicular rail-

way system, the state should upgrade the funicular coaches, improve their time schedule and replace old cables," he said.

Tang said he heard that the plan would include new waiting areas at the bottom and top stations.

He said any construction work at the waiting areas would cause disruption to the residents' daily movement up and down the hill.

"Let us not cause further destruction to the environment and look towards improving the existing services instead," he said.



Tang: The state should upgrade the funicular coaches.

STARMETRO, TUESDAY 30 DECEMBER 2008

COMMUNITY

M5

Perish the thought of lighting up Penang Botanic Gardens!

THE earliest Botanic Gardens in the country was set up as a centre of research and propagation, not for the passing titillation of the curious public.

Proposals to light up the gardens at night are extremely ill-conceived and should be immediately dismissed.

Botanists, naturalists and anyone with any concern for our dwindling nocturnal wildlife are appalled.

It is well-known that 'light pol-

lution' is responsible for the unpredictable, dysfunctional and often deadly behaviour of nocturnal mammals, insects, birds and turtles, to name a few.

Moths become disoriented while fruit bats and opossums forage less because they are easy prey to predators in the light.

Birds sing during unnatural hours, breeding cycles are altered, nesting becomes difficult because of the brightness, frogs and toads suffer abnormal

light levels, even their evening breeding and croaking choruses are affected and night temperatures are raised with bright lighting.

Have you tried sleeping in a brightly lit room or relaxing under floodlighting?

Darkness is essential for the welfare of all man and beast.

It is part of our internal clockwork and fundamental to our sense of the rhythm of life.

Scientists are currently investi-

gating the ill-effects of overexposure to artificial light on humans.

Hawker complexes, canalising natural streams with concrete, cutting trees to build carparks and shophots?

Isn't it time to take a step back and review the direction the Botanic Gardens seems to be going before it's too late?

Loh-Lim Lin Lee
lohlim@gmail.com

PHT lauds Penang Government's stance

The Star 27 March 2009

THE state government's height restriction in line with Unesco guidelines on four controversial high rise projects proposed within the heritage site should set a clear direction for future developments.

Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) president Dr Chooing Sim Poo (pic) said they applauded the stand taken by the state government and the Penang Municipal Council following the advice of the Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry.

"This is an important step forward for our policy makers. The state government should now establish a clear principle that no developer should be allowed to pursue its short-term interests over the long-term interests of the city's prosperity as a Unesco World Heritage site," he said in a press statement.



Last November, controversy arose over four high rise projects in George Town as they were found to exceed the maximum height of 18m allowed under Unesco guidelines for World Heritage Sites.

The four are the Rice Miller boutique hotel in Weld Quay, the Boustead Royale Bintang Hotel at Lebuh Downing, an E&O Hotel extension project and a 23-storey hotel project along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah by the Low Yat Group.

As for the threat by some of the developers to sue the government, Dr Chooing called on the people to express their abhorrence at such arrogance and urged the government to blacklist any company that did so.

"Alternatives should be pursued before any legal action," he added.

MEDIA COVERAGE

M4

COMMUNITY

STARMETRO, FRIDAY 9 JANUARY 2009

Forum on hill slope projects

Lee: Need to protect environment

FOLLOWING concerns about hillslope development in Penang, InvestPenang is organising a forum on the viability of hill land development for its 'The CEO Speaks...' series next week.

The forum, on Jan 16 at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) auditorium, will feature speakers from the property development and real estate industries, non-governmental organisations and the engineering field.

InvestPenang executive committee chairman Datuk Lee Kah Choon (pic) said the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide last month sounded a word of caution to Penang on hill land development.

"The reason for this forum is due to several factors like the need to protect Penang's environmentally sensitive areas that include hill land over 76 metres or 250 feet above sea level with gradients over 25 degrees.

Lee also said Penang had not revised its density guidelines for 30 years and the urbanisa-

tion rate in the state had increased.

Among the key speakers at the forum are Henry Butcher Malaysia director Dr Teoh Poh Huat, IJM Properties (northern region) general manager Toh Chin Leong and Institution of Engineers Malaysia (Northern Branch) chairman Lim Kok Khong.

Dr Teoh will speak on the demand for property and the expectations of housebuyers in Penang while Toh will speak on his company's mitigation works at hill slope development projects.

Lim will share his expert views in hill development.

The forum will be from 3pm to 5.30pm. The fee is RM50 per person.

For details and registration, call Sudirman Husani at 04-6268833 or email him at sudirman@investpenang.gov.my. Enquiries and registration forms can also be faxed to 04-6468811.

"The CEO Speaks..." series is sponsored by The Star, Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) and the Penang Development Corporation (PDC).



The Star 23 February 2009

Cable car project open for tender

State govt wants the line to go from Botanic Gardens to Penang Hill



By ANDREA FILMER
andrea@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Hill cable car project, which has been talked about for almost 20 years, may soon turn into reality as the Penang Government has opened the tender process for the project.

Penang Public Works, Utilities and Transportation Committee chairman Lim Hock Seng (pic) said the project would be a private finance initiative and the state had set the cable car alignment from the Botanic Gardens to Penang Hill.

"There have been proposals in

the past to build the cable car from Teluk Bahang, but after the state conducted a study, we felt the distance was too far and may become dull for the passenger.

"With the Botanic Gardens, the distance will only be 1.5km to 2km long with the journey taking about 15min.

"The place is a scenic attraction and it is also an easy place for tourists to catch buses or get other transportation into George Town," he said when contacted yesterday, adding that the ride would have taken about half an hour.

The state government has placed an advertisement in The Star yesterday inviting qualified

companies and registered with the Ministry of Finance to participate in the tender process. Closing date for the tender is May 15.

Lim said if all went well, the state hoped to finalise the project by the end of the year.

"With the cable car project, tourists will have two methods of getting to the peak of Penang Hill - the historic funicular railway station in Air Itam and the cable car.

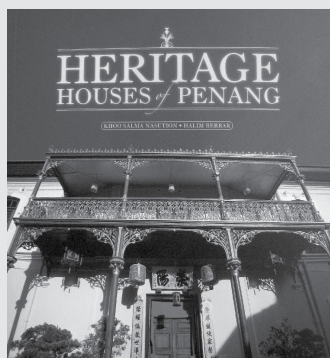
"The cost, time frame, ridership capacity, rate of charge, planning and specifications are very important considerations.

"Hopefully, we will be able to finalise things by the end of the

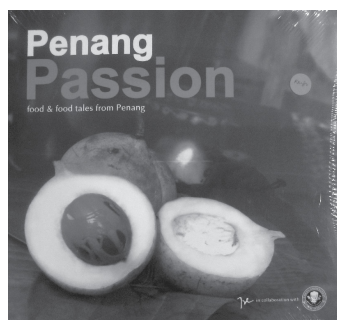
year but it depends on how many proposals we receive," Lim said.

According to press reports, the Penang Government toyed with the idea of a Penang Hill cable car project from as far back as 1990, though serious consideration on the project began in 1999.

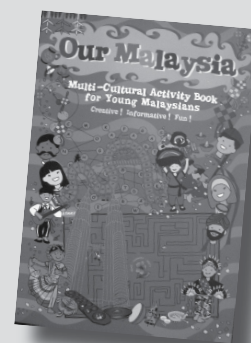
In mid-2008, state Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee chairman Danny Law Heng Kiang revealed that the state had received two proposals on the project - an RM80mil proposal linking Teluk Bahang to Penang Hill and a RM60mil proposal with Youth Park as the starting point.



*Heritage Houses of Penang by
Khoo Salma Nasution & Halim
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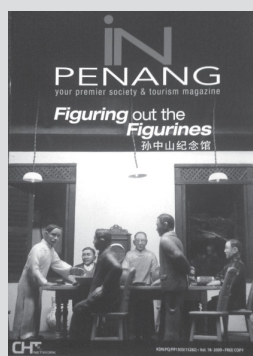
*Penang Passion, food & food
tales from Penang | RM80.00*



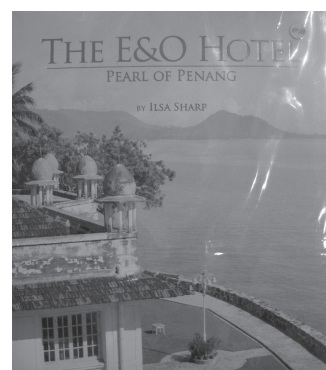
*Our Malaysia Multi-Cultural
Activity Book for Young
Malaysians | RM10.50*



*PHT George Town Shophouse
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*IN Penang
Free Distribution*



*The E & O Hotel Pearl of Penang
by Ilsa Sharp | RM188.00*

NOTICE

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Reminder for membership renewal with increase in subscription for 2009:

Admission: RM50 | Annual subscription: RM60

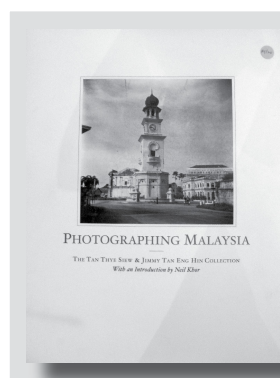
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