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Heritage News

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

Greetings!

As the year closes, it is gratifying to note that our heri. trails have got people to sit up and take notice. Thanks go to the press. Three stories came out of 'Surprising Chemor' in two consecutive weekends in the Star and we received congratulatory SMS's and membership enquiries from heritage lovers in various parts of the country.

The demolition of Sg Buloh Leprosy Settlement's East Zone began the very day after Merdeka, 2007. Our source e-mailed us some good news: the Ministry of Culture, Arts & Heritage, KekKwa is working to conserve what's left of the site. For sentimental reasons, and to inspect the extent of damage, Siak Hong returned to the place he frequented more than twenty years ago and filed the story on page 2.

Closer to home, and of major concern, is the dismantling of the iconic giant water pipeline which identifies Gopeng as a tin-mining town. It seems the 92-year-old engineering feat is no longer useful - mining operation ceased in the mid-1980s, and it poses danger to road users and the kampongs through which it runs. It is deemed to be in the way of development. While a better road will be appreciated by the nascent eco-tourism development, viz Rumah Rehat Adeline, My Gopeng Resort, etc, the sustainability of the place will be ruined by roads built for buses of tourists. Is this a conflict of community interest against heritage value not understood?

Some landowners in Gopeng alerted the PHS when the dismantling was already in progress. Press coverage followed. It seems that heritage value is worth nothing but millions of ringgit in scrap metal, which the dismantled steel pipes have become. There is hope: to *the Star*, a spokesman for Gopeng Bhd has said that some sections will be retained for "Homestay Tourism" involving the kampongs of Jelitong (Jelintuh?), Sungai Itek and Pintu Padang. Wait for the exciting update in your Heritage News (HN).

Members, here's a gentle reminder to renew your membership. Use the renewal form accompanying this issue. A membership application form is also included for you to recruit a member for your PHS. Do feel free to photocopy the form provided should you need more than one application. For queries on your membership, the contact for our Honorary Secretary can be found on the back page of your HN. Please do not forget to register your e-mail address in your renewal form. If you do not have an e-mailbox, please get one or arrange with someone who would access it for you regularly.

Selamat Hari Raya Haji on 20th December. As we come close to saying goodbye to an eventful 2007 in heritage, the PHS Committee and the editorial team wish you a very Merry Christmas and a **Happy New Year!**



The dismantling of the Kampar Pipeline in Gopeng.
Photos : Charlie Chong

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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.



Email from Nick

Thu, 11 Oct 2007 09:10:22

Thanks for Heri.News 4.5. It's becoming a good newsletter, more polished, WITH colour, and a good mix of social and political content. For some of us outside the state it would be good to have a half-page map of Perak in every issue. On it, you pinpoint the places, the towns and kampongs that are written about in each issue, giving it a geographic sense of place. I know many of the towns but often I cannot place them in context.

Ed: Thanks, Nick for the excellent suggestion. We will include this as a standard feature in the new format to be implemented in HN: Volume 5, 2008. Meanwhile, get yourself a Perak map, please!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Professor Lynn Hollen Lees is seeking people with personal or family memories of pre-1940 social history of Perak and western Malaysia. Those interested in sharing their stories should contact Hong on perakheritage36@gmail.com. Interviews will be held in April/May 2008.

NOTICE**Training for Trainers**

Get trained in facilitating heritage workshops. The skills you will acquire are useful for life and living. Fee: to be determined, but it will be painless. For more information, contact Siak Hong: **017 506 1875**
Sign up by **30 January 2008.**

A LIGHT SHINING ON THE VALLEY OF HOPE

Text by Law Siak Hong, photos by Darryl Collins

The demolition of the East Zone of the historic Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement (SBLs) has caught the eyes of the world. What has been lost to ignorance and self-interest is irreplaceable but the historical significance and its world heritage value is now acknowledged. The good news is that remedial action is being taken. Teoh Chee Keong, a heritage specialist, has been working on preserving the site before the sudden demolition. In a recent e-mail, Chee Keong wrote:

'As far as I know, KekkWa has great interest in gazetting this site as a national heritage. They have formed a committee that includes scholars, KekkWa representatives, Selangor government representatives, the head of Sungai Buloh Leprosarium, Pengarah from the Ministry of Health and our representative, Mr. Lim Yong Long. They are working on a proposal to preserve the remains of the site. They will consider the sustainability of the site as well as the rights of the residents. Hopefully they will come out with a good proposal to urge the cabinet to gazette this site... This settlement is a common heritage that should be recognized, affirmed and fully preserved, for the benefit of the present and the future generations.'

On 30th October, with Darryl Collins, my friend from Siem Reap, we discovered that there was still much to love and treasure. Residents we met related in anger what had happened. Yet, they seemed resigned to the fate of their 'kampong', their only home. The young man we met at the vegetarian lunch at the Buddhist Association was born in the Settlement. He has moved out, merged seamlessly with the world outside in business but would return daily for the cosy communal life.

Looking at the demolition site, flattened and levelled, it may be hard to justify that the site is vital to the hospital. There are stretches of unused land and land under oil palm adjacent to the hospital grounds. Elsewhere in the SBLs I see piles of bricks where chalets once stood on gentle slope. I see on-site workers and wonder if they knew what they have done to the history of the world and to the people who have lived and died and were buried there. I see temporary food stalls beside the main thoroughfare patronised by uniformed hospital staff.



From Chalet to a pile of bricks.



Roof tiles salvaged (see details of roof tiles, pg 3).

Demolished and levelled - hospital buildings in the background.



PHS member Peter Vong observed, 'The recent run of events has caused considerable woe among the patients, and the threatened displacement of residents together with further reduction of land (that would otherwise be used for purposes of rehabilitation) does not bode well for the settlers' well-being. In a world that is bent on wiping out the planet's past at ever increasing speed, that prospect seems to be the norm for heritage sites of any value. What, if anything, do you intend to do to "save the past for tomorrow"?'

Lee Tong Lim, a resident, sums it up, 'The government should help to preserve this settlement as there's no other place like this in the world.' Moreover, no 'incentives' were provided to the inmates who built up the nurseries on their own. He indignantly made his case: 'We should not be asked to move!'

What will be gone? 110 leper's home, 10 common baths, 1 central market, 1 workshop, 1 laundry shed, a prison complex with ward and central park.

What will happen? A massive development for UiTM's (University Technology of Mara) medical faculty which comprises 2 blocks of 12-storey faculty building, 5 blocks of 10-storey student hostel and 2 blocks of 6- and 4-storey postgraduate and research center. The development will destroy and disfigure one of the most important leprosy settlements in modern history.

Why save this common heritage of human race? Leprosy settlements are facing extinction due to the availability of cure for the disease since 1980. But the existence of leprosy is recognized as one of the common enemies that had afflicted human race since early history. The SBLS is an extremely rare prophylaxis leprosy settlement model that was based on an enlightened segregation policy which provided an outstanding solution for humanity. Leprosy will soon become part of history itself and the SBLS would be one of the most important evidence of human triumph over leprosy.

On 30th October, in a bid to stop further depletion of the SBLS, the 'Save Valley of Hope Solidarity Group' made an appeal to various international heritage and health agencies including UNESCO, WHO and the World Heritage Centre. For more information, please see <http://valleyofhope.blogspot.com>.



Buddhist Temple, built 1959

The Royal Belum Gazetted **Congratulations** to the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS).

As a result of the ten-year Belum-Temengor Campaign run by the MNS, joined later by its supporters, including the PHS, the Royal Belum was gazetted. In addition to the 'bands' of MNS and its branches, the campaign involved Celebrity Ambassadors, a sponsor and generated 80,000 post cards to the federal and state governments.

Of course, all is not done. In the September 2007 issue of the Malaysian Naturalist, a quarterly published by the MNS, these quotes highlight the challenges ahead:

Datuk Seri Mohamad Tajol Rosli Gahazali, Chief Minister of Perak: 'We hope to be able to stop logging completely at the Temengor Forest Reserve in 10 years and turn the entire area into a permanent reserve.'

Angela Hijjas, Chairperson, Belum-Temengor Campaign: '...the gazettement of Royal Belum in May 2007 meant the achievement of half our task... There is still much to be done... first off the development of a management plan that is still pending funding...'

Law Siak Hong, PHS President: "Despite the gazettement, plans for commercial planting and the laying of gas pipeline remain as threats to the Royal Belum and the Belum-Temengor forest complex... the state government should implement immediately professional management and sustainable eco-tourism development to make Royal Belum the iconic Malaysian environment conservation model for the visiting world..."



Roof tiles for the buildings manufactured by Tuilleries Romain Boyer, France.

Statement of significance of the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement

Source : The "Save Valley of Hope Solidarity Group"



Building donated by Kepong Group? note the inscription on the chimney



Moral support from Taiwan. Taiwan's leposarium was preserved for its medical heritage.



A product of the Settlement.

LAT THE COVER BOY

'We always feature ordinary people who do extraordinary things. Although, as the region's most famous cartoonist, Lat is far from "ordinary", his Kampung Boy celebrates the extraordinary events of everyday life - the joys and pains of being a kid no matter where you live.' -- Jim Plouffe, editor-in-chief, *Reader's Digest Asia*, on the transcending power of Lat, Dato' Mohd Nor Khalid, who appears on its October cover. See also entry in *Snippets*, [backpage](#).

1. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement is a pioneer leprosy prophylaxis settlement that demonstrates how an isolated world (self-contained settlement) should be constructed to segregate human beings in a humane way (based on enlightened policy with self-supporting ability). It involved human genius effort in organizing proper social policy, town planning and medical sciences to provide an outstanding solution to humanity.
2. The concept of enlightened policy with self-contained and self-supported leprosy settlement has inter-influenced with Sao Paulo Leprosarium Model that later widely influenced the development of the model of leprosy settlement in many countries.
3. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement was the biggest leprosy settlement in the British Empire and the second biggest in the world. It generously accepted leprosy refugees from neighboring countries based on humanitarian ground.
4. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement is evident to great human achievements in fighting one of the scourge diseases (leprosy) in human civilization.
5. The self-contained living environment of the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement has created a very unique culture, socio-economy characteristic and autonomy system (own currency, prison, etc) that represent a very rare and exceptional example of modern sub-culture in the development of humankind in the 20th century.
6. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy research center contributed a lot to modern leprosy medicine and was one of the most outstanding research centers of leprosy in the world.
7. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy settlement is only home to a group of aged and disabled since 77 years ago. They have cultivated and flourished the land as one of the most remarkable horticulture industries in the Klang Valley since 1959.
8. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement is a pioneer planning work of 'modern human settlement' in the country that laid the fundamental idea and model of a multi-racial living environment.
9. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement is probably the earliest (1926-30) model of modern 'human settlement' in the country that was perfectly planned based on the Garden City ideology, both conceptually and practically, with clear zonings (housing, central park/field, social facilities, treatment and green belt) and self-sustainability (water source, agriculture land, interdependent zones).
10. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement illustrates a rare example of 'a group' of domestic scale colonial architecture buildings in one contained settlement which consist of detached houses, prison, post office, market, administration building, wards, mosque, churches, social clubs, school, clothes factory, etc. with simple expression, simple features and utilitarian function appropriate to the sociological and economical circumstances of a self-supporting settlement.
11. The Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement buildings show the adaptation of colonial architecture and tropical architecture including deep overhang, pitch roof, louvers, jack roof and full height window panels.

Various stories have been written about the SBLS since the demolition. When the issues are all cried out, the hurt may remain a very long time.

PHS MovieNite 2007

There are compelling reasons for location-filming in Perak: the beautiful landscape is quite accessible, with wonderful old buildings, essential facilities and hospitable services. Locals have been involved, including our PHS Committee member, Charlie Choong, who has built sets for several movies since the early 1990's. So, it is no surprise that he master-minded MovieNite. Between September and November, three films were shown: 50-50 the action-comedy, Indochine the romantic drama and an Oscar winner and Beyond Rangoon a political drama set in 1988, when civil strife gripped Burma (Myanmar).

Naturally, the Sungai Perak, which provided many interesting sites for PHS heri.trails, is featured in all of these movies. We noted Gunung Datoh, in Tambun, where Charlie built a thatch-roofed kampong for 50-50; the site is now a gated residential area, visited during our recent 'Surprising Chemor' heri.trail. The Rumah Besar Raja Bilah in Papan and the Alma-Baker House in Batu Gajah are featured in Beyond Rangoon and Indochine. It was marvelous to see their transformations in the hands of the set designers. While the former has been restored three years ago, it has remained closed; the latter now lies in ruins, as you must know, a state you can see displayed on the huge billboard for bridal services on Jalan Raja Ekram in Ipoh.

Ever the handy technician and builder, Charlie rigged our meeting room for the sessions. After the first session, cushions were added to the chairs for viewing comfort. Just as well, for the second session featured Indochine, which lasted 156 minutes!

For next year, Charlie plans to show more movies featuring our heritage sites, like the cinematographic Anna & the King.

THE SEKOLAH TUANKU ABDUL RAHMAN TURNS 50!

By Mohd Taib, an old boy of the STAR

Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman (STAR) started out as the Malay Secondary School, Ipoh in January, 1957, housed in temporary premises on Baeza Avenue. It was one of three boarding schools set up under the recommendation of the The Razak Report on Education to provide secondary education to rural Malays; the others are Sekolah Dato' Abdul Razak in Tanjung Malim and Sekolah Tun Fatimah in Johor Bahru.

The first batch of 200 Form One students from six Remove Class Centres in Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lipis, Kota Baharu and Johor Baharu were taught by 15 teachers with Encik Hamdan Sheikh Tahir (later Tun) as the headmaster. By March in the same year, 160 students had enrolled in the school's Remove Class.

The present complex in Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, formerly known as Tiger Lane, was ready in 1958. Built to the tune of RM2.5 million, it was equipped with 2 main blocks of 13 classrooms, an administrative block, a science laboratory, a dining hall (and kitchen), an assembly hall, six hostels and a huge field for sports on the 40-acre site.

On 14th May that year, the school was re-named after the first DYMM Seri Paduka Baginda yg Di-Pertuan Agong. The official event was lead by YTM Tuanku Abdul Rahman Putra, the 1st Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya. In the Prime Minister' message of the 1st edition of the school magazine, PRINTIS 1957/1958, he stated that: 'of all the journeys I have undertaken as Prime Minister up and down Malaya in the first year of our Merdeka, I think there is none which has given me greater personal pleasure than the opening of Tuanku Abdul Rahman School in Ipoh'.

Officiating the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the school on 27th October, 2007, the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah spoke at length on the need to have a multi-racial composition in our country's residential schools. This is to allow the younger generation to first, understand themselves as Malaysians, and then, as a component of a race. National interest has to be given priority over any group's interest.



Movie set: Charles Alma-Baker House, Changkat, Batu Gajah.
Photo : Charlie Chong



Rumah Besar Raja Bilah, Papan.



Mohd Taib reunited with classmates from Remove Class of 1965

OUT & ABOUT

In conjunction with the 538th birthday of Satguru Nanak Devji, the founder of the Sikh religion, a special exhibition was held at the Wadda Gurdwara Sahib in Ipoh. The exhibition, 'Exploring the Role of Sikh Soldiers - Where Valour is the Tradition' amassed an impressive selection of 200 photographs of the Sikhs in various historic battles. The event also showcased the Punjabi's favourite obsessions: the Punjabi bed, needle work and henna painting. Food was served to some 500 men, women and children - vegetarian, of course. PHS Vice-president, Mohd Taib Mohamed was among the guests-of-honour at the opening of this Sikh community-pride event.



Panggung Wayang Chemor - PHS on Chemor Heri.trail. Photo : Charlie Chong

REST & RE-VISIT

We will take a break from our heri.trail-blazing until after your new committee takes over in March 2008. Re-visit and explore your favourite heritage sites. Happy heri.trail blazing!



Mint Museum, Sydney.

PANGGUNG WAYANG CHEMOR

Our main concern for this heritage building was how much of the original (as inherited by the new owners) will be retained. 80%, I was told, when, armed with *LANDMARKS OF PERAK* and photocopies of the story on the building, I met the manager the very day after our chance discovery that renovation was in progress. The new owners had no real idea of its heritage value, but admitted that, for them, its beautiful facade clinched it. This unique theatre, owned by the Tai Chong Tobacco Company, is a wooden construction, with parts of its ground floor bricked up.

The façade, I was told, will be retained and rendered as authentically as possible, although no architect has been engaged to apply preferred practices. Thankfully, the rusty tin shed in the forecourt will be demolished to reveal the façade in full. A new wing has been added, and existing extensions are refurbished for the production line. As a manufacturing plant and store, the inter-connected buildings will get a lowered ceiling for 'more efficient' air-conditioning. The lofty auditorium space will be reduced by a dropped ceiling. One of the two wooden balconies outside the theatre has been removed. For safety, the remaining corner wooden staircase with impossibly narrow treads will be demolished and replaced by a new one in concrete.

In this small town some 12km out of Ipoh, with a stage and a commodious auditorium, Chemor's Panggung Wayang stands out among the surviving theatres, the precursors of modern cinemas in Malaysia. 'In its heyday, audiences came from as far as Ipoh to watch the resident Chinese opera company', wrote Chen Voon Fee in *LANDMARKS OF PERAK*, 'it was once used as a performance space for bangsawan.'

A quarter of a loaf is better than none' -- that was the consolation offered by our heri.expert in KL. At least, its 1930's façade will continue to resonate in style. The management informed PHS that it plans to be an active part of the Chemor community, not only as employer but also benefactor in education. All said and done, it would seem that Tai Chong Tobacco is set to take on corporate social responsibility seriously.

A MALAYSIAN HERITAGE CONSULTANT IN SYDNEY

Text & photos by Chong Fong Loon, *PHS Member, November 2007*

A decade or two ago, when we talked about a Heritage Consultant, we would be referring to a Westerner visiting Malaysia to give a talk in KL to government officials and NGO's (Non Governmental Organizations). This consultant would most probably be sponsored by an international organization like UNESCO since heritage conservation was then not a priority to most government departments and the NGOs would not be able to finance such a visit. Fortunately for Malaysia, we now have our own home-grown consultants who are not only internationally renowned for their knowledge of our local heritage but also of the Asia-Pacific Region.

One such person is Khoo Salma Nasution, a consultant and writer based in Penang and quite established and well-known in heritage circles worldwide. Her definitive book on the heritage buildings of George Town, Penang, *Streets of George Town* is in its umpteenth printing. She and her husband Abdur-Razzaq Lubis are better known in Perak for writing the coffee table book 'Kinta Valley', a seminal work on the history of the Kinta valley. For those of us who were involved in the formation of the Perak Heritage Society (PHS), she provided immeasurable help when we were drafting its constitution as well as to the needs of the nascent PHS.

So, it was a pleasant surprise to hear that Salma was coming to Sydney, my current residence, to give a talk in September. She was invited by AusHeritage Ltd to be their keynote speaker during their Annual General

Meeting (AGM) and also to give a 'Powerpoint' presentation about her work to the architects in the NSW Department of Public Works. AusHeritage is an organization which provides professional, quality support for cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region through a network of Australian cultural heritage services. Salma's host and guide in Sydney, Bruce Pettman is a soft-spoken Australian and a very active Board Member of AusHeritage. He is a Principal Heritage Architect working for the state government. He is no stranger to Penang, having visited Penang countless times in the early 90's on behalf of the South Australian Government to help in the early restoration of Suffolk House. His affinity with Penang is genuine and even infectious when he regaled us with his first impressions of the Hungry Ghost Festival.

Bruce took the trouble of driving Salma to all the major heritage sites of Sydney including several museums and was also kind enough to include me and my wife in his car. On the last full day in Sydney, we were joined by a colleague of Bruce, Verena Ong, an Ipoh girl who now calls Australia home. For me, it was a very pleasant surprise meeting Verena again. Our paths had crossed before, in Papan, during a PHS outing when I was impressed by the job description in her business card! Verena is a Conservation Architect and is responsible for restoring whole streets of heritage-listed terrace houses in the oldest part of Sydney (Millers Point). According to Bruce, the typical tall and burly Australian contractors are frightened of working for this diminutive Asian lady who demanded the work to be performed to her exact and high standards. Verena accepted Bruce's observation with candour and added the memorable words: 'People should read the full terms of the agreement before signing any contracts'.

What was the highlight of Salma's visit to Sydney? Without a doubt it would be the talk she gave to the members of AusHeritage during their AGM. The AGM was held in a hall of the Parliament House of NSW (perhaps the most distinguished and imposing venue in Sydney to conduct a meeting) and was hosted by the President of the Legislative Council of NSW. The talk she presented was titled 'Heritage in Asia, Idea and Reality' and Bruce said it was very well received because her presentation was to appreciative members who are themselves actively engaged in the global heritage conservationist movement.

If nothing else, Salma is a fine cultural ambassador for Malaysia who could motivate those who have met her to book their next vacation in Penang. She was in Sydney for only 4 days but thanks to Bruce, she managed to cram in all the main museums and prime heritage sites, meet their directors and even take a stroll in an open-air street market.

Within this narrow time frame, one cannot really experience the pulse of a city with a population of 4 million people, a fifth of the Australian population. I suggested that she should return for a longer stay, this time with the family to relax and to enjoy a dynamic city on the Asia-Pacific rim. After all, Penang and Sydney are really not that dissimilar: they were founded by the British within two years of each other (1786 and 1788 respectively) and both engaged convict labour extensively in their early public projects. And without George Town, the South Australian city of Adelaide might not have existed in its present form or location for it was founded by Francis Light's son William, born in 1786, the year George Town was beginning to be carved out of the jungle.



Heri, ambassador
Khoo Salma Nasution,
in Sydney.

Toponymy

The (scientific) study of place-names yields interesting information to streets and places. Familiar names are not necessarily common knowledge. Place-names derived from personalities, original communities and geographical features add qualities to our heritage. Perhaps the name of the street you live in has a story to tell. Why don't you share it with us ?

The Semai Orang Asli have lived with the pipeline for almost 100 years. Read our Special Feature in HN 5.1.



photo: James Gough



photo: Benedikt Schwarzacher

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.

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Re-constructing the old fort of Malacca

KeKKWa has budgeted RM12.4-million for the first phase of the project to re-construct the fort near the river mouth by year-end. Since the discovery of the old footings during excavation works for the controversial observation tower, work has been in progress to unearth and re-construct bits of the fort wherever practicable. This is done to gain Malacca's listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

'Toilet squads' for Perak Tourism

Recently Malaccan journalist for Sin Chew Daily, Ou-Yang Shan visited Angkor Wat, a World Heritage Site, and reported her amazement at finding how clean and tidy the whole complex was. She observed that cleanliness and well-kept grounds are pre-requisites and indispensable if one has to pay to enjoy the beauty of the heritage sites. Well said. To monitor the cleanliness and hygiene of the facilities in our tourism destinations, the state Tourism Committee chairman, Dato' Mohd Radzi Manan will send his 'toilet squads' to visit them and report to him. What are these destinations and who are responsible for their maintenance?

Aga Khan Award for Architecture to University of Technology Petronas

Out in Tronoh, in mined-out landscape, the innovative architecture of the UTP deserves recognition. Its design is a direct and creative response to our climate, one of the main criteria for the Award. Here is a heritage building in the making, but students of UTP are already complaining about the lack of maintenance.

Parit: where forest reserve does not mean a thing

Perak Tengah's Parit forest reserve is home to several endangered species and at least seven protected species: Clouded leopards, Malayan tapirs, leopard cats, lesser and large mouse-deer, smooth otters and purple herons. The Perak Environment Association is concerned about the natural swamps' fragile eco-system. Only about 1,000 ha remains of the original 4,100 ha, the rest de-gazetted since the 1980's for logging, and the development of Seri Iskandar town and oil palm estates.

Boutique heritage resort in Terengganu sets the trend

In Terengganu, on 1.2 ha of land near a terrapin sanctuary, 28 traditional Malay houses are being restored and given modern facilities for foreign holiday-makers. There will be nineteen guest villas, a restaurant, a spa and art and craft galleries. Due to open sometime next year, the 'high-end' boutique heritage resort has already attracted bookings from Europe and Japan.

Penang's Suffolk House resurrected

It took seven years and RM6.3-million to regain its former glory, including corporate sponsorships by the HSBC (the Bank). Built in the 1790's and originally owned by Francis Light, who began to build Penang as a port, this last surviving example of Georgian residential architecture is now owned by Penang state. Immaculate restoration and a new annex have made it an important landmark conservation project which might win another UNESCO Conservation Award for architect Laurence Loh.

Local War Historian, Chye Kooi Loong, MBE

As a reward for his efforts in documenting and publishing research on the battles fought in Malaya during the Second World War, especially the Kampar Battlefields, the 78 year old KL Chye will be honoured as a Member of the British Empire. Incidentally, two other recipients of the MBE are also related to the wars fought in Malaya: Dr A C Kathigasu and Dato' Thambipillay.

Lat in the US of A

Our local hero and 'living treasure' has gone big time! First, Kampung Boy, then Town Boy, these two of his classics are now published and sold in the US. Through his cartoons, Lat, or Dato' Mohd Nor Khalid, has shared his views about Malaysian life with the world at large. He manages to paint a humourous brush on even very sensitive political and religious subjects.