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# PHT *newsletter*

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PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG • PENANG HERITAGE TRUST

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## “Giving Incentives to Heritage Development”

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**T**he Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC), which was formed in March following the public outcry over the demolition of Hotel Metropole last Christmas, held a press conference on 15 September to announce the incentives for heritage development it had recently recommended to the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP).

Dr Choong Sim Poey, the HAC chairman, said that the 12 organisations which the committee comprises — *Persatuan Warisan Pulau Pinang (PHT)*, *Persatuan Pemaju Perumahan Malaysia (HDA)*, *Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia*, *Persatuan Pembayar Hasil Pulau Pinang*, *Institut Perancang Malaysia*, *Institut Jurukur Malaysia*, *Institut Jurutera Malaysia*, *Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)*, *Lembaga Muzium Negeri*, *Universiti Sains Malaysia*, *Persatuan Pencinta Alam Malaysia*, *Dewan Perniagaan Tionghua Pulau Pinang* — were all agreed that “before their recommendations were rejected or accepted, in part or in toto, by the MPPP the public must be given the opportunity to express their own views on the matter — by writing to the HAC, the MPPP, or the press”.

The list of 11 incentives must come as good news to those who are seriously considering restoring their

old property. It should leave the public in no doubt that the HAC has a comprehensive grasp of the question of giving incentives to heritage development. Full marks here for the HAC.

The set of options in the preamble, however, is something else. It is hard to see in what way it has anything to do with encouraging anyone to save any building. Its inclusion in a paper on the subject of incentives can only serve to confuse the public and raise fears that the HAC might have put the city's historic sites and buildings in danger of being delisted and unprotected, and in the not too distant future swallowed up by the voracious demands of new development.

## *From the Press* ➡

### *The Star* (16 September)

At the HAC's first press conference yesterday, the dissent between the conservationists and developers became apparent when HDA chairman Eddy Choong indicated that he was not in favour of the idea of conserving an entire area as this would impede development.

Choong said the term 'heritage buildings' should not be loosely used but should be based on the Antiquities Act which defined heritage buildings as those over 100 years old and of public interest.

The task of classifying heritage areas and buildings, which is top of the council's terms of reference to the committee, has yet to begin and is expected to be a difficult one. The HAC chairman Dr Choong Sim Poey, who is also the Trust's vice-president, said: “I anticipate there will be quite a lot of differences of opinions.”

### *The Star* (17 September)

*Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)*... president S. M. Mohd. Idris said yesterday SAM did not agree to three options proposed by the HAC as they would undermine the “entire effort made by the Penang Municipal Council so far to preserve and conserve heritage buildings in Penang.”

"The proposed options put a very heavy burden on the state in promoting conservation. Heritage conservation should be the joint effort of property owners and the government. Property owners must play their role in conserving heritage buildings. They cannot run away from their responsibilities by merely asking the government to acquire their property at market value.

Once the state cannot acquire their property, the present heritage guidelines will not apply since the building is removed from the list of heritage buildings."

#### **New Straits Times (27 September)**

The Penang Youth Council has alleged that the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) is "undermining its own efforts" in promoting heritage development in the State.

Youth Council secretary Haniffa Abdul Hamid said the HAC's motives were rather suspect as evident from the preamble of its paper called *Giving Incentives to Heritage Development* which was submitted to the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) for consideration and quick action.

"People are wondering why the preamble requested the MPPP to acquire all new buildings it has listed and to delist those it has listed but not acquired, thus giving the MPPP every reason not to act quickly."

Haniffa pointed out that the MPPP's finances would not allow it to acquire more than one or two buildings.

"Surely the job of the HAC is to encourage people to conserve their heritage property and not to protect the rights of those who might want to destroy theirs."

Haniffa said the HAC in its paper seemed to have taken into account the constitutional rights of the individual to do whatever he wished with his property but this, he pointed out, was the job of Parliament, not that of the HAC or, for that matter, of the MPPP.

"If the HAC is genuinely serious about preserving its precious heritage buildings, why is it so anxious to reserve the right to have them delisted. It makes no sense whatsoever."

#### **Penang Municipal Council**

The MPPP have so far not said a word. The word is they are hoping that soon this business about heritage development will all go away, so that they can get on with the job of providing every household in Penang each with a rubbish bin. I hope mine comes in Council blue, with a cover, and is really cat and dog proof.

(Write to the PHTnewsletter. Perhaps we can debate the topic "Protection imposed by government merely incites the ingenious to find ever more loopholes: protection coming from the people, though infinitely slower to establish itself, is infinitely more effective")

## **Big Sale at Charlie's**

Charlie, a new member of the PHT,  
is having a private sale

**Saturday and Sunday,**

**October 8 and 9,**

to dispose of his overflow of  
**antiques and collectibles,**

with hundreds of items

**priced from \$5 to \$1350.**

He has especially nice

restored local furniture.

**The sale will be at 47 Kajang Road**

(off Dato Keramat, the street behind Kuantan Market)

**from 10am to 5pm both days.**

## **Potluck at Isobel's**

Isobel Morris organised a potluck at her house the evening of 9 September for members old and new to get to know one another better as well as to say farewell to Alan Flux and Sue Gross who were going away in the next few days, Alan back to the UK, Sue to the US. It was a very good party considering that Isobel had only two days to make it happen. Nearly 40 people came and there was an interesting variety of food to choose from — char koay teow, sar hor fun, roti chanai, roti jala, koay lapis, koay kodok, putu piring, putu mayong, dodol, undeh-undeh, pulut something, many other goodies whose names you must ask your nonya grandmother.

I'm afraid I can't tell you anything about the conversation as most of the time I was alone in the smoking zone out in Isobel's organically grown garden. Concerned about my health, our good hostess had put me there in the hope that while indulging in my wicked habit I might attempt a conversation with myself about the quality and number of my days.

## **New Members**

Choo Beng Teong

Lim Chong Hin

Markend D Joshi JP

Susan Collins

Dr Charles R Krimminger

TKTan