

September - October 2007
Volume 4, Issue 5

Heritage News

A bi-monthly newsletter of the Perak Heritage Society. For Members only.

Greetings!



From The Straits Times, 31 AUG 1957.

They did it! The Merdeka Stadium, still under restoration, was transformed into a huge performance space for the big Merdeka celebrations.

In the run-up to Merdeka Day 2007, our dailies went all out to instill pride and nostalgia with reminiscence, how life has changed over the last 50 years and how much Merdeka remains etched in memory. Much talked about is the corporate-sponsored supplement in the NST, a set of facsimiles of 'The Straits Times' from 26th August 1957 to the day after Merdeka. Interestingly, parents are keeping them for their children as 'heritage' collection.

Papan Memories was the big event of the year. Why go to Papan to celebrate Merdeka and the end of WWII? The answer lies in the co-operative Papan community and the enduring spirit of Sybil Kathigasu who operated a clinic here during WWII. Merdeka can be celebrated anywhere, but where else can we take over the town for a night but Papan? Read Sook Mei's report on centrespread.

Heritage is essential to tourism as tourists want to experience authentic historical sites. In the Nanyang Siang Pau, columnist Zheng Min Lie wrote: ...The competitive edge of tourism Malaysia lies in what the other countries cannot compare: our nature, heritage and folk culture and lively communities. They require little investment and development. They are enduring and uniquely Malaysian. For a brief report on the Perak Tourism Seminar, go to page 2.

25th September was the Mid-autumn Festival celebrated with lanterns and lots of yummies: mooncake, pomelo, baby yam and lots more. Was your lantern the brightest and prettiest?

Selamat Berpuasa and **Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri** to our Muslim members and friends! For a taste of 'Raya', join us on the Chemor heri. trail in October. Sign up now! To our Hindu members and friends, an early **Happy Deepavali**.

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Views and opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Committee. Verification of facts and statistics are the responsibility of the respective writers.



50 years later ... from the New Straits Times, 31 AUG 2007.

PHS Movie Night
Saturday, 27 October
7.15 pm



INDOCHINE

Starring the glamorous French diva, Catherine Deneuve, the film is a story of passion and revolution in colonial Vietnam, an epic of love and war. Come see the demolished Alma Baker House, and other beautiful sites in Perak. The movie won the 1992 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. English subtitles.
 By donation: RM10 per person, light refreshment included
 Duration : About 3 hours
 Bookings: Charlie: 019-571 9691



Norman brought Nick's attention to the dilapidated building (below)
 Photos : Nick Cofill



PHS heri.trail: Surprising Chemor!

On this trail, we will share with you some "best-kept" secrets, including a vanishing trade. As it is the festive season of Hari Raya Puasa, we will visit a kampong house for festive delicacies. Be warned, Chemor may not be the same again!

Date Sunday, 21 October
 Time 8 am to 4 pm
 Meet Ipoh Railway Station at 7.45 am. Car-pool.
 Cost Members and those below-18: RM25; Non-members: RM45
 Booking Su Win: 012-288 6888 by 14 October

Heri.trail: Kampar: Kinta's new boom town

With the new UTAR campus, new railway station and impending municipal status, Kampar is set for rapid development. What will happen to the old town and its heritage communities? We will pace the streets to see some fine old buildings. Then we hop to the new town for contrast.

Date Sunday, 25 November
 Duration 8 am to 6 pm
 Meet at Ipoh Railway Station by at 7.45 am. Car-pool and travel in convoy.
 Cost Members and those below-18: RM20, Mon-members:RM40; lunch and refreshments on your own account.
 Booking Su Win: 012-288 6888 by 23 November

PHS Movie Night - Saturday, 24 November : BEYOND RANGOON

NORMAN'S RUIN

E-mail from Nick Cofill, PHS member

While motoring north to Papan last Saturday, 18th August, for some mischievous adventure, I happened to snack at Gopeng - as one does these days to avoid the tiresome fare available on the North-South Expressway.

Naturally enough, having been on the recent PHS walk through the town, I returned to the familiar coffee shop for some tasty *char siew pau* and an iced Ipoh *kopi puteh, kosong*. While munching, one of those young, quite good-looking pups came over (who, unfortunately, often aren't the full quid) but nevertheless, he did manage to focus my attention to the row of fine early timber shop-houses next door.

It was to my disappointment - but not my horror (we can't be dramatic about these things) - that I noticed the front upper storey above the five-foot-way had caved in. Building debris was scattered everywhere.

Such is the decline of our streetscapes. I felt in my minds' eye that the pup should be called Norman.

PERAK TOURISM SEMINAR

Venue and date: Syuen Hotel, 13 and 14 August, 2007
 Organisers: Perak State Government & Perak Tourist Association

From different perspectives, tourism is a 'big game' and it is, for now, the main bread-winner for heritage.

This seminar reflects the desire to improve tourist arrivals in the state as we looked at various aspects of the tourism industry. The most interesting presentation was given by Prof. Dr Amran Hamzah, who showed slides of what he found at the various popular tourist attractions: the pathetic and appalling conditions of the infrastructure and facilities which we are familiar with. Not easy to understand but clearly important is the matter presented by Sivaprasagam Govindasamy, GM of the Syuen Hotel. In his presentation,

he expressed the need to enhance the role of the private sector in the tourism industry, turning on the state machinery in tourism to focus on promotion and supporting services from local authorities.

The state has opted to brand Perak tourism as “eco” and “nature” tourism. Top of the list was the Royal Belum Forest, followed by Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary and the Matang Mangrove Forest. One of the workshops came up with the idea of packaging the Kinta Valley to show off the industrial heritage of Malaysia. Remember the days when our beauty queens would introduce themselves at international pageants that they come from the land of rubber and tin?

EMPOWERING PERAK

Law Siak Hong took in the dinner talk: ‘Perak’s Contribution to Merdeka’.

Nearly 500 diners attended the event jointly organized by the National Archive and the Perak Academy, and delivered by Tan Sri Datuk Abdullah Ahmad and Emeritus Professor Dato’ Dr Khoo Kay Kim. Most of them stayed past mid-night, when the evening finally ended.

Let’s get it straight. Stunned or stung, I was more concerned about pride in our cultural heritage (political history) and how that might be sustained in our beloved state, this land of grace. The Perak sultanate is endowed with natural beauty from the sea to the hills, forests rich in biological diversity, communities with enduring traditions, a fascinating social history and material culture. Let’s start with Ho Tak Ming’s thought in the souvenir programme:

“In a sense, the genesis of Malay nationalism lay in the incident at Pasir Salak in 1875 (*Ed: Where the British Perak Resident, JWW Birch was murdered*)... The development of the tin industry in the 19th century in Perak, and particularly in the Kinta Valley, as a result of the influx of Chinese miners, spearheaded the country’s economic development. By the early 20th century, Perak also featured prominently as an agricultural centre, with rubber contributing significantly to the State’s wealth. Until the Second World War, Perak was the richest and most advanced of the Peninsular Malay States, with the largest population, the largest number of sizeable towns, the best-developed infrastructure, and the most schools. Perak was indeed the country’s premier state... The close co-operation between the three major races in Perak was an important contribution to achieving national Independence.

Perak’s wealth touched all races. Historically, nationalism was at the heart of the people of Perak and their political leaders. In spite of excellent talents and a vast pool of potentials, Perak has been overshadowed and sidelined by other states for fifty years. Tan Sri quipped: ‘How time has changed what Perak was and could have been. Get your act together, and soon. What goes around comes around’. Yes, take heed. Perak’s contribution to Merdeka was enormous, HUGE. Perak, he felt, had the dynamics to change events in Perak and Malaysia. He urged the Malays to respect their tradition and seize the opportunity to become formidable players amongst the highest echelon in Malaysian politics.

Perak-born and bred, the Emeritus Professor Dato’ Dr Khoo was full of gems and peppers:

- The British stopped the development of Perak (in favour of Selangor)
- Gopeng had the first tin dredge (*Ed : wooden or steel?*)
- Perak had the best civil service in the Federated Malay States (FMS)
- Clifford School, Kuala Kangsar, produced the most number of “Tun’s”
- The first metalled road ran between Kampar and Ipoh

Below: Press advertisement in The Straits Times, Saturday, 31 AUG, 1957. Text from YOUR AUTHORIZED FORD DEALER associated with Ford Motor Company of Malaya Limited.

MALAYA

To the majority of people outside Malaya our country means rubber, tin and padi from a pear-shaped peninsula inhabited by many races.

To all those who share its heritage, it means much more -- for we see more than these material things.

We see the natural resources as a means of a more abundant livelihood. We see in the wealth of our land a way to a higher standard of living for us and our children. We see the green jungle as a competitor to be held back, so that we can plant our estates, build our homes and kampongs, develop our cities and extend our roads. We see the people... who by their progress in education and responsibility of citizenship, will ensure that Malaya maintains her honoured place amongst the free nations of the world.

And then we see the people as a Nation... of many races and creeds, all playing their part in making this country of ours rich in understanding, culture and economic opportunity. We see much to make us proud.

But most of all we see a future bright with promise... as we celebrate today, Malaya’s Independence.

Ed : Also in the same issue was a spread of congratulatory messages from Japanese concerns such as Sumitomo Bank, Radio Japan, Japanese canned sardines, Japanese travel bureau, including traders and manufacturers from pulp industry, cement plant, shipping lines, chemical producers and exporters, etc.

E-mail from Nick Coffill:

Thanks for the party!

I had a wonderful night. It was just perfect. It's always good when you have an audience that is like Los Angeles (forty suburbs in search of a city). Last Saturday we had 80 people in search of a focus and eventually they realised it was themselves. They were the focus and when those collective dreams went up into the night air riding on the paper hot air balloons it seemed the perfect affirmation that people and society can have a great time just by being themselves and having fun. We all introduced each other and made friends, fustspots were not allowed and bad spirits negated. Everyone was welcome even if they were not invited. Perfect. Charile and his fun loving attitude was a great support and I think he too had a ball. We all turned eleven years old for the night. -- Nick presented the slide show in No.74 for Papan Memories.



Nick setting his hair for the show. (AP)

E-mail from Bob & Avril:

Thanks for a good one!

Sincere thanks for a most enjoyable evening. A tremendous amount of work must have gone into organising the event and we are both very glad that we came along. We actually managed to find our way home, more by luck than any navigating feat on my part I would say, and found ourselves entering Ipoh on the Pasir Putih road (not quite where I expected, but never mind!). Look forward to joining one of your future heritage events.

Birthday boys getting ready to blow! (AP)



Food, glorious food.(AP)



LASTING MEMORIES OF PAPAN

Text by Lau Sook Mei Photos by : Audrey Poh (AP) Nick Coffill (NC)



The audience on the basketball court. (NC)

Captivated audience. (NC)



The Yuk Choy dancers. (AP)



One for the album. (NC)



It rained in Ipoh

in the early afternoon of 18th Aug, 2007 and my heart sank. I kept my fingers crossed. For the past week I've been waiting impatiently for the arrival of this special night in Papan. Yes, the Perak Heritage Society had painstakingly organized a social event dubbed 'Papan Memories' in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of Independence and also to mark the 62nd anniversary of the end of WWII.

When I got to No.74, Main Street, Papan, the host venue, it was already bustling with activities. First-time visitors to Papan were scrutinizing the timeless exhibits and paraphernalia of Sybil's Clinic Papan with great curiosity and fascination. Outside, Charlie and gang were busy turning bamboo baskets into lanterns which were then hung from the tree. At one corner, Nick was struggling with his paper lantern. Next door in the food hall, Ghee Hong was perched on a ladder transforming plain fluorescent tubes into multi-coloured ones. Amidst laughter and chatter, everyone played their part in making the night a success. Guests began to arrive ahead of the appointed time. They mingled, jovial and friendly. They were a mixed lot, comprising people from as far as Austria, Australia, England and Scotland, as well as members and friends from Ipoh, KL and Singapore. There were many new faces.

At about 7.30pm, much to the delight of the hunger-stricken guests, supper was announced. Oohs and aahs were heard when they saw the delectable spread of local dishes: nasi lemak, curry puffs, vadae, fried chicken, savoury yam cake, kuih and more. Especially popular were the WW2 food of steamed tapioca and sweet potato porridge with salted egg. How memorable it was for first-timers! Some of them went for second, even third helpings. One could see the look of satisfaction on their face. With everyone chatting heartily, the food hall was like a market. In the midst of it all, those who were 50 years old were asked to step forward. The rest of us sang 'Happy Birthday' to them and a special cake that I had made and decorated was cut and shared.

Sated, we walked to the open air basketball court for the dance performance. Lighted candles placed on the ground around the pitched-dark court evoked a strange eeriness but that vanished when the headlights of two cars flooded the court. This much awaited highlight of the night was delayed due to some technical hitch. I wonder if there was any complaint...

When the modernized Chinese folk tune came on, six young dancers from Yuk Choy (Suwa) High School, Ipoh, pranced into position. Donning red and blue traditional Chinese costumes and long pheasant feathers on their head, they were a sight to behold. Twirling bright red hankies and with dance steps well-synchronized, they danced to 'Can't Let Go'. According to the choreographer, the hankies represented our roots, traditions and culture. In the finale, the hankies were dropped to the ground but were eventually picked up. No matter how modern we are, our heritage cannot be brushed aside. We must always remember our roots and where we came from. The second dance, 'Sweet Memories' saw the dancers in qi pao and elbow-length gloves dancing to a medley of songs, to some familiar strains of the 1930s, an era when nightclubs were most happening. The message of the songs is that we must appreciate what we have; it was because of the past that we have today and tomorrow.

After that, led by Siak Hong, the guests took a walk along a candlelit path through the ruins. Long wavering shadows cast by the flickering candlelight gave the impression that the ruins were haunted. I quickened my pace and headed back to No.74 for another interesting 'game'. Charlie and gang were preparing to light up the cylindrical 'wish lantern', which works on the same principle as the hot-air balloon. The village folk crowded round them. Rarely does one get to see a flying light at such close range. We waited in suspense and when it finally lifted and flew, cheers echoed all round.

All eyes were trained towards the clear night sky, concentrating on the lantern until it became a tiny speck that eventually disappeared. I said a silent prayer to God for keeping the rain away to let us all have such a fabulous time. I'm sure this night in Papan will remain in our memory for a very long time.



Charlie created this exceptional heritage lantern for the night. (NC)

Lighting the lantern. (AP)



Pui San and Chin Yong, little mah jeh with hubby. (AP)



Hang on. Make your wish. (NC)



continued from page 3

To him, naturally, 'History is the mother of all disciplines and therefore, very important. Teach it, learn it. 'Perak,' he urged, 'know your strength. Don't try and imitate others'. Pure wisdom!

Perak's unique position in our national history is a source of pride. Our prince, HRH Raja Nazrin's public views enunciated and liberated our constricted thoughts and earned him a blanket respect for the heritage role of the Malay rulers. Yes, uphold the rule of law and the Constitution. Rekindle our glorious past to live in peace and harmony.

Will we grab our rhinoceros (an endangered species in our Belum Forest) by the horn, and act wisely? Yes. On second thought, make that a statement, not a question!

WIN-WIN: 'CURATORS' LIVE & CARE FOR STATE-OWNED HOUSES

Nothing Down, \$0 A Month, Hammer Required by Eve M. Kahn, the New York Times, 30 AUG 2007, condensed.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/30/garden/30curators.html?8dpc>

WHY would some people willingly spend decades and hundreds of thousands of dollars renovating houses they will never own? For a small but growing number of so-called resident curators living in old and cherished state-owned houses up and down the East Coast of USA, the answers include the pleasure of bringing an abandoned landmark back to life, freedom from mortgage payments and the chance to live in the kind of home that would otherwise be out of reach.

Curatorship programs like the one in Massachusetts have come about because many state governments own more houses of historical interest than they can afford to maintain, mainly on farms acquired decades ago and converted to parkland. Now a few states have begun turning these properties, along with some of the surrounding land, over to live-in curators, who take on restoration responsibilities in lieu of paying rent or taxes.

More states are looking to resident curator programs as a way to hold onto history, especially since a more familiar approach opening the old houses to the public as museums is on the wane, mainly because of a decline in visitors. They have often sat vacant for years in remote forested areas; their tenants are typically married couples who often do much of the renovation themselves. Many have professional experience in construction as well as "creative skills that are especially good for dealing with the finer details in the house," said Kevin M. Allen, who oversees the 28 properties in the Massachusetts Historic Curatorship Program, founded in 1994.

Maryland started the first network of 40 house curatorships in 1982, and Delaware began its program with three properties in 2004. In the last year, Vermont has offered the first three of what it expects will be a half a dozen or so houses, and Pennsylvania parks officials are meeting next month to discuss the establishment of the park system's first curatorship, in an 18th-century farmhouse outside Philadelphia.

As part of the arduous application process, potential resident curators are asked to submit detailed restoration plans and budgets (usually at least \$150,000), and to sign long leases (in Massachusetts, typically for 25 years, with options to renew; in Maryland and Delaware, for the life of the leaseholder).

A state inspector visits at least once a year to monitor the work. Exteriors have to be brought back to their period look, and vintage interior features cannot be drastically altered and the projects can last many years.

The resident curator system appeals to some preservationists as an alternative to selling properties off, or maintaining them as museums at a time of "low visitorship, no endowments and aging board members," said Donna Ann Harris, a preservation consultant and the author of the recent book "New Solutions for House Museums" (AltaMira Press). Resident curator arrangements, she said, "are an option that would serve these institutions well, in a business situation that's pretty grim."

Pictures above : An amazing landmark of Perak, the 1930's Chemor theatre is being adapted and re-used. More in the next issue.

Photos : Ken Yeh & Audrey Poh



China: the towers of Kaiping, Guangdong

From around 1840, *Sei-yap* people of Kaiping, Guangdong, went abroad to seek their fortune in the gold rushes and railroad booms in the USA, Canada, and Australasia. They did menial jobs for very little money but returned (80% never did) with their savings to build *diaolou*, tower-houses that are a 'flamboyant fusion of Chinese and Western structural and decorative forms'. In June, this collection of about 2000 towers of fortified architecture formed the newest World Heritage Site in China.

Kedah: Bujang Valley for World Heritage Site

In line with tourism promotion in the context of the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER), Kedah state executive council will collaborate with several universities to prepare a comprehensive dossier on the research findings of Bujang Valley for listing with UNESCO. According to the Malaysian Museums Department, Bujang Valley was a vibrant trading centre from the 3rd to 12th century, handling cargo from Arabia, China, India and the Malay Archipelago.

Kuala Gula for "Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance"

The bird sanctuary of Kuala Gula, less than one-fifth of the Matang mangrove forest eco-system, is ripe for successful eco-tourism. However, Malaysian Nature Society executive director, Dr Loh Chi Leong, had said that his organization would prefer that the entire forest reserve becomes a Ramsar site so that the forest surrounding the bird sanctuary would also be under a management plan to control destructive economic exploitation.

Kelantan: Push for tourism

Local historian, Prof Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud urges the villagers of Kampung Pintu Pos, Jeram, Pasir Puteh to preserve two unmarked graves of the comrades of Tok Janggut, the martyrs 'demonised by the British'. All three men were killed in a battle in May, 1915. Prof Nick Anuar wants to mark them with a proper signage and put the spot on the tourist trail. Incidentally, Visit Kelantan 2008 has been promoted in Dubai, London, Berlin and New York. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China will follow soon. The main event: Festival of 300 types of rice and delicacies.

Logging Bubu Permanent Forest

Star, 14 JUL: Villagers of Kampung Cheh in Bukit Gantang are suffering the effect of logging activities which were stopped two years ago. The place is no longer safe; erosion of the scarred terrain has silted the dams which supplied water to the village. Recently, boulders dislodged from eroded forest had tumbled down the hill and knocked down numerous orchard durian trees. Before logging spoilt the pristine landscape, villagers like Mat Arof could earn extra income from guiding European tourists on hiking and camping trips.

Taiping: Coronation Jetty

It is heart-warming. Volunteers of an international community group refreshed with new paint the 1932 Coronation jetty at Taiping Lake Garden, a crumbling and neglected time-piece. However, *HN* was told that the jetty is still awaiting repair.

Terengganu: heritage buildings for museums

Star, 7 AUG: State museum director, Mohd Yusof Abdullah has announced plans to gazette two early 1930's buildings and turn them into museums. The first is a commercial building in Kemaman, the other is the district officer's office in Dungun. It seems both tourism and the younger generation will benefit from this marvelous plan.

Issue

Sungai Buloh Leprosy Centre crashed!

Malaysia's medical heritage critically damaged. It suffered demoralising demolition the day after Merdeka Day. Ironically, it was done because of re-development by the Sungai Buloh Hospital. So, isn't it re-development that is against Heritage?

Read our special report in the next issue of *HN*.



Image from The Straits Times, 31 AUG 1957.

Preserving our Heritage for the Future

PHS, as we call ourselves, is a non profit-taking non governmental organization.

Our main aim is to promote heritage preservation and raise awareness of the natural and cultural heritage in our midst.

An elected committee runs a programme of activities for members and friends.

We network with individuals, groups and local communities for local knowledge.

We support information-gathering on 'hometown heritage'.

Heritage News (HN) is the vehicle for news, views and information to reach our readers.

Membership has its privileges; more information and application forms are available from our office.

Persatuan Warisan Perak, the Perak Heritage Society (Reg No:1254) was registered with the Registrar of Societies in August, 2003.

Office and
Postal Address:
85C, Jalan Sultan Abdul Jalil,
30300 IPOH, Perak, Malaysia.
(opposite the Syuen Hotel)

Telephone: Su Win
012-288 6888
Fax: 05-253 5507

E-mail:
perakheritage36@gmail.com
(new email address)

Germany: traffic woes threatens Dresden's heritage status

Is nothing sacred? UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has given Dresden a year to come up with alternative traffic plans or face the risk of being struck from the list of World Heritage Sites.

'Made-in-Malaysia' cultural heritage

Star, 14 JUL: The Deputy Minister of KeKKWa, Dato' Wong Kam Hoong stated, for the National Heritage Listing (NHL), items and intangibles chosen from Chinese culture must be 'Made-in-Malaysia'. These included the 24-season drum performance, the word *yam seng* ('cheer' in Cantonese), hawker favourites *chee cheong fun* and *yong tau fu*. So far, Chinese cultural items on the NHL are the Lion Dance which uses stilts or crossbars and the building which is the Chinese Assembly Hall of Selangor.

UNESCO calling!

Late in August, the UNESCO assessor called on Malacca, then Penang, for World Heritage Listing. The Penang Municipal Council and the Penang Heritage Trust rushed to complete information signboards which, in three languages, tell the history of streets within the core heritage conservation area in George Town, Penang. They are meant to educate the public, especially youths, in local history.

Pulau Pangkor: fishing village and tourism

Kampong Teluk Dalam is the only area on the island with a natural cove for fishermen to moor their boats. Land-acquisition for the development of airport, chalets and resorts has affected the villagers, who are third generation fishermen. Their livelihood would be lost, if they are pushed inland. The assemblyman for Pangkor maintains that development for tourism will not sacrifice their livelihood or their village. He also reckons that the island's history should be promoted for tourism.

Sarawak heritage forges ahead

Leading the way, the 'Hornbill State' has added 19 historical buildings, monuments and sites to its heritage list. These and the existing 70 are being gazetted. The new list includes the buildings of the 1770 Tua Pek Kong Temple, 1848 Bishop's House, 1865 St James' Church, two Catholic secondary schools and the 1912 Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Other historical sites include a Buddhist shrine, ancient Chinese cemeteries, primitive rock carvings, and a 1952 Bidayuh headhouse.

Sitiawan: Government funding for repairs to heritage

KeKKWa has allotted RM150,000 for repairs to the Gong Diong Chang Memorial Hall in the Methodist (ACS) School in Kampong Koh, Sitiawan. The 1953 building commemorates the contributions of DC Gong, former headmaster (1926-1930), later appointed Vice-Principal until the Japanese Occupation. When the Japanese secret police, the Kempeitei, occupied the school premises, he was taken away and was never seen again.

Speak up for your (heritage) right

Eddy Saw of Selangor is proud of his hometown. In response to a feature story on Taiping, he wrote to the Star indignant because it missed out his favourite food and places. Let us hope that others would come forth and share their hometown heritage with us.

Tambun Pomeloos

Tambun Pomeloos are an iconic Malaysian produce, branded by the place just outside Ipoh in the Kinta Valley where it has been grown for decades. Like Sayong pottery, Tambun pomeloos are geography-specific. The Tambun Pomelo Growers Association recently received the Most Encouraging and Supportive Non-Governmental Organisation award from Perak Tourism. Ironically, two-thirds of the farmers are facing eviction due to housing development.