



# PHT Newsletter

Issue 91/ September 2007

Support Conservation Efforts in Your Community!

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**PENANG  
HERITAGE  
TRUST**  
*Persatuan  
Warisan  
Pulau  
Pinang*  
**PHT**



*The Penang Heritage Trust joins  
with all Malaysians in celebrating  
the Fiftieth Anniversary of Merdeka!*



## 50th Anniversary of George Town City Status

### EDITORIAL

*With hopes raised in August, by the visit of the UNESCO evaluator, that the City of George Town may finally be on the brink of listing as a World Heritage Site, the people of Penang awoke in September to the prospect of yet another gigantic property development that threatens not only the city's historic vista but also its very cultural and social fabric. The offending project is no ordinary one but the "mother" of all monster projects that take no account of their historic, cultural, social and natural surroundings. Known by its appropriately ugly acronym PGCC (for the pretentious sounding "Penang Global City Centre") the project was "launched" this month with great fanfare in the presence of the country's leading politicians, thus giving the impression that it is a done deal, never mind that there had been no public consultation or that the process of seeking planning permission appeared to have been ignored. One of the most disturbing aspects of this project is the way in which its publicity agents have manipulated the mainstream media and deceived not only the public but apparently also the many influential opinion-makers recruited as cheerleaders for the project as to the true size and character of the project.*

*One singularly disingenuous press report on the project was headlined "Forest inside PGCC plan" and quoted a spokesperson for the project as claiming, "A green leafy forest comprising more than 700,000 trees, not including shrubs, is inside the PGCC master plan....." Forest indeed but not a forest of green leafy trees! A glimpse at the scale three-dimensional model pictured in this Newsletter reveals a veritable forest of tower blocks, over forty of them in all, 35 of which are over forty storeys high. The impact on local infrastructure including roads, traffic and services staggers the imagination. Finally, how was it possible for land use of this huge green space, intended as a race course, to be converted so as to benefit not the people of Penang but an elite coterie of investors and developers?*



Photo by Tan Yeow Wooi

*We had hoped in this issue to focus on the hopes generated by the UNESCO evaluator's visit mentioned above. There are several positive stories to tell, including those of the Clan Jetties Pictorial and Interpretive Centre and funding for the restoration of the Old Roman Catholic Cemetery. At the same time we remain alert to other continuing threats to Penang's environment and heritage -- illegal and obtrusive birds' nest farming in inner-city shophouses, unchecked illegal road building on Penang Hill, massive hillside development causing serious erosion along the Island's north coast from Tanjung Bungah to Telok Bahang and hammer piling at project sites adjacent to heritage buildings such as the historic Loke Mansion on Gurney Drive.*

**Guest Editor**

## ***Joint Press Release By A Group of Concerned NGOs To Oppose The Development of Penang Global City Centre (PGCC), 15 Sept 2007***

### **Background**

*The Penang Global City Centre (PGCC) is a project of Equine Capital Bhd. The project to be carried out via its associate Abad Naluri Sdn Bhd, will be developed on the current Penang Turf Club land on Jalan Scotland. The project is estimated to cost about RM25 billion. It will be sited over a 104ha-land which will incorporate technology and ecology based components and modeled along the lines of Kuala Lumpur City Centre. It is being marketed as 'one of the world's first zero-carbon cities where pollution will be kept to a minimum'.*

*The PGCC has been billed as the largest commercial development in Penang that will feature two five-star hotels, a performing arts centre, high-end retail outlets, two iconic towers, residential properties and a world-class meeting and convention centre. It will also promote medical tourism in the state through specialist clinics at the PGCC.*



*The site will also contain 33 blocks of residential units ranging between 12 floors and 53 floors. The blocks include two five-star hotels - one which is 53 stories high and another 22 stories. The total luxury residential units are 6,933 units including 100 bungalows. One of the two iconic towers will have 66 floors.*

*According to Equine, the project will combine 34.4ha of parkland, including 10.4ha 1km-long linear park, and about 24ha of a hill site that cannot be developed.*

*The project was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Sept 12, 2007.*

*Our group of concerned NGOs is shocked that the PGCC has been launched even before obtaining all major planning approvals. The government should not also have granted a fast-track status for the project, seeing that the scale of the development is going to create a drastic impact on the areas of traffic, social and environment on Penang island.*

*Questions raised about the manner by which the land was converted from 'Open Space' to 'Mixed Development', about traffic congestion, public consultation, and provision for social housing remain unanswered.*

*Below are glaring issues which arise as a result of this project.*

### **Land Re-zoning**

*The site of the project - the present Turf Club- was originally given by the government for a nominal sum and was zoned as 'Open Space'. This was changed very recently to 'Mixed Development', even though public opinion was unanimously against it (judging from the submissions sent in by the public during the 2007 Structure Plan exercise).*

*By doing so, the State has acted arbitrarily and sacrificed the interests of the community to a group of developers.*

### **Traffic Congestion**

*The project is so large that it will affect almost every person in Penang, but there has been very little public consultation. By our estimate, it will generate about 60,000 traffic movements daily which will be channeled into Jalan Scotland and Jalan Utama (via Jalan Brook). Even now these roads are heavily congested and we worry what effect the huge additional traffic will have.*

*The traffic dispersal plan for the project leaves much to be desired and we are asking for another traffic study by independent experts to be done before any decisions are made.*

### **Public Consultation**

*During the drawing up of the Penang Structure Plan, public consultation was minimal, perfunctory and the results were entirely ignored. Since a mega development is going to take place on the Turf Club land that is subjected to the Structure Plan, we would therefore call for a greater genuine public consultation due to the large size of this project.*

*The project was approved in Putrajaya, plans were finalised without any local inputs, and have now been publicly launched with much fanfare. That is not consultation. It smacks of an attempt to bulldoze aside all objections. It is a top-down planning of the worst type and is against all principles of participatory democracy.*

### **Social Housing**

*It is a national policy that all development must include 30% low-cost units, and yet none will be built on the site. Instead the developer is proposing to build 6,933 luxury units of apartments and houses on the site. However, the low cost units will be built elsewhere.*

*We do not understand why this is so, unless the developer does not want low-income communities on this project. We urge the MPPP to withhold approval until 2,080 low cost units are included in this project, and these units must be included in every phase in the right proportion.*

### **EIA**

*Given the size of the project we would also ask for a detailed EIA to be done, as a preliminary study would not be sufficient to address all the issues that will arise.*

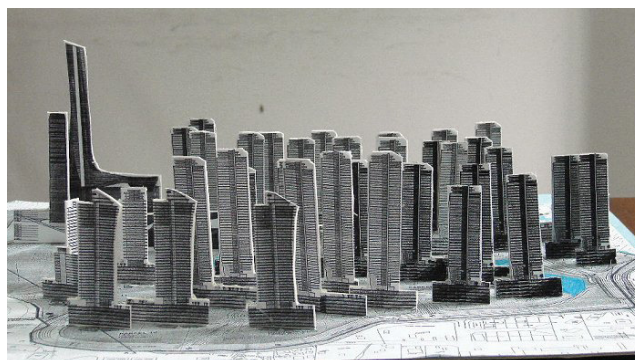
### **Summary**

*We regret that the project has been launched even before the above questions have been considered and urge the MPPP to review the plans objectively and professionally and not to approve them unless the following is done:*

- i) greater public consultation*
- ii) an independent traffic study*
- iii) a detailed EIA, and most important of all*
- iv) the full complement of low cost houses are included*

### **Group of Concerned NGOs**

*Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP)  
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)  
Penang Heritage Trust (PHT)  
Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)  
Citizens For Public Transport (CEPAT)  
Aliran*



**Say *NO* to PGCC**  
(Turf Club development)



## Taiping



*Taiping is widely regarded by many as a quaint and sleepy town with generous amounts of rainfall throughout the year. What many do not know is that it is a town of many Malaysian 'firsts' and heritage sites. On a bright sunny Sunday, 24th June, the Penang Heritage Trust paid Taiping a visit with the accompaniment of 50 of its members. Our counterpart, the Taiping Heritage Society, was host for the day.*

*The first order of the day was breakfast at the Taiping New Club, formerly known as the Perak Club. The New Club was*

*founded in 1894 by the leading European community. It also claims the distinction of having the first golf course in the Federated Malay States and the second oldest golf course in Southeast Asia.*

*After a few helpings of curry puffs and bee hoon, drowned with teh tarik, it was decided that after a hearty breakfast a brief and not too brisk walk to the site of 'The Residency' was in order. The Assistant Resident's House was built in 1884 for over \$19,000 (Straits dollars) and subsequently occupied by the Resident of Perak. Taiping has the distinction of being one of the very first few towns to have a Resident reside within the town itself. Regrettably, the building was demolished in recent times due to its deterioration and lack of preservation measures in the 1980's. In its stead is a modern rest house, the Casuarina Hotel, and all that remains of the Residency are the sixteen-foot high brick pillars adorning the garden of the modern rest house as a symbol of the foundations of colonial Malaysian history.*

*After leaving the colonial pillars of the Residency, we proceeded to the Taiping War Cemetery which is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The multi-ethnic cemetery is divided in half by the road. On one side are the graves of British soldiers, mainly Christians, and across the road those of Muslim and Hindu soldiers of the British Indian army. The cemetery contains 826 graves of Commonwealth casualties who fell before the advance of the Japanese in 1941-42. We noted that the cemetery contains the grave of Squadron Leader A.S.K Scarf, the first Victoria Cross winner of the Malayan campaign. Flying from the RAF station at Butterworth on 9th December 1941, his aeroplane bombed Japanese troops landing at Songklha in south Thailand. Afterwards, although mortally wounded and with his aircraft crippled he saved his crew by managing a forced landing at Alor Star. He died in hospital there the same day.*



Commonwealth War Cemetery, Taiping

*Our next stop was the Old Clock Tower of Taiping. A clock tower fortified with chambered gun-slits, the building was used as the town police station as well as the fire station during the early 20th century. Tragically, this heritage site brimming with historical importance is overshadowed by a modern building devoid of any character and sharing no architectural similarity or historical significance. Don't town planners have any sense of aesthetics and historical ambience? I was not the only one in our party who thought this way and voiced the same displeasure.*



Nearby, just two blocks down Kota Road our nostrils were rudely assaulted as we approached Market Square where the strong smell of fish permeated the air. The old market is a 19th century timber structure housing a cavernous hall for the market sellers to display their goods. After a brief exploration inside, we had lunch nearby despite feeling a little nauseous, but who could turn down good Malaysian food? And Taiping has it in spades.

At the wooden structure of All Saints Church, there exists a still functioning pipe organ, a priceless antique! PHT member Dr Jon Lim provided us a brief demonstration of his musical talents as he played the organ to good effect. Many memorial plaques and tablets are displayed on the walls of the church, recalling the history of the town and district. Besides claiming the honour of being the Federated Malay States' first Anglican church way back in 1886 (although it was consecrated in 1887), All Saints Church has a cemetery laden with beautifully crafted tombstones of European settlers and young servicemen who did not make it home.

One of the privileges of being with good company is the opportunity provided to explore little known sites. Our afternoon visit to one of the charcoal factories of Taiping was a treat like no other. At Mr. Cheah's charcoal factory there were narrow canals, old boats and black-stained dirt roads. Everything looked as though it had seen the test of time, everything looked old, used and worn out, giving it a warm familiar feel. The smell of burnt wood was akin to chestnuts roasting over an open fire. I really liked the kampong atmosphere. However, Mr. Cheah told us that charcoal making is a dying trade and not many young people are eager to pick up the trade for it is highly labour intensive. It was interesting to note that the charcoal is mainly exported to Japan (60%), while the rest is for local consumption. The Japanese use charcoal for cooking and for making odor and water filters. We experienced the heat of a kiln still hot despite being left to cool for eight hours! It was like a sauna and reportedly good for women with rheumatism to step inside and soak in the heat.

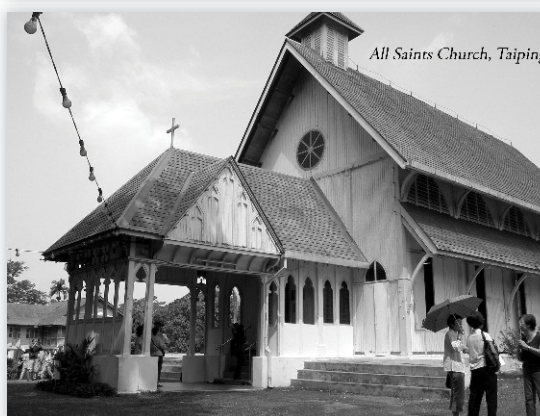
About thirty minutes drive from Taiping is the Ngah Ibrahim Fort at Matang, built by Ngah Ibrahim, the son of Long Jaafar who is credited with being the first to open the tin mines of Larut. The house of Ngah Ibrahim, who was appointed Mentri Larut in 1863, was fortified as a defence against rival warring clans of Chinese tin miners during the Larut Wars (1861-74). The structure has served many functions besides being a home and fort. It was an administrative building and a college and served as the military headquarters of the Imperial Japanese army during WWII. The fort is unique as it has a flight of inverted stairs which face the house instead of away from the house, possibly to facilitate the defence of the house.

Prior to leaving Ngah Ibrahim Fort, we were served tea and given souvenir information packages at the nearby Matang Historical Complex. As we embarked on our one hour return trip to Penang, I realized how little I knew of Taiping prior to the visit. There was plenty that we learned about Taiping that fine day, and I believe that there will be many more undiscovered experiences to come in the future for this young Malaysian.

By Daniel Lee, PHT intern



Old Market, Taiping



All Saints Church, Taiping

## David Brown House, Penang Hill



*On 29th July 2007, 54 members of the PHT paid a visit to the reconstructed David Brown bungalow atop Strawberry Hill near the Penang Hill Railway Upper Station. Our arrival was delayed until 5.30 p.m. because of the large numbers of holidaymakers waiting to use the train. A brisk scenic and cooling walk from the station to the Brown house, however, was all that was needed to forget our unpleasant wait.*

*The sight of the beautifully reconstructed double-storey bungalow with its well managed garden (complete with lotus pond) overlooking the Island was breathtaking and I found myself easily imagining colonial times at this hill-top bungalow.*

*We learned, thanks to Mr. Ahmad Chik's presentation, that Strawberry Hill's name derived from Captain Francis Light's fondness for strawberries which he brought from his native Suffolk to plant in the conducive Penang Hill climate. Light was the first occupant of the Strawberry Hill site.*

*A later occupant of the site was David Brown (c.1775-1825), a wealthy Scotsman who owned a large plantation at Glugor. He had a reputation for living with many young female servants at the elegant house he built on Strawberry Hill.*

*The original Brown house was replaced about 1930 by a small tea kiosk to serve the growing number of visitors to Penang Hill. Before the building of the funicular railway, access to the Hill had been restricted as many of the mansions on Penang Hill were under private property laws.*

*Although popular for many decades after World War II, the Tea Kiosk closed in the 1990s. In the spirit of conservation and with the intention to preserve Penang's historical legacy, however, it was proposed that a new two-storey building be constructed to reproduce the aesthetic quality of the original early 19th century Brown house, maintaining not just the surrounding ambience but also recalling the historical context.*

*After Mr. Ahmad Chik's brief presentation and a short speech by Mr. Bernard Lim, manager of the David Brown Restaurant and Tea Terraces, thanking the PHT for its support, an enticing English tea was served. It was truly a beautiful affair as the mouth-watering delights of scones with strawberry jam and tea was absolutely scrumptious and we were all able to sample them while taking in the cool air, the greenery of the gardens and the scenic beauty of Penang Hill.*

*By Daniel Lee,  
PHT Intern*



**Editor's Note:** According to author Sarnia Hayes Hoyt, **Old Penang, OUP, 1991**, it was the construction of the Penang Hill Railway which opened in 1923 that led to the demolition of the original Brown House.

*Research & photos by Tan Yeow Wooi*

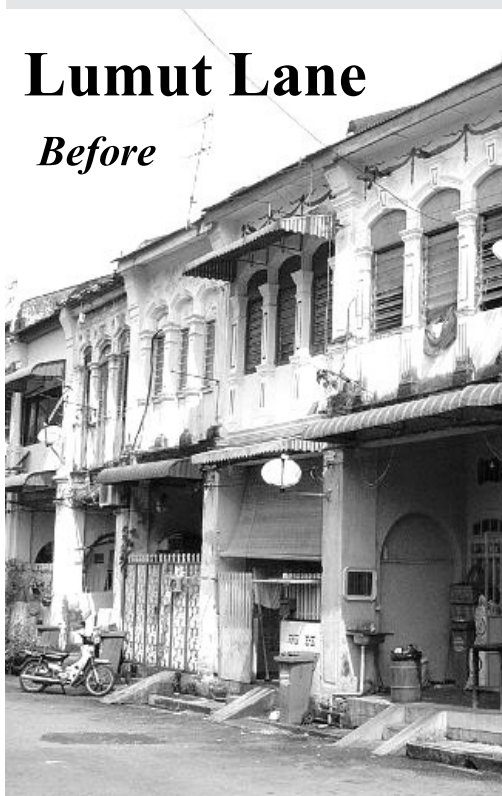
## Dato Keramat

*(Opposite Berjaya Times Square)*



## Lumut Lane

*Before*



*After*



## Market Street 79 & 81







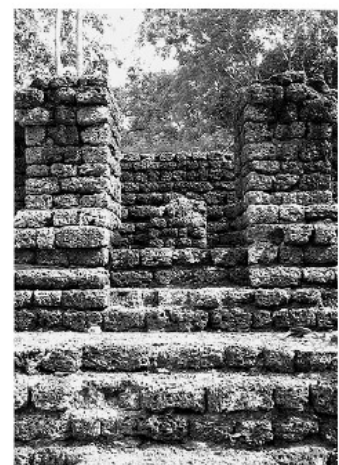
*Kedah Peak from Gurney Drive, January 2004  
Photo by L.A.K. James*

## ***Gunung Jerai – Kedah’s Mountain Beacon***

*Looming more than 4,000 feet above the Kedah rice plain and standing aloof from Malaysia’s main range is Gunung Jerai. Kedah Peak, as the mountain is known in Penang from where its familiar silhouette on the mainland can be seen on haze-free days, rises on the Kedah coast 25 miles to the north of George Town. Situated near the Kedah town of Sungai Petani, the mountain and its environs are well worth exploring. Kedah Peak’s mountain fastness is not only rich in flora and fauna but a site of great cultural and historical significance for Malaysia.*

*From ancient times, Gunung Jerai was an important landmark and the first landfall for seafarers entering the Straits of Malacca from the Bay of Bengal and approaching the Malay Peninsula. Standing at the mouth of the Merbok River the mountain beckoned travellers and traders to the settlements at its base. Sanskrit inscriptions on stones discovered in this area indicate that south Kedah was home to a rich civilization with extensive trade and communications links to the world beyond. The first of these antiquities was found in south Kedah by Colonel James Low of the East India Company in the 1840s. From the mid-19th century other British explorers as well as archeologists began discovering temple ruins in the Bujang Valley on the southern flank of Kedah Peak. These ruins date from the pre-Islamic period of Hindu-Buddhist influence from about 500 AD to 1300 AD. Archeological research was carried out sporadically until interrupted by the Second World War. The temple sites discovered -- as many as 29 in the Bujang Valley alone -- and the religious and other artifacts unearthed nearby revealed the development of a highly civilized society reflecting local and foreign influences that included India, China, Srivijaya (an empire that embraced Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula), the Khmer empire and the Middle East. The dominant influence was Indian.*

*In recent years many of the temple ruins have been excavated and moved for their preservation to a single site in the Bujang Valley where the Malaysian Museums Department has established an archeological park and an excellent museum, one of the best in the country. The park, about 16 kilometres from Sungai Petani, is centred on the site of the largest and best preserved of these temples, Candi Bukit Batu Pahat (“The Temple on the Hill of Cut Stone”), an 11th century stone temple, which like the others has been partially restored. (Candi, pronounced “chandi”, means temple or shrine.) Candi Bukit Batu Pahat dates from the period when Kedah was under the influence of the Chola kingdom of South India. What the visitor sees, however, are not massive temples like Angkor or Borobudur with their intricate friezes and carvings, but stone or brick bases on which wooden structures with multi-tiered thatched roofs were probably mounted, perhaps like the Hindu temples of Bali. In the*



*Bujang Valley temple ruin*



*nearby river cascading past the temple ruins can be seen the huge rocks from which ancient masons cut the stones to build these temples. The museum itself displays a vast array of antiquities -- stone carvings, pottery, religious artifacts -- discovered in the area, including relics from a temple site on the summit of Gunung Jerai which is thought to date from the 7<sup>th</sup> century*

*From the Bujang Valley Archeology Museum the main road goes west to the coast and round the mountain to Yan Besar and Yan Kecil on its northern side. A side road leads to a waterfall park at Seri Perigi from where intrepid climbers can brave the leeches and make a grueling hike 3,300 feet to the mountain's secondary summit. Alternatively, further to the east at Guar Chempedak there is a 13-kilometre paved road to the top, ascending through vegetation ever changing with the altitude and past a Forestry Museum. From a plateau at the secondary summit the view north along the Kedah coast and across the Kedah plain is outstanding, changing from green to gold with the paddy seasons. A small hotel with chalets, based on what was formerly a colonial government bungalow, caters to local tourists. Access to Gunung Jerai's uppermost peak, however, is restricted because of telecommunications towers on the summit.*

*Kedah Peak was the scene of dramatic events in the early days of the Malayan Emergency, the communist insurrection of 1948-1960. On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1954, the chief police officer of Kedah, Charles N. Godwin, was killed in an ambush by communist terrorists. He was returning by car from the government bungalow on Kedah Peak with the head of the Kedah police Special Branch when they were stopped by a tree felled across the narrow winding jungle road. Godwin died in a hail of bullets and is buried in a section of Penang's Western Road Cemetery that contains the graves of several other police officers killed in the line of duty during the Emergency. Later the same day, another police vehicle sent to bring down the Kedah Special Branch head was also ambushed and two more persons killed. The party of communist terrorists responsible was estimated at thirty-strong and in the follow-up operations by the security forces it was reported that thirteen suspects were detained. Security force operations also included action by an 8,000 ton cruiser of the Royal Navy which was visiting Penang for the birthday of Queen Elizabeth II. **The Times** of London reported that on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June HMS Newfoundland bombarded a communist hideout eight miles distant and 2,700 feet up the mountain, in two days firing 267 shells from her six-inch guns.*

*Peace now reigns on the jungle slopes of Gunung Jerai, broken only by the cries of the occasional gibbon or the chatter of bands of dusky leaf monkeys high in the forest canopy. The mountain remains a forest reserve protected from the bulldozers of developers. Away from the bustle of town and highway the temple sites of the Bujang Valley remind the visitor, however, that humankind has been drawn to the sanctity of this mountain for generations, first to erect shrines for worship and now to contemplate the past and the beauties of nature.*

*By Leslie A.K. James*

*An abbreviated version of this article was published in **The Expat** magazine, Kuala Lumpur, vol. 116, May 2007.*



*Photo courtesy Liu-Boon Chong*

## Living Heritage Treasures of Penang Awards

The 2007 presentation of Awards took place on 30th August 2007 at the PHT premises. An exhibition of the work of the awardees was held at the same time. The Chief Minister, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, presented the awards. Also present on the occasion was Professor David Lung, UNESCO Evaluator for Malacca & George Town for World Heritage Listing. He was duly impressed with the work done by PHT in protecting our Intangible Cultural Assets.

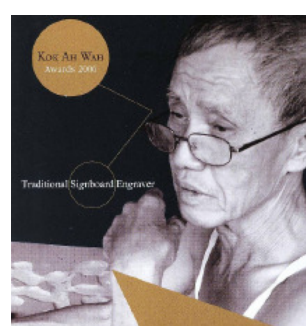
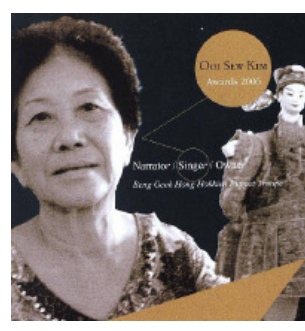
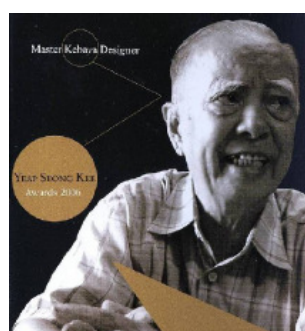
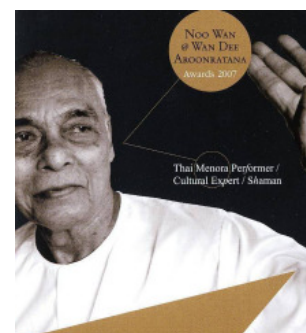
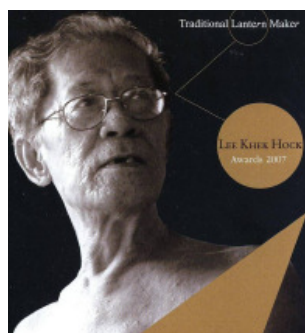
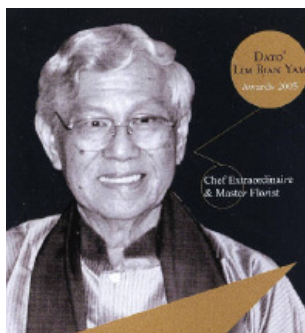
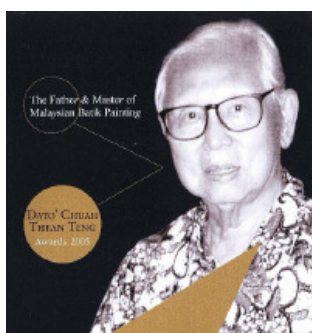
The Awards for 2007 went to **Mr Wan Dee Aroonratna** and **Mr Lee Ah Hock**.

There were 15 nominees this year and 6 finalists were selected for consideration. The judging for 2007 Awards took place on 13th June 2007 at the Penang Heritage Trust office. The following were members of the panel of judges:

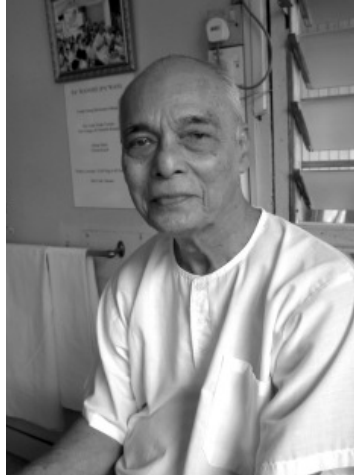
Dato Sharom Ahmad (Chairman/Educationalist)  
 Encik Rosli Rahmat (HSBC Area Manager)  
 Puan Sri Datin Susan Jalaudhin (BWM Representative)  
 Encik Hasnul Saidon (USM Museum/Gallery Director)  
 Prof Tan Sooi Beng (USM Musicologist)  
 Tengku Dato Ismail Jewa (PHT Vice President)  
 Encik Ahmad Cik (PHT Council)  
 Loh-Lim Lin Lee (Convenor – PHT)



PHT would like to once again thank all our judges for their invaluable services and HSBC Bank Malaysia Berhad for its continued support of this very worthwhile programme. We now have our full quota of 8 award winners and we look forward to 2008 when we will add one more Living Heritage Treasure to the list. PHT has produced a very attractive brochure highlighting the award winners.



## 2007 Award Winners



### **Noo Wan @ Wan Dee** **Aroonratana Thai Menora** **Performer /Cultural Expert /Shaman**

*Leader of the last Thai Menora troupe in Penang, Wan Dee, the only son of the late Pak Chandee started to perform at the age of 14 and remained a leading Shaman and Menora dancer till his last performance at the age of 78 in 2002.*

*Wan Dee's father & family migrated from Songkhla to Penang between 1914-1916. Now 82, he remains actively involved in Menora by giving advice, blessings and witnessing performances. Wan Dee says that despite difficulties of sustaining the troupe, he did not want his cultural heritage to die out. He continues to offer rigorous training to young people to become full-fledged Menora performers.*

*'Menora' refers to the performer as well as the art form. The integration of Menora into local Penang cultural celebrations is testimony to the extent of Thai influence in the Northern states. Traditionally performed at weddings, festivals and shamanistic healings associated with deities and the fulfilling of vows, the Menora troupe has always been a family affair. Music is played to evoke the mood and accompany the movements and Wan Dee is accomplished in many traditional instruments. Derived from century old lengthy epic dramas, the Menora in Penang has been localized to incorporate the local context and has Hokkien, Cantonese, Malay and English incorporated into the Thai version.*



### **Lee Khek Hock** **Traditional Lantern** **Maker**

*Mr Lee is believed to be the last craftsman in Malaysia making traditional bamboo & wax paper lanterns with family and business names delicately and skillfully painted on them.*



*Lee's late father was one of the founders of the Fuzhou Association in Penang and being the eldest son, he was taught lantern making from the age of 15. However, he turned his back on the trade after high school and only returned 10 years later to continue the artisan vocation.*

*The process of making each lantern takes more than 5 days and involves cutting the bamboo, making the base, shaping the lantern, shaping and fixing the wax paper, drying and finishing off with colourful painting and the stunning calligraphy.*

*Mr Lee works alone. He has no workers, his wife being the only assistant in the shop. His only son and last apprentice, sadly passed away and there is no one to inherit the business.*

*Although he believes in the importance of preserving this unique and specialized craft, he intends to end the business when he is no longer able to work. He has no apprentices as the long hours and low returns do not attract young people.*

## *Armenians in Penang*

*Fewer than 180 Armenians lived in Penang between 1800-2001. Of those, about 30 made Penang their home, while the others stayed only a few years. The Armenians probably never numbered more than 25 at any given time – a minuscule percentage of Penang's total population.*

*The first Armenians in George Town had arrived by 1802. As traders, they often had links to other Armenian trading houses in India and the Dutch East Indies. Pioneering short term residents included John Narcis, Narcis Mackertich, Carapiet Gabriel, Simon and Gvork Marcar, Johannes Carapiet, S M Carapiet, Gregory Lucas, Johannes Simon, Carapiet Arackell, Lazar Agabeg, John de Murat, Joseph Minas and C Satoor. (These spellings are shortened or anglicised versions of their original Armenian names.)*

*These Armenians served on Grand Juries (in 1827, three of the fourteen Grand Jurors were Armenian), the committee of Assessors, signed petitions, carried out civic duties, served as JPs, officials of the Penang Exchange, Penang Club, Penang Turf Club and other clubs.*

*An early prominent figure was merchant and philanthropist Catchatoor Galastaun who lived in Penang for around 30 years. He was largely responsible for the establishment of the Armenian Church of St Gregory which was opened in 1824. The Church was demolished around 1906 and a large monument erected to commemorate it; that too, disappeared and the Church grounds were finally sold in 1937.*

*"No history of Penang in the last 100 years could be considered complete without mention being made of the Anthony family," wrote an author in 1908. The patriarch of this family, Arathoon Anthony originated from Shiraz in Persia and in 1819, he and his family settled in Penang where he became a trader and planter. He later acquired Clove Hall as the family residence. Three of his sons - Anthony, Satoor and Johannes became respected merchants and civic figures being among the founders of the Penang Association, and members of the Penang Exchange and Special Jurors.*

*Anthony Anthony made the most impact, founding the trading firm A A Anthony and Company in 1840. Anthony married Marianjam Ter Stephen of Calcutta and the couple had twelve children. Gregory became a lawyer, for a while in partnership with R G Van Someren but later on his own. Seth made his name in social circles, being an active official of the Penang Turf Club and the Penang Club. Penang had lost "one of its best known figures...there was no member of the community better known than he..." mourned the press.*

*But it was Anthony's second son, Joseph Manook, (1847-1917) who would become most prominent. He further consolidated the firm and diversified into steamship agency work, insurance, auctioneering, share broking, and tin and rubber representation. He also co-founded the stock broking firm of Anthony and Anderson and was Acting Vice Consul for Portugal from the mid-1880s till his death. Keen on the turf, he owned a number of successful racehorses. His obituary described him as "one of Penang's best known and most highly respected citizens, one of its most successful businessmen...the doyen of Penang men."*

*Anthony had married Isabel Hogan and the couple made their home at Chatsworth. Their first child, Anthony Stephen, (1871-1920) joined the family firm but became renown as Penang's most prominent sportsman, excelling at tennis, cricket, football and billiards. On 13 consecutive occasions he had won the Penang Cricket Club tennis tournament -- still an unbroken record perhaps, and was described as probably the most brilliant batsman Penang has produced. He married Lisa Apcar of Calcutta and the family resided at Nirvana in Macalister Road. (This is now incorporated into a private college.) Their son Thomas duly joined the firm, being the last Anthony to do so. He died in 1957 and the firm passed into other hands.*

*Isabel died three years into the marriage and Joseph later married Regina Gregory of Calcutta. Their son Alec joined Huttenbach Brothers in Penang, rising to become managing director of Huttenbach, Lazarus and Sons of Singapore in 1925. Another son Robert was a gifted musician and settled in London where he enjoyed minor success, under the name Marc Antony, as a composer of popular music in the 1920s and 1930s.*



*In the 1880s, physician Dr Thaddeus Avetoom from Calcutta opened his practice in Penang. Until his death in 1915, he played an active role in the medical, social and political life of Penang, serving as a Municipal Commissioner and as a JP for many years. He established the Georgetown Dispensary and was a director of several rubber companies*

*Another arrival in the 1880s was Tigran Sarkies from New Julfa, who set up as an auctioneer before venturing into the hotel business. He opened the Eastern Hotel in 1884, and soon, joined by his elder brother Martin, opened the Oriental. After a few years, the brothers extended and refurbished the Oriental, renaming it the Eastern and Oriental and opening for business in 1889. A third brother, Aviet, managed this new hotel.*

*Around 1892 youngest brother Arshak came up to Penang to join Aviet (Martin having retired to Persia, and Tigran having gone down to Singapore to*



*run Raffles Hotel in 1887). Arshak soon became manager, initiating the many extensions and improvements that made the E&O the leading hotel on the island.*

*However, over spending on lavish extensions in 1929 coupled with the slump and Arshak's generosity led to financial losses. Plus by 1930, Arshak was an ill man. In January 1931 he died and Penang was in mourning. The press commented on his philanthropic spirit, his generosity, and his interest in racing, describing him as "one of the most popular figures in Malaya." The E & O was declared bankrupt in 1931.*

*In Penang, the Sarkies Brothers had also run the Sea View Hotel, the Oriental Tiffin and Billiard Rooms, and the Crag Hotel. Most of their senior staff was Armenian, thus boosting Armenian numbers.*

*When Arshak died in 1931, there were only about ten Armenians left in Penang; the same figure as in the 1950s. Around 1966 Ipekian Brothers, jewellers, the last Armenian business closed. Since then it would seem the only Armenians in Penang were posted there on business or visitors.*

*By Nadia Wright*

*Nadia Wright is the author of **Respected Citizens: The History of Armenians in Singapore and Malaysia**, Amassia Publishing, 2003. She resides in Australia.*

## *Isle of Dead Rivers*

*Sungai Pinang  
Sembilang  
Sungai nipah  
Nibong  
Sungai Gemuruh  
Dondang/ Kluang  
Sungai Jelutong*

*No fish  
inhabit these rivers  
neither crad  
nor mud skippers....*

*For our rivers  
writhe in death throes;  
choked with every  
ilk of household offal:  
an old kettle, an oven  
a threadbare mattress  
styrofoam cups & plastic  
bags by the dozen  
with the occasional  
bloated carcass  
of some poor animal*

*The billboards say:  
"Love our Rivers"  
How to love anything  
- purled with poison -  
reeking death & decay?*

*Our rivers, our arteries:  
Sungai Pinang  
Sembilang  
Nipah & Nibong  
Sungai Gemuruh  
Jelutong & Dondang  
Sungai Air Itam  
Sungai Kluang  
& Sungai Kilang Ubi .....*

*How long before  
they all end up  
"Sungai Sudah Mati"?*

*And how long after  
its arteries clog  
can the heart  
of an island survive?*

*by Cecil Rajendra*

## Visit of UNESCO Evaluator for Melaka & George Town, 24 – 31 August, 2007

Although we consider that the evaluation visit went well and Professor David Lung was suitably impressed, it is premature to comment on the outcome of his visit to Malacca and Penang. He will write his report and more information, as recommended by Professor Lung, will be sent to UNESCO by the Ministry of Culture, Arts & Heritage. A panel of experts will go through the dossier and the additional material as well as Professor Lung's report. Additional material or clarifications may be sought. The final outcome will only be known in July 2008.

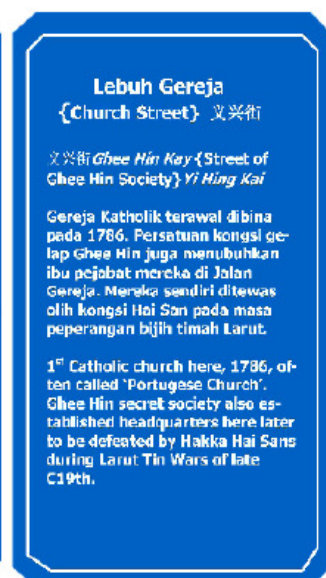
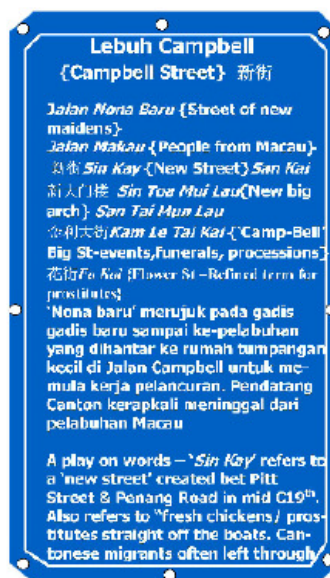
During his meetings in Penang Professor Lung made several comments. The dossier, he said, failed to highlight the strengths of the site adequately. For example, Chinese Peranakan Culture was hardly mentioned in the Penang dossier. In his view, such communities, including the Chitty community and the Peranakan Jawi, were a very important and unique feature in both sites.

Professor Lung regarded the tourism impact as a very important aspect of management. How will public transport and hotel rooms accommodate the 20% increase each year if listing is successful? He suggested that issues such as public education, capacity building and tourism should be amalgamated for both sites instead of treated separately. He thought that some of the dossier's "weaknesses" should be addressed in a supplementary management plan that should be submitted before February 2008.

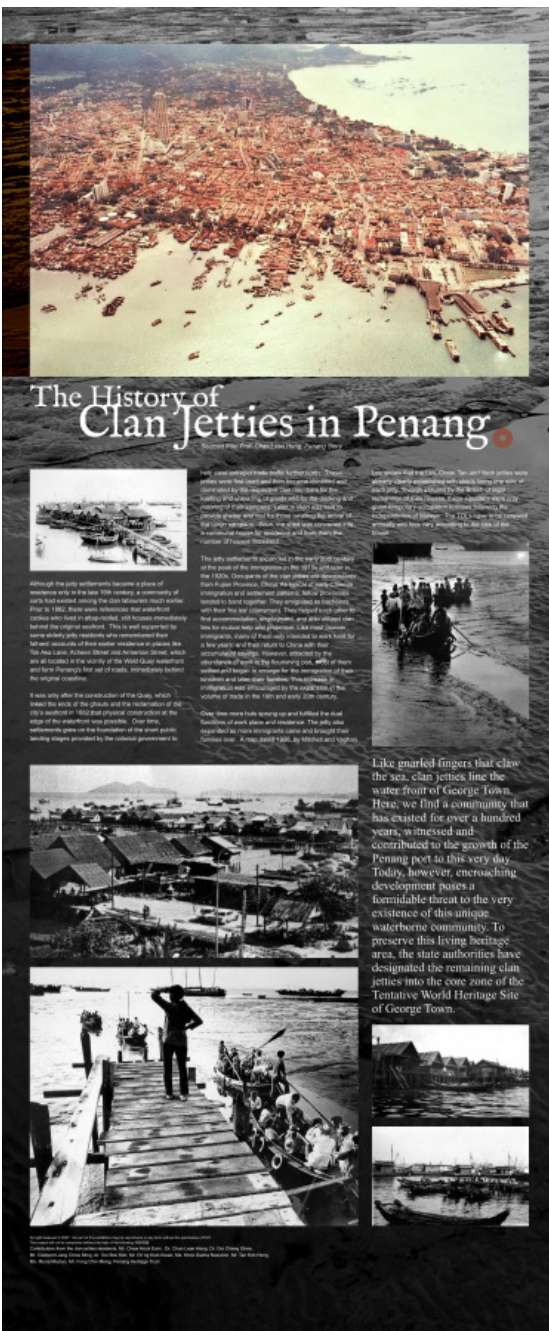
Following a power-point presentation by PHT Professor Lung focused initially on "mistakes" of the past which had been portrayed (e.g., Hardwicke, Metropole and Shih Chung School) and asked what plans or regulations had been put in place to prevent a repetition. His concluding remarks at the PHT presentation, however, were positive. He noted that although some of George Town's built heritage had been lost, there was still much left. He said that he was impressed with the people he had met in Penang as they were people with heart who had succeeded in influencing government. Finally, he said, the dossier should include a commitment for future action. This was the message behind his questions about negative developments like Hardwicke and the Metropole (which he referred to as "compromises"). Although outside the core zone they affected what he called the city's "vista" and that was important.

### Historic Street Name Plaques

In support of the bid for UNESCO World Heritage Listing, funds are being sought for the installation of historic plaques which will denote and explain traditional and local names of our inner city streets. PHT is responsible for all research, documentation, consultation with inner city residents and historians, translation into four languages, as well as location and supervision of installation works. So far we have completed the text and research for 90 streets and have completed translations in two languages. We expect the plaques to be ready and in place by year's end.



## The Clan Jetties Pictorial and Interpretation Centre



Text by Clement Liang  
Poster designed by KakiDesign

The Clan Jetties of George Town represent a facet of Penang's rich historic and cultural heritage not found elsewhere. It has been chosen for, and is well-deserving of, inclusion in the core area of the nominated UNESCO World heritage site for the City of George Town. For years, the Clan Jetties were left neglected and seen as fit only to be demolished for other development projects. As recently as last year, we have lost both the Koay Jetty and the Peng Aun Jetty and their close-knit communities. New urban development in a historic city need not be symbolized by high density concrete jungles. Instead we should heed the latest trend towards a more human oriented and cultural-sensitive development for the community in situ. It is with this objective in mind that PHT regards it as timely that the communities living in the Clan Jetties, together with the authorities and other interested parties, should work together to improve the living conditions of the Jetties while retaining the traditional lifestyle of the residents. The setting up of the Clan Jetties Pictorial and Interpretation Centre at the Chew Jetty aims to increase awareness among jetty residents so that they see themselves as the custodians and interpreters of their own communal site.

PHT worked extensively with the Clan Jetties residents, scholars, photographers, graphic designers, volunteers and the State authorities to design a series of large posters depicting the Jetties and illustrating their history. The project was completed in time for the visit to Penang of the UNESCO evaluator who visited the Clan Jetties on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2007 in the company of the Chief Minister. The latter appeared impressed with the project and was seen to provide explanations to the UNESCO visitor based on the posters!

The Clan Jetties project exemplifies the strong will and concerted efforts by grass-roots communities, NGOs and the authorities to preserve an important heritage site in Penang.





## What of St Joseph's Novitiate?



*Hidden behind construction hoardings, the fate of St Joseph's Novitiate and its beautiful 1925 raised chapel remains beyond view, consigned to being part of the newly minted "Gurney Paragon", Hunza's so-called mixed development project between Gurney Drive and Kelawai Road. Although scaled down from the original concept of several huge tower blocks, the project comprises two gigantic towers, each of 43 storeys and together containing 220 condo units, facing Gurney Drive and dwarfing the elegant St Joseph's Novitiate. The project also includes an*

*enormous shopping centre filling the hitherto green space between Kelawai Road and the Novitiate building. Speaking to the media in advance of a local property fair, Hunza's executive chairman described the Gurney Paragon units as surrounding "a heritage structure and a festival square", the former a reference to St Joseph's Novitiate, which he said Hunza had invested about RM10 million "to rehabilitate and refurbish as a colonial style café and art gallery." He added that the 60,000 sq.ft. festival square would be next to a three-storey podium of shops. The developer's own scale model of the project, however, shows St Joseph's Novitiate completely hemmed in by the colossal shopping complex and thereby denied any open vistas necessary to appreciate its architectural beauty. Meanwhile, a short distance away on Kelawai Road Gurney Plaza is hastening to complete its nine-storey shopping annexe for opening in 2008. It seems there will be no lack of multi-storey commercial space in this neighbourhood!*

### Obituary – Goh Heng Chong

*(Researched by Lee Yow Ching)*

*Penang boasts the oldest operating water treatment plant in Malaysia, the Waterfall plant opened in 1804. Over the years the people of Penang have owed the high quality of their water supply to its city water engineers, not least among them Mr. Goh Heng Chong who passed away in Sydney on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2007. He was 94 years old.*

*Mr. Goh was born in Penang in 1913 and educated at the Penang Free School where he obtained a Hutchings Scholarship to study engineering at Hong Kong University in 1931-35. He joined the Municipal Council Water Department in 1936 and, with the outbreak of war in 1941, responsibility for running Penang's water supply fell to him. It was due to his skills of improvisation that the production of chlorine was assured for Penang to enjoy a high quality of water supply during the war years.*

*Appointed Assistant Water Engineer after the war, Mr. Goh took over as the first Malaysian City Water Engineer in 1958, serving until his retirement in 1968. As Assistant Water Engineer he designed the new Waterfall Treatment Plant and almost single handed the Ayer Itam Dam Treatment Plant as well. The latter was entirely designed and built departmentally. Among its interesting and unique features it incorporated a water turbine and generator to convert the energy head from Ayer Itam Dam into electricity. Mr. Goh was also responsible for the Bukit Dunbar reservoir, the ground of which was converted into a public park.*

*Mr. Goh also initiated construction of the Muda River Water Scheme which benefited not only the Island of Penang and Province Wellesley but also Kedah, thus leading to the idea of an integrated Penang Water Authority, a leading water supply authority in Malaysia.*

*The people of Penang mourn the loss of a man whom PHT President Dr. Choong Sim Poey has called "an historic figure in Penang's development."*



## FRIENDS OF PENANG HILL

C/O CAP, 10 JALAN MASJID NEGERI, 11600 PENANG

### Illegal Construction Works in State Forest Reserve on Penang Hill.

The Friends of Penang Hill (a alliance of individuals and NGOs) would like to bring to the immediate attention of the State Government, and in particular the Jabatan Perhutanan Negeri, the massive illegal construction work that is going on in the Hutan Simpan Bukit Kerajaan, a State forest reserve on the south-eastern flank of Penang Hill.

A 4-metre wide concrete road is being constructed from Jalan Tuanku Yahya Petra (Summit Road) to several farms and bungalows lower down the hill. In the process large areas of the forest have been cleared, big trees cut and extensive earthworks carried out. The nature of the work is such that we can be assured of continual land-slides and soil erosion in the near and medium term future as a result. Since Sg Pinang has one of its sources from this area the silt will end up in it, with dire consequences: i.e. shallowing up of the river and flooding.

There is no evidence that the work is being carried out with the approval of any authority or that the trees were cut with the approval of the Jabatan Perhutanan.

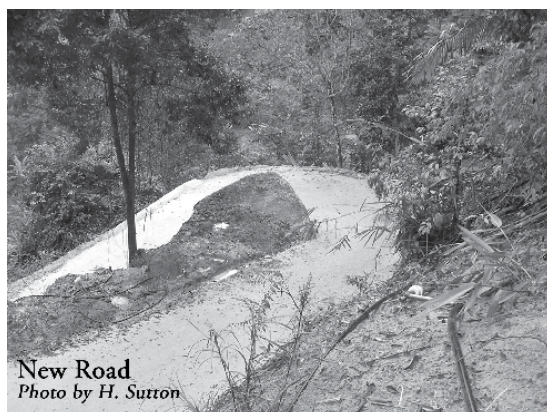
During a recent visit to the site (on 31 August) it became obvious that work has been going on for at least 3 or 4 months. About two thirds of a road that will eventually be at least 800 metres long has been completed. On that day it was also observed that a gang of labourers were working on the site in brazen disregard of a Jabatan Perhutanan sign saying that the area is a forest reserve. They had with them some construction and earth-moving equipment.

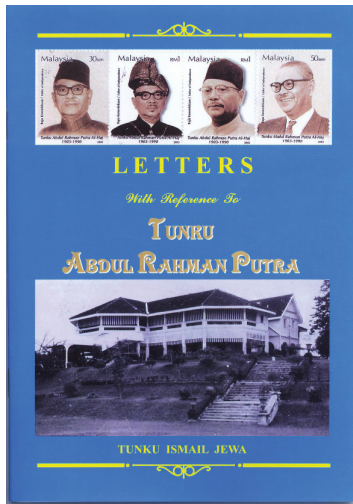
To see the photos please visit [www. penangwatch.net](http://www.penangwatch.net)

A member of the FOPH had previously sent this information (with photographs) to the Director of the Jabatan Perhutanan, but his reply appears to indicate that he is not aware of what is going on, and he does not seem to care, even though the photos clearly show that the illegal road is within the forest reserve.

The forests of Penang Hill are being seriously but insidiously encroached upon by illegal farmers, as anyone can see for himself even from the city or from the upper floors of KOMTAR. However this is the most blatant example. We would ask the Director to visit the area himself to verify our report and see the full extend of the damage. The full force of the law (which allows for seizure of the equipment and prosecution for illegal logging) should be brought to bear, to serve as a deterrent to others who may be contemplating similar ventures within one of Penang's most valuable and fragile assets.

### Ahmad Chik (Spokesperson)





## Merdeka 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Publication

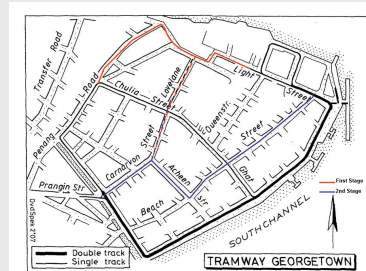
PHT Vice-President Tunku Ismail Jewa has marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Merdeka with the publication of correspondence he has written to the newspapers over the years touching on the subject of his uncle, Malaysia's first Prime Minister. **Letters with Reference to Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra** is in effect a collection of short essays providing insights into Bapa Malaysia from the unique point of view of a close family member. As Malaysians celebrate fifty years of independence from Britain, it is interesting to recall from one of Tunku Ismail's letters entitled "Past Experiences Influenced Tunku" the fact that the Tunku was born in Kedah while the state ruled by his father Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah was

still under suzerainty of Thailand. We learn from another letter how the Tunku became attached to the Residency. As the new Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya following the 1955 election, at first he had no official residence and after a brief stay in a house at No. 1 Hose Road in Kuala Lumpur, he was offered the Residency occupied by the last British Adviser of Selangor. He lived in this house for fifteen years and after his retirement as Prime Minister urged its preservation as a national monument, telling his successor Tun Razak that "there was no residence in this country that could boast of as proud a history as the old place could." One of the most interesting letters in the collection is the one discussing the proper use of "Tunku" in the first Prime Minister's name. There has been much confusion over this as several writers and certain media have been in the habit of using "Tengku", a term which Tunku Ismail assures us is not the official Kedah style. According to Tunku Ismail, the use of "Tunku" for members of the Kedah royal family originated during the reign of Kedah's first Muslim ruler, Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1136-1179). Such informative items make Tunku Ismail Jewa's booklet a prized memento of the Merdeka golden anniversary.

Text by Leslie A.K. James

## Trams for George Town

With financial support from the Penang Tourism Action Council, PHT together with a group of like-minded NGOs interested in re-establishing an electric tram service commissioned Mr Ric Francis, a transport consultant from Perth, to conduct a feasibility study in the City of George Town.

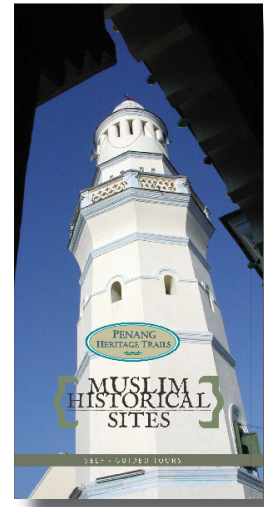


As envisaged, the tram service would only be in the inner city and would complement the bus service already provided by RapidPenang as well as the future monorail project. It would be a silent and pollution-free service very suitable for the narrow streets of the city. It would also be a tourist attraction.

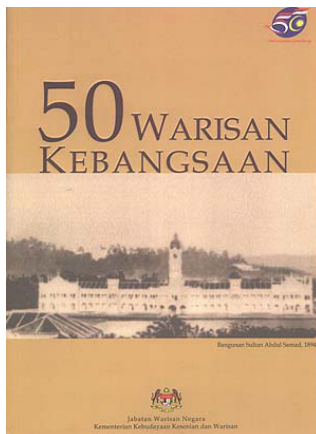
An outline specification of the system including the costing will be made available by the consultant within a few weeks for further discussion with officials and investors.

Meanwhile, continuing road works have exposed a further stretch of old tram tracks along Penang Road to Campbell Street from the corner with Chulia Street where tramlines were uncovered two or three years ago.

## Penang Heritage Trail~ Muslim Historical Sites



## List of 50 National Heritage Treasures issued by Ministry of Culture, Arts & Heritage, June 2007



### Warisan Kebudayaan Tak Ketara

- |                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Lagu Negaraku  | 7. Silat Melayu             |
| 2. Mak Yong       | 8. Ngajat                   |
| 3. Wayang Kulit   | 9. Sumazau                  |
| 4. Bangsawan      | 10. Sewang                  |
| 5. Joget Melayu   | 11. Rumah Terbuka Malaysia  |
| 6. Dondang Sayang | 12. Tarian Singa Atas Tiang |

### Bangunan

1. Bangunan Parlimen, KL
2. Istana Negara, KL
3. Tapak Tiang Bendera Malaya dinaikan buat pertama kali
4. Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, KL
5. Bangunan Dewan Bandaraya & Panggung Bandaraya
6. Bangunan Stesen Keratapi KL
7. Bangunan Ibu Pejabat Keretapi Tanah Melayu
8. Bangunan Pejabat Post Besar
9. Bangunan Jabatan Kerja Raya
10. Bangunan Residen, KL
11. Masjid Negara dan Makam Pahlawan
12. Carcosa Seri Negara
13. Batu Caves
14. St. George Church, Penang
15. Dewan Perhimpunan Cina
16. Tugu Negara
17. Taman Negara Kinabalu
18. Taman Negara Mulu

### Objek

1. Jalur Gemilang
2. Jata Negara
3. Panji-panji Diraja
4. Keris Panjang Diraja
5. Tengkolok Diraja
6. Gandik Diraja
7. Pending Diraja
8. Keris Pendek Diraja
9. Kalung Diraja
10. Cogan Agama
11. Cogan Alam
12. Cokmar
13. Cokmar Dewan Rakyat
14. Cokmar Dewan Negara
15. Bunga Raya
16. Manuskrip Sejarah Melayu
17. Hukum Kanun Melaka
18. Manuskrip Hikayat Hang Tuah
19. Watakah Pengisytiharaan Kemerdekaan
20. Perak Man



