

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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

Number 38/39

April/May 1997

PHT Fundraising Dinner '97

A Big Success *reports Sandra Stoddart*

Over 350 people attended the PHT's fundraising dinner '97 held at the Rasa Sayang Resorts on April 5th. The Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and State Executive Councillor Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen were guests of honour.

There were 143 items available for silent auction – from antiques donated by members of the PHT Antique-collectors Club to more current items such as a flight for two to Kuala Lumpur with accommodation in the Hilton Presidential Suite. This package, valued at over RM8,000 was sold for RM2,500. There were many bargains to be had – a Favre Luba watch went for a 'steal' as did an MCM handbag. There were dinners and hotel accommodation packages from Park Royal and Shangri-la chains, and beautiful British etchings and local art and antique furniture as well.

Many guests came in traditional costume which added to the fun and relaxed atmosphere of the evening. The Rasa Sayang and the Golden Sands let us borrow their excellent bands and many people were up dancing before the evening was over. Members of the Straits Chinese Association Senior Citizens Group performed two dances.

Loh-Lim gave a short but comprehensive slide presentation of Penang as it was and as it is now, highlighting the need to save more of Penang's heritage and the Chief Minister was encouraged to give us assistance in this. In his speech he was very positive about the Government's intentions to save the most important and representative samples of our heritage – where possible.

Importantly, close to RM50,000 was raised on the night. A large percentage of this will be used to commence work on PHT projects such as the Loo Pun Hong or Carpenters' Guild in Love Lane. Already the staff and students of the RMIT University Australia have completed a dilapidation study of the building and repair work can soon begin.

I would like to thank Lee Laine who collected all the antique donations and was of invaluable assistance in co-ordinating the publicity; Stephanie Lee who co-ordinated the dinner at the Rasa; Winfred Khoo who managed to scout up some useful donations; Judy Soulakis for running the silent auction and preparing the bid sheets; Mary Slattery for arranging and keeping track of ticket sales; and Chris Utterback for preparing the program. It was a big job – bigger than many of us realised but we appreciate the support of our members in making this event such a big success

Sandra Stoddart

Chairperson, Organising Committee
PHT Fundraising Dinner 1997

Letters

The office mail usually consists of nothing more exciting than reports and circulars, and minutes of meetings. Nestling in the pile this month were two letters commenting on our 'daring idea' that a rainforest park be built in the heart of the city, on that Komtar triangle of prime land the government is now reserving for such as the superhyper Prangin Mall. Letters from members always give pleasure here at the PHT office.

New York Central Park

In the March issue of the PHTnewsletter, I read with great interest the editorial on the Prangin Mall crisis. There was a reference to New York City's Central Park. As a proposal for an inner-city park here in Penang will most likely face similar objections, I thought you might be interested in some of the history behind the creation of one of the world's most famous parks.

Originally the city plan for New York in 1811 did not include space for a public park. The planning commission intentionally left it out for two reasons. It did not make sense economically and it was thought unnecessary because of the abundance of recreational opportunities offered by the areas surrounding the island of Manhattan.

However, in 1844, William Cullen Bryant, editor of the New York Post called for a public park in Manhattan. His call for the space fell on deaf ears at first, but gradually the idea gained momentum and even became an election issue in 1850.

Finally, a Board of Commissioners of the Park was appointed to oversee the construction of the park. Frederick Law Olmsted, the famous landscape architect, was appointed as Superintendent of the Park.

The Park was planned and constructed from the mind of Olmsted and Celvert Vaux. They worked night and day to plan the park by carving and moving land to construct a decorative landscape.

The construction period was not easy and Olmsted and Vaux resigned twice over political bickering. Central Park was also not created from an already superbly managed piece of land. Physically, the park required tons of topsoil to be moved in from the neighbouring state of New Jersey, and over four million plantings were made.

The Park was opened officially in 1873, although it had been opened to the public since 1858. Olmsted stood firm that the park be used solely for its beauty and the passive enjoyment of its landscape. However, that is not what the public wanted.

A zoo and baseball fields were built before the official opening. Cars were allowed in it in 1899 and

playgrounds have been built throughout. Now there are many structures: rinks, theaters, restaurants and more. Year round, the park is constantly being used for recreational sports. However, its use as a place to relax still holds true for most of its users.

As a result, the park that was deemed "not economically feasible" has gone on to contain some of New York's most expensive real estate. Apartments that house the rich and famous, hotels, museums and other attractive buildings (buildings that respect and retain the scale and architecture of the community, not impersonal highrises) have been incorporated in a very cohesive plan surrounding the park. Central Park, in itself, has become one of the most famous and visited parks in the world.

Some people might argue that by comparing Central Park to a Georgetown park we are comparing "apples to oranges". But while the Prangin Mall site is not as large as the Central Park area and could not hope to achieve the serenity of a park if cars and motorcycles were allowed in it, the site could still create a much needed respite from the "concrete jungle" now enveloping Georgetown.

Additionally, there is an important environmental benefit to allow this boggy land to remain as close to a normal state as possible. Historically, I have heard that all of the local names given to the land where the Prangin Mall construction site is located translate to mean wetland, bog etc. If trees are the planet's lungs, then boggy wetlands are the planet's liver. Like our own liver that filters toxins that flow through our bodies, wetlands filter environmental toxins. And, judging from the black greasy soot that accumulates daily on my house fans, Penang could use a few more environmental filters!

Seriously, it is only recently that the critical function of wetlands has been discovered. In many cases, it has been too late. Even in the United States, nearly half of our existing wetlands had been filled in by the end of our first President, George Washington's term in office. We now have strict wetlands and open space policies in place in every state. Of course, no environmental policy or law is of any benefit if it is not enforced.

Finally, my late father used to tell me when I was a child to "profit by others' mistakes because you won't live long enough to make them all yourself." Penang would be wise while it is still a child to profit from both the "mistakes" and successes of others.

Christine Utterback
PHT member - Penang

Chris, In Kuala Lumpur they have decided to profit from their own mistakes. They are building what is called the KL City Centre Park, on the 20 hectare site of the old Selangor Turf Club where now stand the Petronas Twin Towers in all their Guinness Book of Records glory. Will Penang do the same? No one I've spoken to would bet on our quality-of-life wilderness park becoming part of the George Town landscape in the near or distant future. They are ready to bet, though, that our authorities will instead bring the city into the Penang Hill rainforest.

What about the dengue problem?

The suggestion that a Central Park should replace Komtar Phases 3 and 4 is a most daring idea and likely, I am sure, to be contentious (assuming that the powers that be give it any consideration at all).

As long standing regular visitors to Penang my

husband and I have noted the steady increase in traffic and decrease in the pleasure of walking in Georgetown. This year the latest one-way system seemed to have produced a small improvement in some areas and a disimprovement in others showing, I think, that any schemes of this sort are no more than temporary palliatives. What is needed is a bold attack on the problems of a deteriorating environment and the pollution resulting from the level of activity in the central area.

The provision of a green space instead of more buildings would go some way to effecting an improvement in air quality and provide somewhere for those who live or work in, or just visit Georgetown to relax in less stressful surroundings. Such open undeveloped places are to be seen in many of the urban areas of the world as a result of forethought by governments and local authorities of an earlier age. If something similar is to be done for Georgetown, this must be the time to do it, before all the available space disappears under ever increasing masses of concrete, steel and glass. I do hope that your suggestion is given the serious consideration it deserves so that future generations will inherit a Georgetown they can enjoy and be proud of.

(Michael is going to contribute his bit to this letter. Feel free to edit him as you think fit).

This is Michael taking over from Mara. Assuming your idea of a jungle area were taken seriously, an objection which I think you should be ready for is the Dengue problem. When we were in Penang in March there were comments in the press about the Aedes mosquito breeding in puddles on the Pulau Tikus building sites and some may say that your jungle could provide similar breeding areas in the heart of Georgetown.

Mara and I have talked a lot about our holiday and particularly the two visits with you and Joyce to the mainland and our tour of the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion. We really appreciated the efforts of the PHT to show us places we had not been before. For me one of the really memorable events was our talk with the proprietor of that little coffee shop at Bukit Merah when I found I could still remember some Malay after all! We will be in touch again before too long.

Michael and Mara Buchanan-Jones
Churston Ford, West Putford, Devon,
EX22 7UU England

Michael, You are absolutely right about the dengue outbreak here in Penang. I should point out, though, that our jungle mosquitoes do not seem to be as bloodthirsty as those now being bred in the city, at the many construction sites. Dato' Lim Chong Keat, our Founder Chairman, has had this secret hideaway deep in the Balik Pulau forests for years and so far as I know he has never fallen even slightly ill because of any insect bite. You must visit it next year.

New Members

We welcome the following as members of the PHT.

Ordinary members

Eugene Ong	Rolf E Berthold	Tracy Hong
Oh How Tat	Mirjam Klappe	Yap Wing Chun
Koay Swee Thye	Cheah Sin Loon	Siaw Siew Lee
Chew Khuan Yin	Ong May Wah	Ooi Geok Ling
Jennifer de Vries	William Fulton	Peter Edwards
Dr Kathleen Loh	Brendan Pointon	B J Stall

Penang may lose Air Itam Dam's water lifeline: MNS

PENANG: Penangites who depend on water supply from Air Itam Dam may lose their water "lifeline" if development in Penang Hill is not controlled.

Malaysian Nature Society (Penang) chairman Prof Dr Dick Ho Sinn Chye said yesterday an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) was imperative for any development at the hill's water catchment area.

"Any environmental damage to the hill's headstream will reduce the dam's water supply, which can cause a critical water shortage during the dry season," he said.

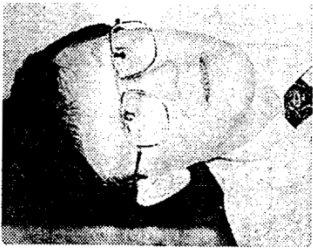
MNS member Ahmad Chik said it would be "extremely short-sighted to exploit our water resources."

He said disturbing the balance of nature could cause flash floods or critically reduce the water supply capacity.

Dr Ho said geological evidence from a scientific study in 1991 showed that the hill's north-west side of Craig Hotel was not stable, adding the Department of Environment (DOE) discouraged development at water shed areas.

"Data obtained by the expedition also revealed that the potential soil erosion at Craig Hotel was between 400 and 5,000 tonnes per ha per year," he said.

With the proposed development on the hill, the rate of soil loss would be faster than the rate of soil formation, said Dr Ho.



Dr Ho ... EIA imperative for any development at the hill's water catchment area

Among the proposals submitted to the Penang Municipal Council were:

- **SCRAP** the proposal for a cable car and upgrade the furnicular railway instead;
- **DEVELOPMENT** should not be permitted in water catchment areas;
- **BERJAYA** Group or any other developer should not be given the first option of refusal to develop the hill;
- **NO** new development should be allowed until measures for conservation, rehabilitation and proper maintenance had been implemented;
- **THE** actual number of visitors to the hill should be limited to 4,000 per day and not



Ahmad ... 'extremely short-sighted to exploit our water resources'

10,000 as stated in the plan, and,

- **THE** maximum development density for hotel development had been violated as the number of hotels allowed to be built at the Lomonds and Craig/Richmond property had exceeded the capacity.

Friends of Penang Hill (FOPH) spokesman Meenakshi Raman said they had collected 3,510 signatures so far to support the group's views and recommendations to the council.

She said the campaign was ongoing and people from other states were welcomed to sign the open public letter addressed to the council president.

NGOs: Set up corporation to manage hill

BY SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Friends of Penang Hill (FOPH), comprising eight non-governmental organisations, yesterday urged the state authorities to set up a Penang Hill Corporation to manage the hill more efficiently.

The call was contained in a 25-page memorandum submitted at the end of the two-month public display of the Penang Hill Draft Local Plan, which ended yesterday.

The display of the plan, originally scheduled from Feb 28 to March 31, was extended to yesterday following public appeals.

FOPH spokesman Menakshi Raman said the corporation could weed out "wasteful and inefficient duplication of the hill's services."

She said the corporation should have a general manager to control four units — railway and transport, maintenance, commercial, and conservation and rehabilitation.

"The corporation can be governed by a board of directors appointed by the state government, which should include public interest groups and agencies," Menakshi told a press conference.

The memorandum, drawn up by FOPH, and

which bears 3,510 signatures, was submitted to Penang Municipal Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan on Wednesday. One of the proposals called on the government to review the land titles and seize properties whose owners have breached the lease conditions, resulting in illegal clearing of the hill forest.

FOPH comprises the Consumers Association of Penang, Malaysian Nature Society, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Aliran, Angkatan Bella Islam Malaysia, USM Administrative and Academic Staff Association, Penang State Youth Council and Penang MTUC.

HISTORICAL VIEWS OF PENANG HILL

An Exhibition of Prints, Maps and Photographs from the 18th Century to the Present, prepared by Datuk Lim Chong Keat, Ooi Eng Hai, T. Puventhiran and sponsored by Bellevue the Penang Hill Hotel in conjunction with the Penang Hill Festival 1989.

In 1986 a major exhibition of early paintings of Penang dating from the 1770s gave a broad insight into over 200 years of the island's topographical history. The pictures included several which particularly reveal the environmental changes to the Hills of Penang. Penang Island had been noted from time immemorial for its fresh water supply which has been naturally related to the beneficial hills and the verdant forests. The Great Waterfall was a distinct touristic and functional symbol from the early days. When Capt. Francis Light established the East India Company settlement on the island in 1786, one of his clear instructions was to preserve the trees, and not to deforest unnecessarily. His commercial colleagues, however, saw the forests and potential timber-yards for ship-building and the hills as plantations for spices and fruit. Among the early estate owners were James Scott and David Brown who acquired and developed vast tracts including Highlands and Glugor planting on them cloves, nutmeg, gambier etc. Indeed by the 1850s as can be seen from a significant map by Moniot, the Government Surveyor, all the hill ranges on Penang Island had either been converted into spice and fruit plantations, or were earmarked for these economic activities at the sacrifice of the hill forests. The history of changes to our flora (and fauna) can be traced to the earliest days of the East India Company.

By comparison with the torrid climate of India, the Hills of Penang offered a balmy "rest and recreation" place, and the development of the Hill Station provided for vacations and convalescence. For those affected by the debilitating low lands, Mount Hygeia (now Convalescent) was the welcomed sanatorium. On the Hills, the British naturally indulged in their nostalgia for temperate flora and landscaping, and introduced fruit and flowers such as strawberry, roses, hollyhock, marigold, dahlia and others. In keeping with other estates of colonisation, foreign plants were introduced, especially those that adapted well to the climate both on the hill and in low lands, which became more dominant and desirable than indigenous species. Consequently the style of gardening changed the landscape and vistas.

have completed his stay without a trip to Penang Hill. By the 1850s P & O cruisers were also stopping at Penang, and in one of the Cazalet paintings of Bel Retiro we can observe the navigation signals.

The early route up the Hill was known as the first quarter of the 19th Century. Major McNair built more bridle paths, undoubtedly including Moniot Road, using Indian convict labour and other had been sent to Penang from Bencoolen and other places. McNair's intention was to rehabilitate them and he indeed turned them into the stairwells of public works on Penang Hill. Apart from Summit Road, Moniot Road (named after the Government Surveyor) was the main trail on the Hill right up to 1925, when the Hill Railway was practically completed (after earlier debates), which opened up the Hill to a new wave of residential buildings by local wealthy gentry, although kept below the exclusive preserve. Several of these Straits Chinese named their houses in European nostalgia and redolence, with names such as Mon, Sejour, Claremont, Fairmont, Dulce Domum, Grace Dieu, Tosari, Lausanne, the Rockies etc. The few exceptions included the Great Wall and the Heath Swee Lee bungalow. Much earlier, the Catholics had built the Retreat on a panoramic site towards the South end of Moniot Road.

The Waterfall Gardens was established in 1884, below the Great Cascade, and was the oldest Botanical institution in the country. It had in fact a predecessor established in 1810 by Governor Philipps near Suffolk House, but this was unfortunately sold off 12 years later. The Waterfall Gardens was a tribute to Charles Curtis, its first Superintendent, who collected botanical specimens extensively, especially from Government Hill and Moniot Road which have become the most significant samples in major herbariums all over the world. The Gardens was also the starting point for ascent to the hills - by foot, pony or sedan-chair. Early photography in Penang dates back to the 1860s with the advent of John Thomson. More pictures date from 1880 with the extensive views by Mrs. Moniot, Lambert, Kaulfuss, Klengrothe and others. From these available records - many turned into commercial postcards - we can see into the past and observe the milieu and the way of life, and the environment. There are pictures of social gatherings on the hill by the Brown and other families. The Crag Hotel owned by the Sarkies of

E & O (and the Rafflies) became the premier destination. The well-maintained splendour can be seen from the early photographs. The visitors obviously enjoyed the journey up and down. It is interesting to note that Frank Swettenham in the 1880s used to walk down and ride up by pony everyday during his month's stay on the hill.

The construction and completion of the Hill Railway has also been well documented by photographs from which we can compare the newly cut slopes and the natural reforestation regrowing on those sites over a period of 60 years. Other photographs of the Hill show fine landscaping, road works, services and impeccable maintenance, which many Penangites will remember as the hallmark and heyday of Penang Hill up to the 2nd World War. Obviously all should realise that the Hill is due for a renaissance in excellence.

The many views and maps offer a great wealth of information. This mini-exhibition is intended to be a harbinger of more research and development towards a book and it is intended to excite and enthuse all the Friends of Penang Hill in the heritage and the potential splendour of our unique botanical and environmental assets. From the Hill we can see a continuum of developmental trends into the future and the new buildings and changing landscapes become part of our topographical history. The early visual records have documented the realities of environmental change over the last 200 years - an inexorable process into the future requiring and deserving sensitive concern, design and management.

DATUK LIM CHONG KEAT
Chairman
Special Features Committee

*(Reprinted here in the PHT Newsletter
for the benefit of our new members who
are not familiar with the topographical
and cultural history of Penang Hill)*

Panel to hear views on draft plan

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: A high-powered panel has been set up to hear public views and objections on the draft Penang Hill Local Plan.

Town and Country Planning Department director Mohamed Jamil Haji Ahmad said the three-member public hearing committee, headed by state Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen, had to hear objections within six weeks.

The exhibition on the draft local plan, which was extended for a month, ended on Thursday.

The panel also comprises state Infrastructure and Public Utilities Committee chairman Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya and state Land Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Latif Mirasa.

Mohamed Jamil said the committee, after hearing public views, would present its "documented view" to the state Planning Committee for a decision.

The panel, he said, was "not obliged" to decide during the hearing on the proposals and objections.

"The committee will call individuals or representatives of organisa-

tions who had filled up the objection forms for the hearing. Such hearing is usually held over a single session," he told *The Star*.

He added the public hearing was required under the Town Planning Act before a local plan could be gazetted.

The state Planning Committee, chaired by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, would then decide whether to incorporate the proposals into the local plan.

On Thursday, Friends of Penang Hill, comprising eight non-governmental organisations, urged the

state government to set up a Penang Hill Corporation to manage the hill more efficiently.

FOPH, in its proposals to the Penang Municipal Council, called for the cable car project to be scrapped and development in water catchment areas on the hill to be stopped.

Council president Dr Teng Hock Nan confirmed that he had received the 25-page submission from FOPH.

"We will study the proposals and recommendations made by the FOPH and individuals. We will also

look into the overall comments made by the public," he said.

Later, Dr Teng told reporters after a council meeting that the council would send a summary of the public feedback to the public hearing committee.

"The committee will then recommend to the council any changes based on the feedback after conducting a public hearing," said Dr Teng.

The council would subsequently make a decision based on the committee's recommendation, he added.

STAR 22 APRIL 97

'No' to CAP's proposed office complex

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council has rejected a proposal by the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) to build a four-storey office complex at the site of a pre-war mansion at Jalan Masjid Ne-geri.

It is learnt the council's building committee turned down the application to build the complex on the 2,790sq m site as the area was ga-

zeted as a residential zone.

The decision, made last week, is expected to be confirmed by the full council at its next meeting.

The colonial building near the State Mosque, although not a designated heritage building, is one of the most elegant pre-war buildings remaining at Jalan Masjid Ne-geri today.

The property, on Lot 598 of the

North-East District, was reportedly sold for RM2.7 million last year to the non-governmental organisation.

Last month, two state-owned buildings nearby together with 36 government quarters at Jalan Kennedy and Jalan Sir Hussein were demolished to make way for the development of 430 apartment units for civil servants.

STAR 28 APRIL '97

Assure us of a stable water-table: Residents

PENANG: Residents of crack-affected houses around the Prangin Mall project site want the state government to ensure that the underground water-table is not "re-distorted" when construction works are allowed to resume.

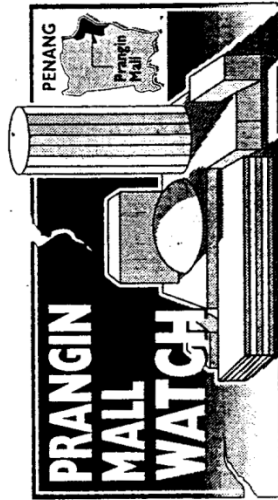
Tanjung Area Crack-Affected Residents Committee chairman Lau Heng Loon yesterday called for assurance from the state that the affected houses would not be further damaged.

"We do not want to face the risk and be victimised again," he said.

Residents, he said, supported the Technical Advisory Committee's decision to allow construction

works to continue only after the water level surrounding the project site has stabilised.

The driving of the third row of sheet piles was completed on Wednesday and Prangin Mall's main contractor, Getaran Unggul Sdn Bhd, submitted its application to resume work to the state authori-



ties the next day.

Lau said according to an affected resident who is a consultant civil engineer, sheet piling could only cut down water seepage by 70 to 80 per cent.

On Saturday, State Executive Councillor Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya, who headed the Technical Ad-

STAR 30 APRIL '97

Doc: Average of 4 cases daily

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Despite intensive larviciding and fogging activities, an average of four dengue cases were recorded daily in the past two weeks.

State Health, Welfare and Caring Society chairman Dr K. Rajapathy said the dengue situation was stabilising with the 30 cases recorded between April 13 and April 19 and 25 cases between April 20 and April 26.

Last week's 25 cases equals the total number of cases recorded from Jan 1 to April 26 last year and the cases recorded until April 26 this year had reached 305.

"Thirteen construction companies will be taken to court this year and compounds had been issued to eight companies," he said.

Construction companies must appoint an employee to be solely in charge of vector control at the sites, he said.

He said such a move was necessary after 43 construction sites were found to have aedes mosquito breeding grounds, of the 308 premises checked.

In view of the rainy season, Dr Rajapathy urged the people not to be complacent with the stabilising dengue situation.



Hilmi ... not possible to seal water off

visory Committee, said it was not possible to seal water off 100 per cent as there was bound to be minimum seepage of 1mm-high per day, which was an acceptable level.

Before the sheet piling, the level was 70mm-high per day.

By JESSINTA TAN

PENANG: Repairs to houses affected by the Prangin Mall project will only take place once the underground water-table in the area returns to its original level.

State Executive Councillor Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said results from the monitoring

of the water level in the surrounding area by Kumpulan Ikram Sdn Bhd indicated that the water level was rising steadily.

"The water level is likely to return to the original level soon."

"Ikram will continue to monitor the water level and also the cracks at the affect-

ed houses," he said.

Dr Hilmi said the technical advisory committee would wait for Ikram to submit its report following the completion of 30m-deep perimeter sheet piling on Wednesday.

He also said the committee, which he chairs, would continue to monitor the situation before considering the devel-

oper's application to resume construction work.

Main contractor Getaran Unggul Sdn Bhd, through its consultant architect, had on Thursday submitted the application to the committee and the Penang Municipal Council.

Dr Hilmi said there were no reports of new cracks on

houses along Prangin Road, Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong and Magazine Road.

Until April 12, the cracks in 42 houses had been rectified by the Prangin Mall developer. To date, eight houses which were seriously affected had been vacated while residents of three houses had requested for relocation.

Repairs linked to water table

Penang plans incentives to conserve heritage

By ANTHONY CHEW

PENANG: The state has proposed incentives such as quit rent and assessment rebates and tax exemptions for owners to conserve heritage buildings, especially in the inner city area.

These are among the strategies being drawn up by the state to promote heritage development and exploit its potential as a tourism product.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said the inner city precincts, with their rich cultural heritage buildings, were viable tourism products.

He said several consultants had been talking to owners of major heritage buildings to convince them that "there is a lot of money in conservation."

"The state is working out a package of incentives, including rebates for assessment and quit rent and waiver of setbacks (the space between the road and house) and

car parks when an owner refurbishes his heritage house," he said in an interview.

Dr Koh said the state would also convince the Federal Government to classify heritage buildings as tourism products, thus providing the owners with "tax holidays."

(A tax holiday is a form of tax exemption where the operator does not have to pay tax from earnings during the first five or 10 years.)

Dr Koh said that for example, a row of "heritage shops" could be turned into boutique hotels, curio shops or restaurants.

"Heritage buildings can serve as a living potpourri of culture and as a tourism product," he said.

Dr Koh said certain places such as Little India and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling and buildings such as the Khoo Kongsi, Syed Alattas Mansion and the Acheen Street Mosque could be further promoted as heritage areas.



BEAUTY OF OLD HOUSES ... a row of prewar houses at Bangkok Lane, Penang, photographed yesterday. — Starpic by LAWRENCE SEOW

STAR 25 April '97

'Heritage environs should involve locals'

By JONATHAN KWOK

PENANG: Heritage development should be carried out for the local community's needs and not just for tourism promotion, according to the Penang Ratepayers Association.

Its president Datuk Lim Chong Keat said yesterday that local initiatives and development needs should take precedence over artificial attractions or "product development" for foreign appeal.

"We support the state's latest proposal of offering incentives to owners to conserve heritage buildings as it is in line with

the objectives of the Penang Island Structure Plan approved in 1989.

"However, the most appropriate heritage environment should involve the local community for intrinsic reasons and not merely be driven by touristic marketing," he said.

Lim was commenting on a report that the state had proposed incentives such as rebates on quit rent and assessment, and tax exemption for owners to promote heritage buildings as tourism products.

The report quoted Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon as saying the strategies were being drawn up by the state to conserve heritage build-

ings, especially in the inner city area.

Lim, who is also the founder chairman of the Penang Heritage Trust, said actual heritage conservation should be spontaneous and voluntary on the part of the owners or residents who could then carry on a genuine living tradition.

"You should not develop a place to make it appealing to tourists from, say, Australia or Germany, but it should be done for the local community's needs," he said, adding that discriminating visitors would prefer a genuine civic heritage.

"Saving dying neighbourhoods to turn the rel-

ics into tourist or curio shops is part of standard urban renewal strategies, but is a poor second."

Lim also urged the government to hold further consultations with affected parties and concerned civic organisations, including the ratepayers association.

"There are still many issues to be discussed, including outstanding aspects of land rent, rates and valuations."

He also called on the Housing and Local Government Ministry to make available draft copies of the proposed Heritage Bill and discuss its intentions and provisions as soon as possible.

STAR 26 April '97

Stilt houses spared in project

By LIM A LEE
and JESSINTA TAN

PENANG: Century-old jetty settlements at Penang harbour will not be affected by the development of the RM300 million Jelutong Expressway.

It is learnt that the alignment of the mega project will not encroach into eight Weld Quay settlements near the ferry terminal where houses built on stilts are a major tourist attraction here.

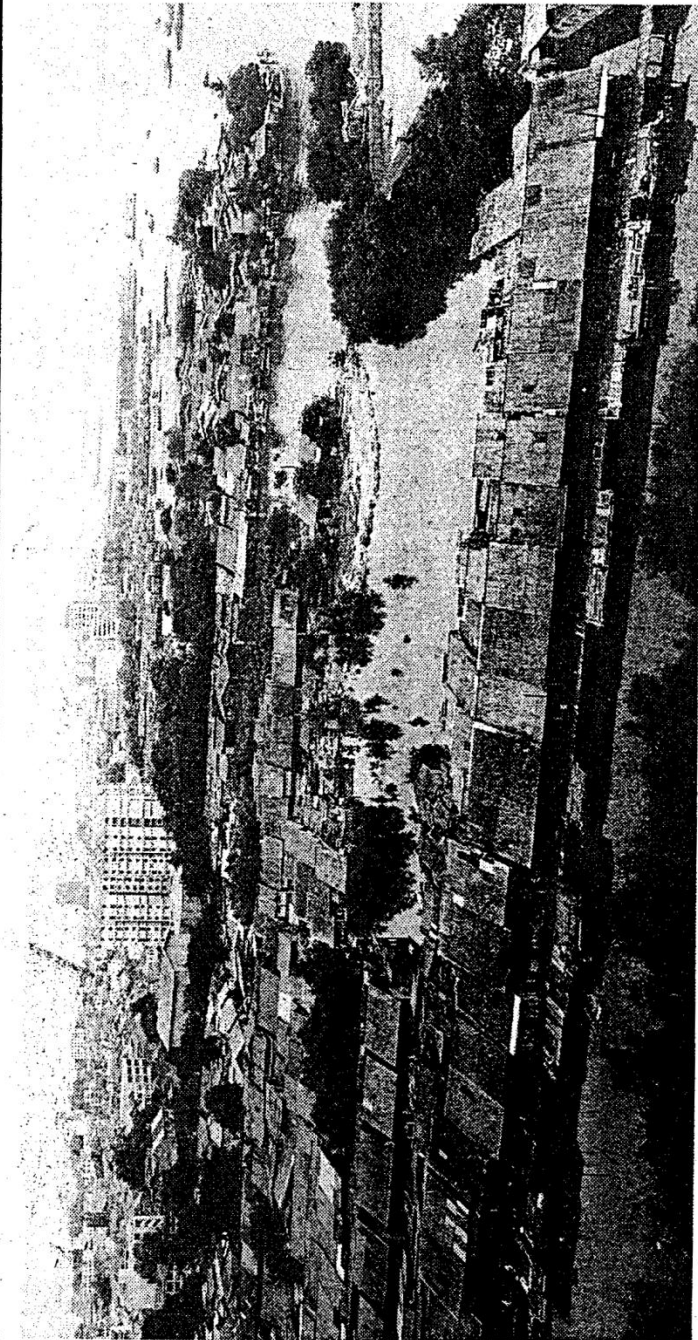
Dubbed Penang's historical backyard, the settlements were built by early Chinese migrants who lived in the harbour area, with the jetties named after clans like Lim, Chew, Tan, Lee, Yeoh and Koay.

Other settlements are the *Sin Keoh* (new jetty) and *Selamat jetty*.

It was reported that about 300 families would be affected by the Jelutong Expressway linking Weld Quay to Udimi Road.

Those affected included over 120 families at Noordin Street Ghaut, Presgrave Street Ghaut and Sandiland Street Ghaut, said Pengkalan Kota assemblyman Lee Hack Teik.

Sources said the developer, Jelutong Development Sdn Bhd, would build longhouses to resettle families affected by the project in stages, beginning this year.



SAFE ... these jetty settlements near Weld Quay will not be affected by the construction of the Jelutong Expressway.

EIA for mega project 'not yet submitted'

PENANG: The Department of Environment (DOE) has yet to approve the detailed environment impact assessment (EIA) for the RM300 million Jelutong Expressway and waterfront city project.

State DOE director Raja Roshiah Raja Saigon said yesterday the developer had not submitted the EIA for the mega project, which would involve reclamation of 110ha off the island's north-east foreshore.

She said the developer, Jelutong Development Sdn Bhd, was required to announce that the project's "terms and refer-

ence" were ready for public scrutiny.

"The public will be given some time to give their views on the project, following which the developer must come up with the detailed EIA for DOE's appraisal," she said.

On Tuesday, the developer signed an agreement with the state government to build the expressway over three years. In exchange, it was given the right to develop 130ha, including 20ha of state land.

The developer will also create a waterfront city centre and build over 4,000 residential

units in addition to 5,500 low and low-medium cost housing units. It has also proposed to provide amenities such as seaside promenades, bus and taxi terminals, boat landing points and civic parks.

Meanwhile, conservationists here have expressed concern that George Town may lose its historical significance with the massive reclamation proposed for the two projects.

Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution said George Town was built on a cape and the massive project could irreversibly alter the wa-

terfront's character.

She cited the case of Malacca, considered by Unesco for world heritage listing but was later rejected because of the reclamation of its waterfront.

Although the Jelutong Expressway would serve as an alternative route to Jalan Jelutong and Jalan Mesjid Negri, it would also bring more vehicles to the already-congested Komtar area and the inner city, she noted.

Khoo called for environmental and social reports to be carried out and made accessible to the public.