



# ACADEMY

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THE BULLETIN OF PERAK ACADEMY

April 2006 – March 2007

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## EDITOR

Encik Adib Vincent Tung Abdullah

## MISSION

To promote Perak State as a centre of excellence in thought, culture and technology by organizing and supporting activities and projects related to intellectual discourse, research and writing, publishing and the fine arts, and whereby these can be progressively made complementary for the betterment of the State and its citizens.

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**I**n this bulletin, we have the usual brief description of talks as well as activities organised by our Academy. Texts on the talks presented by several of our speakers are also reproduced for our readers' reading pleasure.

Since April 2006, our Academy has also participated in and contributed to the sub-committee meeting on tourism development under the auspices of the Perak State Economic Planning Unit, a dialogue session with the Menteri Besar of Perak on tourism and industry, a "Publisiti Kajian Rancangan Tempatan Kawasan Pentadbiran Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh" hosted by the Ipoh City Council, a debate on "Taiping Many Firsts" organised by the Taiping Municipality Council, a Malaysian Science and Technology Congress 2006 by the Confederation of Scientific and Technological Associations in Malaysia (COSTAM), and an executive talk on the "Third Industrial Master Plan" organised

by the Perak Investment Management Centre.

Events supported by our Academy for the same period included the Tropical Rainforest Tourism Symposium 2006 held at the Banding Resort in Royal Belum (State Park) on 28-29 July. Our chairman, Dato' Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan, and one of our governors, Dato' Wah Abdul Hamid Idris, who is more popularly known as Wah Idris, acted as moderators during the symposium where a number of our members also participated.

With this we look forward to bringing you more interesting events as we usher into 2007, and on that note, all of us at the Academy would like to wish you a very Happy New Year.

Warmest regards,

 **The Editor**

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## Recent Activities

Mr Tong Kooi Ong is a former stockbroker and banker who founded and built one of Malaysia's most successful and innovative banking groups, PhileoAllied Berhad with assets of over RM10 billion before it was divested. Today, he is at the helm of Nexnews Berhad and its publications include 'The Sun' and 'The Edge'.

Being widely acknowledged as a leading innovator in the field of finance and business, the audience expected the talk on February 17, 2006 to revolve around this area. However, Mr Tong talked about how the subject 'knowledge' affects our values, lifestyle, freedom and equality. He also touched on under what circumstances can knowledge be used positively for the benefit



of society and humanity rather than just self interest and the role of the average citizen in a socially progressive society that promotes the interest of the people.

An audience of a hundred people comprising the business community attended the talk. 🦋



The secretariat of Perak Academy has been re-located to :

**28 Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tiger Lane),  
31400 Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia**

This premise is shared with Perak Society of Performing Arts (PSPA) and Malaysian Karst Society (MKS).

Our grateful thanks to our governor, Dato' Seri Lee Oi Hian, and Datin Seri Sandra Lee for their kind generosity in providing Perak Academy the use of the said premise.

Our new contact numbers and email are :

**Tel : (605) 547 8949**

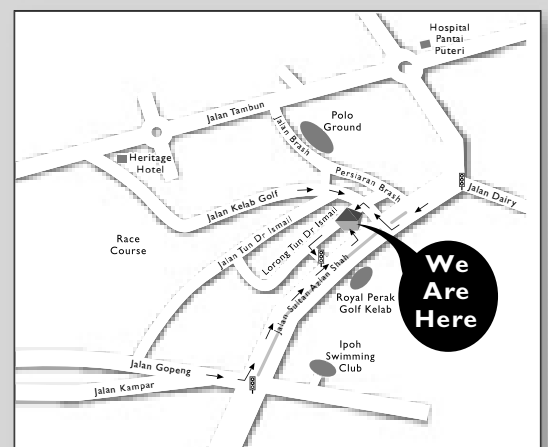
**Fax : (605) 549 6675**

**Email : [contact@perakacademy.com](mailto:contact@perakacademy.com)**

All are welcome to visit us at our new premise and our operation hours are :

**Monday to Friday : 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

**Lunch: 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.**



**P**erak Academy co-organised the 'Perak Meili 2006 Travel Fair' and 'Perak Night' with the Perak State Government – an event held to promote tourism, food and culture of Perak to our neighbours in Singapore from March 14-15, 2006. The delegation was led by YAB Dato' Seri DiRaja Mohamad Tajol Rosli and was held at Grand Capthorne Waterfront Hotel in Singapore.

by HRH The Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, was held at the Institute of Southeast Asian



Governors of Perak Academy also participated in a working dinner held the night before to discuss and share ideas about opportunities and cooperation with the Singaporean business community. The dinner was hosted by YAB Menteri Besar of Perak. State Executive Councillors and senior Government officials also participated in the discussion.

On the morning of 15, March 2006, an official tree planting ceremony



Studies (ISEAS), Singapore to mark the event. A fellow of Perak Academy, Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad presented a talk 'Perak : Then and Now in Malaysian Politics'. The Raja Muda of Perak also visited the ISEAS library and bookshop where a collection of books on Perak were displayed and on sale. ✎

**P**rofessor Hew Choy Sin is a professor of plant physiology and a world authority on orchid physiology. He has published books and over 100 scientific papers on the subject. Currently, he is the Vice-Chairman of the Tan Kah Kee Foundation, Council Member of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Advisor to the NUS-Tsinghua-Xiamen University Trilateral Research Program at DBS, NUS and Adjunct Professor at the Institute of Advanced Studies of Nanyang Technological University.

On March 28 2006, Professor Hew talk on the commercial cultivation, potential world demand and recent advances in orchid research. He enthralled the audience with slides showing the mystique and grandeur of orchids, their diverse structures and adaptation abilities.

Orchid enthusiasts including members of the Perak Orchid Society enjoyed an enlightening evening with Professor Hew. ✎

**F**meritus Professor W.K. Fletcher is a geologist by profession and a nature lover who needs no introduction especially in Perak. He and his wife, Donna Baylis, spent their time travelling the world photographing the flora and fauna.

Professor Fletcher first came to work in Ipoh in 1982 at the Southeast Asia Tin Research and Development Centre. Since then, they have returned to Malaysia every year and now live here under the Malaysia My Second Home Programme.

During the talk on May 17, 2006, Professor Fletcher took the audience on a journey from his home in Vancouver to their Second Home in Ipoh. He shared his personal collection of slides and photographs of protected places in America, Africa and Asia which included the volcanic desert of El Pinacante in Mexico, Lauca National Park in Chile, the wildlife of Etosha in Namibia and the gigantic sand dunes of the Namib.



The journey ended with our very own “jewels” – Royal Belum Park, *Rafflesia* sites, drinking spots of the Raja Brooke’s Birdwing near Gopeng, glades of the magnificent *Johannesteijsmannia perakensis* palm in Gunung Bubu and the wetlands near Batu Gajah where the Kinta Weeds still grows profusely.

He also touched on issues associated with conservation and eco-tourism. He advised to learn from other countries how they protect their own flora and fauna eg. South Africa’s strict policies on handling game reserves. He suggested using hot air balloon rides for tourist to view the beauty of our Royal Belum’s rainforest. 🦋

**D**r Leon Comber, a specialist in Asian Studies, author, publisher, linguist and alsosoldier, was ‘accosted’ from his 2-weeks holiday in Penang and whisked to Ipoh on July 6, 2006 by the Perak Academy to give a talk on the role of the Special Branch in the Malayan communist uprising. Dr Comber served several years in the Special Branch of

the Malayan Police as a political and security intelligence officer after the Japanese surrender in September 1945.

The talk was not so much of the nitty-gritty of Special Branch intelligence operations but was rather on a general and policy level of the Special Branch in the containment of the communist insurgency in Malaya from 1948 to 1960. Much has been written on the Emergency by Noel Barber, Henry Miller, Anthony Short, etc, but the special role played by the Special Branch has generally been sidelined.

The ‘Emergency’, an euphemism quaintly adopted by the British Government to describe the communist uprising in Malaya was, as far as Dr Comber was concerned, another war. Doubtless, it was war too in the minds of the communists, as was reflected in the naming of the armed struggle by the Malayan communist Party (MCP) as the ‘Anti-British National Liberation War’.



## Recent Activities (continued)

All records on the Emergency were written from a British point of view and thus the perception that the war was won by the British. Dr Comber stressed that without the vital knowledge and language skills of local officers, the struggle would have gone on longer than the 12 years that it did.

The counter-insurgency campaign was controlled by the civil government and the army depended on the collection, analysis, assessment and distribution of intelligence by the Special Branch for its operations. The police suffered more casualties than the army in the MCP's reign of terror and intimidation and this demonstrates that the police was very much in the forefront of the fight.

The Special Branch relied heavily on a network of secret agents and informers but, as Dr Comber revealed, the most important source of information was from the surrendered and captured communist terrorists who showed an amazing willingness to betray

and even lead patrols in attacks on their former comrades.

Though Gerald Templer was generally given credit for the containment of the insurgency it was the brilliant plan laid down by Harold Briggs just before Templer's arrival that turned the tide against the MCP. Briggs' Plan, as it was known as, sought to sever the lifeline between the communists and the half million or so Chinese squatters living in the jungle fringes. The mass defections in Perak and Johor brought on by the desertion of Hor Leung in 1958 spelt the beginning of the disintegration of the entire guerilla army. By the end of 1958, about 500-600 communist guerillas had surrendered and the situation continued to improve to such an extent that the end of the Emergency was declared in July 1960.

Dr Comber went on to say that the subtle methods used by the Special Branch which took into account the human element and use of intelligence may be examined by the Pentagon for use in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On the lighter note, readers may be interested to know that the multi-faceted Dr Leon Comber was once married to the famous Chinese-Belgian authoress, Han Su-Yin. Her novel, 'And The Rain My Drink' was written during Dr Comber's Special Branch days and had been deemed anti-British and pro-Communist in sentiments.

Attendees included two former Chief Police Officers of Perak, Dato' Seri Yuen Yuet Leng and Dato' Mariman.

After a 'grueling', to quote Dr Comber, 2 months at ISEAS, Singapore as a Visiting Research Fellow, he will be returning to Australia where he is a Research Fellow at the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University. 🇲🇾

**P**rofessor Sir Ghilleen Prance was a Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew between 1988 and 1999. Currently, he is the Scientific Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall and Visiting Professor at Reading University. He spent eight years on field work and botanical exploration on 15 expeditions in Amazonian Brazil. He is the author of 19 books, editor of a further sixteen, and published over 510 papers of both scientific and general interest on plant systematics, plant ecology, ethnobotany as well as conservation.

Professor Prance was invited by the British Council to present



## Recent Activities (continued)

papers on plant taxonomy, ecology and conservation of rainforest at several Malaysian universities in Kuala Lumpur. Perak Academy was indeed honoured that Professor Prance accepted our invitation to visit Perak who is proud to have one of the best untouched rainforest in the world, Royal Belum.

On 15 September 2006, Professor Sir Ghillean Prance presented a talk "Bringing Botanical Science to the Public : The Eden Project, Cornwall, UK" to members and friends of Perak Academy. He talked on The Eden Project which opened its doors to visitors in March 2001. He explained how the project is a demonstration of restoration ecology as it is located in a disused clay mine pit near Cornwall, United Kingdom. Plants and vegetation, representing various climatic zones of the world, are housed in domes or biomes. These biomes are well insulated and can retain heat and moisture so plants thrive regardless of the weather outside. Tropical rainforest covers over 5 acres and the plants come from all over the tropical regions of



the world, including Malaysia. He showed a picture of a star fruit tree with ripen fruits grown in the conservatory.

The Eden Project is self-funded. Its major source of revenue is from tourism. A total of 7 million people from all over the world have visited this conservatory since it opened its doors in March 2001 until October 2005. The Eden Project prompt especially Perakeans and the Perak State Government to put on their "thinking cap" to turn our many disused mining pools into money generating tourism projects.

About 60 people attended his talk including officers from the Perak Forestry Department and students from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia led by Dr Kamarudin Mat Salleh.

Clearwater Sanctuary Golf Resort hosted a lunch for Professor Prance and members of Perak Academy. After the lunch, Professor Prance was taken on a conducted tour around the resort – a golf resort in a disused tin mine.

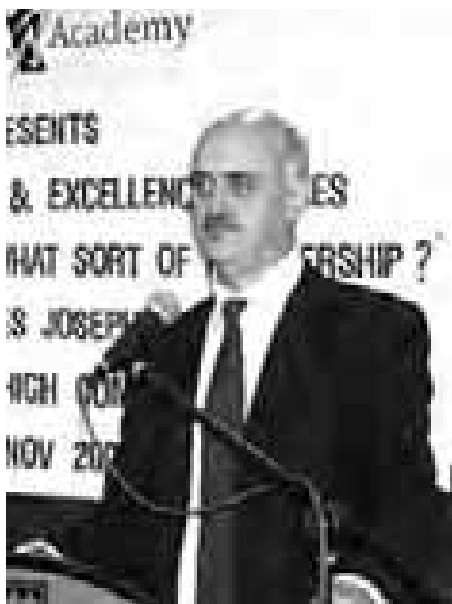
The next day, Professor Prance together with about 30 members and friends of the Academy visited Royal Belum State Park in Hulu Perak. The group was accompanied by officers from the Perak State Park Corporation. Professor Prance noted to be a champion for the sustainable development and conservation of tropical rainforest was captivated and managed to view a blossoming *Rafflesia azlanii*. Group members also visited an orang asli village at Sungai Kejar and enjoyed a "kampong" lunch.

After spending a night at Banding Island Resort, Professor Prance and several local plant specialists, Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat, Dr Kamarudin Mat Salleh (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) and Dr Seri Intan Mokhtar (British Council) visited the Sungai Lebey, another *Rafflesia* site. 🦋



**O**n November 2 2006, Mr. James Joseph Wise spoke on "Australia-Malaysia: What sort of Partnership?" at a lunch to members and friends of Perak Academy. Mr. Wise is the Australia's High Commissioner to Malaysia since January 2003. About 60 people including the State Executive Councillor for Education, Dato' Dr Zambray Abdul Kadir, attended the talk.

He talked about political relations, education, defence, security and commercial relationship. Mr. Wise commented that Malaysia and Australia would still differ in many areas and would not agree on all issues. But would now deal with the differences in a measured, mature way. As a result, both countries could do new things together on the bilateral level, like negotiate free trade agreements, establish Australia-Malaysia institutes and engage in formal security dialogues.



After the talk, Mr. Wise visited the Secretariat of Perak Academy located at its new premise, 28, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, Ipoh. He was very impressed with the heritage nature of its building and the rain trees.

*Text of his speech is available from the Academy.* 

**O**n January 12 2007, Dr K S Nathan, a Malaysian who is currently a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore was invited by Perak Academy to speak on Malaysia-Singapore relationship. He spoke on recent key bilateral issues : the supply of water to Singapore, Malayan Railway land, reclamation works in the Johore Straits and the controversial Bridge Project and its cancellation by the Abdullah administration. He concluded that the "Abang-Adik" relationship is over for good; Malaysia has no

real interest to settle ALL issues as Singapore is not a major priority in its overall foreign policy outlook and practice, and Singapore is more sensitive to developments inside Malaysia. However, the inclination to outdo the "other" ensures continuation of co-operation and competition ie. a working relationship which will never be close. Dr K.S. Nathan believes that the bridge would still be possible someday based on mutual interests and balance of benefits but, however, it would not be "crooked". It would be a straight bridge based on a compromise that would satisfy both parties and in a truly bilateral agreement.

Dr K.S. Nathan holds a PhD in International Relations from Claremont Graduate University in California, USA. He is also currently the President of the Malaysian Association of American Studies (MAAS). He has several publications including 8 books and numerous articles in local, regional and international journals. His teaching, research and publications are largely in the area of international relations and strategic studies including civil-military relations in Malaysia, big power relations in the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN regionalism, Malaysian politics and foreign policy, Malaysia-Singapore relations and more recently, political Islam, terrorism and regional security.



# Annual General Meeting and Chairman's Report

The Annual General Meeting of Perak Academy was held on 22 September 2006 at Syuen Hotel. Mr. Albert Lim, the Company Secretary was in attendance. The audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2006 were adopted. Retiring members of the Board of Governors were re-elected and members also agreed to the appointments of more members to the Board of Governors. Members also passed a resolution which read "With effect from 1/1/2007, the Academy's members will pay an annual subscription of RM100.00 to help defray the cost of producing the newsletter and maintaining the web site".

## Governors and Members

Dato' Dr Abdullah Fadzil bin Che Wan  
– *Chairman*  
En Adib Vincent Tung bin Abdullah  
Mr Chan Kok Keong  
Mr G. Sivapragasam  
Mr Lee Chee Ming  
Dato' Seri Lee Oi Hian  
Mr. Lim Si Boon  
Dato' Mohd Annuar bin Zaini  
Dato' Wah Abdul Hamid bin Haji Idris

## Members

Mr Alexander Hutchison  
Dato' Haji Azumu bin Tak  
Dr Chakr Sri Na Nagara  
Dato' Chin Lean Choong  
Dato' Chin Lean Keat  
Mr Foon Hoong Seng  
Datuk Dr Foong Weng Sum  
Mr Gan Tack Kong  
Dato' Lee Hau Hian  
Dato' Lee Seng Hee  
Dato' Lee Soon Hian  
Dato' Lim Keng Kay  
Dato' Dr (Miss) Madhuri Majumder  
En Mohd Taib bin Mohamed  
Dr Tan Chin Yong  
Mr Tan Yap Pau  
Dato' Yap Lim Sen  
Dato' Dr Lee Yow Chon (YC Lee)

It is my great pleasure to welcome you today to our third Annual General Meeting since the incorporation of the Academy on 19 November 2002. This report covers the performance and achievements of the Academy for the 12 months from April 2005 to March 2006. I shall also discuss our on-going activities and some of our plans for the current period.

In particular, I wish to welcome our new Members who are attending our Annual General Meeting for the first time. We currently have 27 Members.

## Audited Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2006

You will note from the audited accounts that we recorded an income surplus of RM14,046 over expenditure compared to a deficit of RM20,619 for the previous year. Our main source of income was the sale of books, especially the "Kinta Valley" book which accounted for RM75,745 of total book sales of RM83,106 during the year.

If major one-off expenses are excluded, operating expenses were about the same as the previous year:

Operating expenses for YE 31 March 2005:	RM110,622
less payment to Singapore consultant for Perak Report	46,192
	<hr/>
	64,430
	<hr/>
Operating expenses for YE 31 March 2006:	RM 70,695
less cost of "Kinta Valley" book launch	8,690
	<hr/>
	62,005
	<hr/>

We have no external borrowings, no bad debts, very little owing to creditors, and we remain self-financing. Net advances from Governors stood at RM115,600.

## Review of Achievements

The Academy held 12 talks during the year ended 31 March 2006. The major event was the 10th Tan Sri Dato' Seri B Bek-Nielsen Foundation Lecture in November 2005 which we co-organised with MOSTA, Petaling Jaya. We thank all our distinguished speakers, the media, our Members and friends for their support for these talks. We also thank Syuen Hotel for their assistance and support in organising our talks.

We continued with our publishing activities and published a new book by Dr Ho Tak Ming, "Generations: The Story of Batu Gajah" in September 2005. Our sales of books included new titles from publishers such as Pelanduk Publications, and distributors such as Horizon Books.

A premier event for the year under review was the Transfer of Technology Seminar & Exhibition, based on the theme "Investment Opportunities in Oil Palm Based





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Technologies" which we organised in November 2005 jointly with Malaysian Palm Oil Board and FMM Perak. It was a major success in promoting awareness of new technologies from research and development in the palm oil industry.

The Academy's major achievements for the year under review were the Perak Meili 2006 Travel Fair and Perak Night in Singapore on 14 March 2006, which we co-organised with the Perak State Government; and the visit of DYT Raja Muda Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, to the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore on 15 March 2006. These events raised the awareness of Singaporeans on tourism and investment opportunities in our state.

### **Current Activities and Plans**

We continued to host talks by a variety of speakers. For example, we recently worked with Credit Suisse, Singapore to hold a talk on "Wealth Creation". To promote research into the history of government in Perak,

we hosted Professor Lynn Hollen Lees from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA during her visit in early June 2006. She will return as Visiting Research Fellow in May 2007 to complete her project.

We further developed our international links last week when we organised a successful visit to Ipoh and Royal Belum State Park by Professor Sir Ghillean Prance, Scientific Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall, UK and a distinguished botanist. He was made a Fellow of Perak Academy during his audience with DYT Raja Muda Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah. We shall continue to use every effort to do what we do best –

- promote stimulating intellectual discourse and publish works associated with Perak;
- facilitate and support research into various aspects of Perak;
- build strong links with prominent international researchers and research institutions;
- work with the State Government of Perak, Government agencies and business organisations to raise the investment profile of Perak.

### **Acknowledgements**

In conclusion, I thank the Governors, Exco members, Members and employees of the Academy for their valuable support and contributions to the Academy. The success of our activities and plans depends very much on your continued support which I am sure will be forthcoming.

I also thank all our supporters, well-wishers and friends, in particular the State Government of Perak and Government agencies whose assistance has enabled us to achieve our objectives. We look forward to working with you for a mutually beneficial relationship.

On behalf of the Academy, I thank our auditors, Messrs Ernst & Young who have expressed their willingness to continue in office.

**Dato' Dr Abdullah Fadzil bin Che Wan**  
**Chairman of the Board of Governors**  
**22 September 2006**  
**Ipoh, Perak**

## **Appointments**

**O**n the morning of 15 September 2006, **Professor Sir Ghillean Prance** was granted an audience by the Royal Patron of Perak Academy, HRH Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah at Istana Kinta, Ipoh. He was accompanied by governors and members of the Academy. HRH Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, bestowed Professor Sir Ghillean Prance with a **Fellowship of Perak Academy** in recognition of his distinguished achievements in botanical science and studies and important contributions to the sustainable development of rainforest ecosystem and conservation programmes worldwide. Academy governor, Mr. Chan Kok Keong, read the citation :-

Ampun Tuanku, Raja Muda Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah.

Your Royal Highness,

We are indeed honoured that Professor Sir Ghillean Prance has accepted our invitation to be a Fellow of the Perak Academy on the occasion of his visit to Ipoh and to Royal Belum.

Professor Sir Ghillean Tolmie Prance was a Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew from 1988 to 1999. Currently he is a Scientific Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall and Visiting Professor at Reading University. In 2000-2002, he was McBryde Professor at the US National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii.

Born in Suffolk, England on 13th July 1937, he was educated at Malvern College, Worcestershire and Keble College, Oxford where he obtained a B.A. in Botany (1960) and a D. Phil. in 1963 for his "Taxonomic Study of Chrysobalanaceae".

He began his career with The New York Botanical Garden in 1963 as a research assistant, subsequently becoming a B.A. Krukoff Curator of Amazonian Botany, Director and then Vice-President of Research and finally, Senior Vice President for Science in 1981. He also set up the Garden's Institute of Economic Botany of which he was the first Director from 1981-1988.



Sir Ghillean was trained as a plant taxonomist and has spent over eight years on field work and botanical exploration on 15 expeditions in Amazonian Brazil. He has a worldwide interest in the sustainable development of rainforest ecosystems and conservation generally; as well as being the author of nineteen books and editor of a further sixteen, he has published over 510 papers of both scientific (295) and general interest (196) on plant systematics, plant ecology, ethnobotany and conservation.

We have taken this opportunity to recognise one of the most eminent of world botanists in the context of the botanical heritage of Perak. The early history of botanical discovery and collection in our nation was especially significant in Perak, commencing with the work of the botanists Kunstler, Scortechini, Beccari, Wray and Ridley.

In 1927, Ridley's successor, Isaac Burkill enumerated the equivalent areas for botanical collection, his figures showed 957 for Larut, followed by 796 for Penang Island, and 794 for Malacca, the aggregate figure for Perak is by far much the largest within the Peninsula.

It is thus, the challenging responsibility for dedicated institutions such as Perak Academy to be effectively concerned with the flora of Perak, and especially the endemic plants – to know them, to conserve them and to grow them.

Do we appreciate and value palms such as the *Johannesteijsmannia perakensis*, *Pinanga perakensis*, *Pinanga pectinata* ?

Do we recognise gingers such as *Etingera fulgens* (first found on Bukit Larut), or *Scaphochlamys kunstleri* with its varieties endemic to Perak ?

Do we treasure orchids such as *Vanda hookeriana* – once called the “Kinta Weed”, now facing extinction ?

Recent botanical fieldwork has given us other new species such as the *Rafflesia azlanii*, honouring HRH Sultan Azlan Shah, and it is further believed that with more encouragement and research, other new species will be found.


Indeed, in the era of the knowledge economy, we are once again on the threshold of another new frontier, that of bio-technology and new uses of herbs as medicine from our

tropical rainforest. Needless to say, such discoveries cannot be possible without a firm foundation in plant taxonomy.

Professor Sir Ghillean's visit to Perak is not only timely but symbolic of a new era of co-operation between Perak and the great research institutions found in Kew and in other universities in UK. A great number of them have already recognised Professor Sir Ghillean's unrivalled knowledge and expertise in the field of botany by conferment of honorary doctorates and other awards.

We are happy to once again acknowledge our debt to Kew for their few rubber seeds which were first planted in Kuala Kangsar, Perak and which as a consequence propelled our nation to prosperity.

Finally, by honouring and recognising Professor Sir Ghillean, the Academy hopes to play its part for the floristic heritage of Perak, and look to support and collaborate by all those who share our concerns.

It is now my privilege to call on the Chairman of the Perak Academy, YB Dato' Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan to invite HRH to confer the Fellowship of the Perak Academy on Professor Sir Ghillean Prance. 




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## Vice-Chairman

The Board of Governors and Members of Perak Academy wish to express their heartfelt appreciation to **Dato' Seri Lee Oi Hian** on his acceptance of Vice-Chairman of Perak Academy at a Board of Governors Meeting held on 8 December 2006.

# The Burden Of Knowledge

delivered by Mr Tong Kooi Ong

Deputy Chairman of Nexnews Bhd and Publisher of *The Edge*

I expected that I would be invited to speak on issues of business or economics – an area I am slightly familiar with.

But in the presence of very successful business people here, I fear that I may be out of place.

Allow me to speak instead on values, lifestyle, liberty and equality. Although socio-philosophical in nature, they nevertheless have important economic considerations.

Let me begin with this question: “Are we too pragmatic?”

We often hear that one of Malaysia’s strengths is that Malaysians are very practical.

We are pragmatic in resolving disputes, in making business and economics decisions.

Our aspirations for the nation and the goals the government sets for national development are also practical.

On religious, communal or civil issues, we are also pragmatic.

I don’t know if this pragmatism is considered a virtue to uphold or merely the means to an end?

But that’s by the bye, for the important question is this – what happens when pragmatism clashes with protection for the weak, with compassion, liberty or justice?

## Man and animals

I believe, taken to extreme, a purely pragmatic society closely

approximates what we may observe in the animal kingdom where the strong dominate the weak and the weakest are sacrificed.

I am sure most of you have seen documentaries where for example, a pride of lions stalks a herd of zebras.

The lions target the weakest amongst the herd. What do the rest of the zebras do? They run off, willingly sacrificing one of their own, to live another day, where they will once again be hunted.

It’s the gruesome law of the wild as animals seek to survive and reproduce.

But people are supposed to behave differently. What kind of human society would allow its weak to be continuously culled?

Humans are supposed to be rational and reasonable.

We have a sense of right and wrong. We try to act with conscience and compassion. We protect the young and the weak.

## Knowledge

We acquire knowledge and seek a better society. We harness resources and create new technology in pursuit of this. Most philosophers believe that fundamentally, all humans desire freedom and equality as this would enhance the fair sharing of society’s material wealth.

But do we actually use the knowledge we possess to further our desires for liberty and equality?

When we speak of knowledge, in terms

of acquisition, creation, extension, ownership or dissemination, it is usually seen as positive because knowledge will add to economic and medical advancements. Knowledge contributes to progress.

But is this positive image of knowledge and what we do with it a reality? When is knowledge negative?

What about knowledge for the self versus knowledge for the public good?

Sadly, societies generally do not share knowledge. Those with knowledge will share amongst themselves for their own benefits. Indeed, it is by depriving others that such knowledge is of value.

Knowledge is considered a source of power – knowledge can be granted or withheld, shared or kept secret.

The situation is worsened when knowledge is erroneously equated with intelligence. In general, therefore, knowledge creates further inequality.

## Freedom and equality

I spoke earlier of the human desire for liberty and equality. Thomas Jefferson said “liberty and dignity (are) the two true measures of freedom”.

But how much freedom can a society permit? Justice William J. Brennan Jr of the US Supreme Court has said that (it) depends on a dialogue between the heart and the head.

Only by remaining open to the entreaties of reason and passion, of logic and of experience, can a judge



come to understand the complex human meaning of a richer term like liberty, and only with such understanding can courts fulfill their constitutional responsibility to protect that value”.

Some theoreticians see freedom and equality as mutually exclusive. Equality is defined in economic or social terms. Liberty or freedom is juridical-political in nature. Equality occurs through some form of state intervention, because it is essentially a matter of redistribution eg taxation. The preservation of freedom, on the other hand, is tied to limiting this state intervention.

The fact is equality and freedom has to co-exist. One cannot sustain itself without the other. The situations in which both are either present or absent are necessarily the same.

For example, when public freedom is suppressed, the society will become one of privileges, and this will then reinforce inequality.

### **The burden of knowledge**

If knowledge on its own leads to more self-interest and greater inequality, how then can it serve the interest of society and of humanity? I would now like to introduce the notion of the “burden of knowledge” or more precisely the “burden of the knowledgeable”.

By this, I am referring to the burden of responsibility of those individuals with knowledge. They should use their knowledge and talent for the benefit of society as a whole, and not just for personal gain.

There are four reasons why some people use their knowledge “positively” – for religious virtue, for altruistic reasons, due to socio-political inculcation and for economic reasons.

In the pursuit of God or Godliness, some will follow religious doctrines and teachings to do the right thing – in pursuit of grace.

In altruism, a person seeks “a life of reason”. It is similar to the first except that it is not driven by a religious commitment but a secular pursuit of a reason for life beyond materialism.

Thirdly, the burden of knowledge is assumed by many due to the social values inculcated by society.

In many progressive civil societies, these values are imbedded into the socio-political and education system.

Its laws usually have some form of a charter of rights and freedom, a guarantee for a free and independent media, democratically elected government and a reliable judiciary.

I believe humans are born good with a natural desire to do right and to protect the young and weak. In major developed cities, a large majority of their people are socially progressive.

They are willing to speak out and defend the minorities, the underprivileged, the poor and the weak.

I believe people will contribute to society, if the socio-political environment is supportive.

At the very least, the instruments of power should not suppress their action. Nor should the instruments of power exist solely to protect the establishment’s vested interests.

### **Economics of the burden of knowledge**

What is articulated less often is the economic rationale for knowledgeable persons to share their knowledge? I

would assert that it is actually in their economic self-interest to further the interests of society and humanity.

A person can no longer produce all his needs. His prosperity is dependent on the prosperity of those he exchanges goods and services with. The individual’s economic well-being, whether in profits or wages, are dependent on the economic prosperity of the society in which he operates.

Take the case of financial markets. It is to the individual’s self-interest to manipulate or to cheat to maximize self-profit. And it is to these individuals interest that their crimes are not punished.

But the action of these individuals leads to loss of confidence in the system and diminution of core values.

And when that happens, society pays a price, everyone else other than those who committed the crimes. Logic suggests that law-abiding individuals who will suffer direct economic losses should therefore seek to stop such crimes from happening or punish those who commit them.

But why is it then that this often does not happen? Law-breakers are often not pursued. Is there a lack of social consciousness? Is it because individuals think that their effort will not make a difference? Or do they have a fear of the powerful individuals who commit those crimes and abuses?

Quite likely, such apathy occurs because the disproportionate benefit to the law breaker outweighs any net benefit to be gained by the individual who wants to pursue the case.

An aggrieved group of individuals may benefit if they act together to pursue the law breaker. However, there is the



classic problem of “free-riding”. Group action does not materialize because too many individuals hope that others would act. They hope to benefit despite their inaction. It is because of this that every society needs a strong institutional framework to act as a check and balance.

### **The key role of institutions**

If we view society’s interest as a see-saw, then the positive and negative forces are on opposing ends. The result of the pressure by both forces will tilt society either way. It may become more socially responsible or it may end up serving the interests of the few.

Sadly, we know these two forces will never be equal. Those who act for the positive forces generally lack direct and immediate gains. They also have little economic resources. As a result, these positive forces tend to stay dormant for a long period of time.

The reverse is true of the negative forces. These forces are always asserting themselves, driven by the attraction of large, direct and immediate economic gains.

Let’s return to the analogy of the see-saw. Some societies have created institutions to underpin the negative end of the see-saw. These institutions help ensure that the negative forces will not be able to hijack society to serve their narrow and self-serving ends.

### **What constitutes these institutions?**

The elected members of legislative assemblies. The judiciary, the media and NGOs. The executive branch of the Government and the public service. The public prosecutor and the security forces. Any erosion in the workings of any of these institutions will weaken the foundations of society. It will

lead to less equality, less freedom. It will lead to a society that favors the interest of the few and powerful.

### **Responsibility**

Where then is the crux of the “burden of knowledge”? It is the knowledge that corruption and abuse of these key institutions will eventually lead to the destruction of the welfare of society.

The “burden of knowledge” calls on the knowledgeable to protect these institutions from those who seek to corrupt and abuse them. The responsible should also ensure that these institutions are represented by those who are just, fair and independent.

One cannot claim to a leader of society, nor seek knowledge and be among the intelligentsia, unless one is willing to protect the larger interests of society. A leader is a servant of the people – serving the interest of society and humanity.

And the protection of society’s interest begins with protecting the institutions of parliament and elections, the judiciary, the media, the public prosecutors and the security forces. Each of these institutions must be free and fair, independent and responsible.

And they must be subject to check and balance.

It will also benefit society if those who claim its leadership understand that to gain dignity, one has to bestow it to others. To be free, one has to free others. And to be equal, one has to treat others equally.

### **Conclusion**

Let me conclude by sharing with you a discussion I had about two months ago, in Canada, while riding a taxi to

the airport. The driver and I spoke about the Canadian Federal elections and what it meant to him, a middle aged white Caucasian man, driving a taxi for a living.

We spoke about Canada being a rich country with a strong economy and currency. To my great surprise, he turned around and said that Canada derived its wealth not because of its huge natural resources, its oil sands, minerals or its vast geography.

He believed that his country became wealthy economically because of its robust political systems, its independent and reliable judiciary, its world class education system, its excellent security and its openness to all immigrants, culture, race and religion.

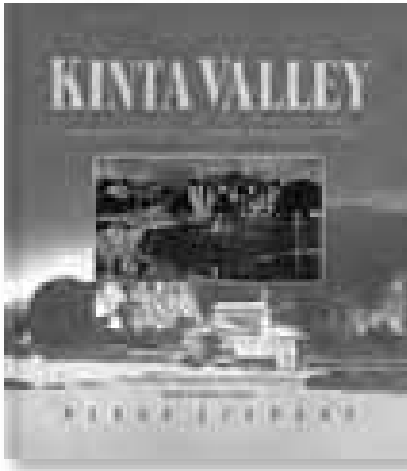
The truth “wealth” of a country can therefore be found from the insights of that middle aged, middle class Canadian taxi-driver.

The “average citizen” bears the burden of knowledge as a direct consequence of the state of a country’s institutions. He recognizes that his values and lifestyle, his liberty and his well being are derived from the health of these institutions. This is the ultimate protection of society’s interest !.

We must ask ourselves then are we truly wealthy if we can afford expensive cars but have to hide behind larger and higher walls? Are we wealthy because we can put our children in private schools but bemoans the problem of hiring good staff?

What we need, therefore, is a more public-spirited and active citizenry, so that we can create wealth and enjoy it in a world without fences and fear.





## KINTA VALLEY : PIONEERING MALAYSIA'S MODERN DEVELOPMENT

Promotion Price: **RM120 per copy**

(Normal price: **RM180**)

**Valid until 30 June 2007**

### Author

Khoo Salma Nasution and  
Abdur-Razzaq Lubis

### Number of pages

371 pages and include 32 pages of colour plates and an index and bibliography

### About the book

This book details the development, from the late 19th century, of the many charming towns of Kinta. It charts the rise of Ipoh as the 'hub of Malaya', and the vicissitudes of tin and rubber booms and busts. The making of Kinta, once the wealthiest district in British Malaya, epitomizes the bitter-sweet story of the country's birth into the modern era.

"A local history that brings a region alive again and, for me, one that makes you re-live what you have left behind, has done its job. This is such a book."

*Emeritus Professor Dr Wang Gung-wu  
East Asian Institute, Singapore*

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- The Rise of Kinta
- Secret Societies & Crime
- Fire, Sanitation & Health
- Rivers, Roads & Railways
- Agricultural Colonisation

#### Mining

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- Non Alluvial Mining
- Tin Smelting
- Tin Economy

### Kinta Towns

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- Kuala Dipang & Sungei Siput
- Lahat & Pengkalen Pegoh
- Menglembu
- Papan
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- Old Ipoh
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- Education
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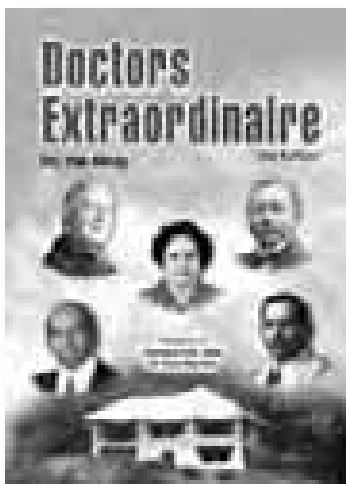
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- The Papan Resistance

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#### Environment

- The Kinta River Valley
- Limestone Hills
- Flora & Fauna

### The Orang Asli of Kinta



## DOCTORS EXTRAORDINAIRE

- 2ND EDITION

Price: **RM35.00**

### Author

Ho Tak Ming, graduated with MBBS from the University of Singapore in 1970 and has his

own medical practice in Ipoh. Other books he has written are Doctors Extraordinaire – 1st Edition; Doctors in the East and Generations : The Story of Batu Gajah.

### Number of pages

291 pages and include an index

"Six years have gone by since Doctors Extraordinaire was published, and it is heartening to note that the book has been well received, and, in fact, has been out of print for a couple of years. In a recent conversation with the two surviving doctors featured in the book, Dato' Dr Sambanthanathan Underwood and Dato' Dr Madhuri Majumder, it was felt that we should come out with a second edition as there have been readers asking for the book which we could not supply....."

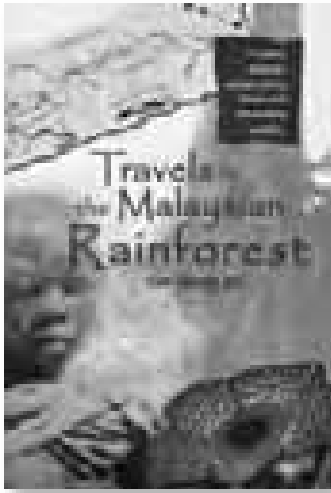
Here in this book are the life stories of some extraordinary doctors. Covering the period from British intervention in Perak in 1874 to the present, Doctors Extraordinaire recounts the history of medicine in Malaysia through the lives of its practitioners.

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- Dr Tweedie's Magnificent Obsession
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- Underwood Defies The Odds
- From Flying Tiger to Gourmet
- Founder President
- The Plague Fighter
- Lady Chairman
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- Moreira's Sporting Days
- One Family's Courage
- An American in KL
- A Forward Movement in British Malaya
- A Forgotten Man, A Forgotten Disease
- Friend of the Estates
- Tuan Doctor
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- Gold Teeth for the Kempeitai
- A Renaissance Man
- A Half Century of Involvement
- A Postscript To a Farewell
- A Requiem for a Stayer



## Book Reviews (continued)



### TRAVELS IN THE MALAYSIAN RAINFOREST

Price: RM40.00

#### Author

Tan Teong Jin, a writer and journalist for over 15 years. He has written for The Star, Knight-Ridder Financial, Asia Times, Economic Intelligence Unit, Financial Times of London and Newsweek magazine. He frequently writes on business and the environment. He holds a degree in Marine Biology/Chemical Oceanography from the University of Wales

(Bangor), the United Kingdom. Other books written or cowritten are The Chinese Malaysian Contribution; Malaysian Palm Oil : A Success Story; Sharpening Competitiveness and Innovation : Recent Developments in the Malaysian Financial Sector; Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Putra Jamalullail : The Installation of His Majesty and Malaysia Explained.

#### Number of Pages

244

"A delightful, highly interesting and high quality book. The author has written with passion about the forest and its people. This well-written book offers the reader fascinating insights into the richness, greatness and sweetness of the Malaysian rainforest. Read and be challenged to begin your own journey and adventures in the forest"

*Selvin David A*

*A former Perak Scout Commissioner,  
State Youth Council Member,  
Teacher and Scoutmaster*

"Until I read this book, I didn't know that the Malaysian jungle could be so interesting and also be the source of mysticism of Malaysian beliefs. I can see where the author gets his

inspiration of life from. He definitely has a deep love of the rainforest.

*Lena Khaw*

*English Language Trainer*

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##### Taman Negara

- A Real Old Forest
- Barrier Mountain
- The Batek

##### Endau Rompin National Park

- Endau
- The Orang Hulu

##### Belum

- Big Water
- Child of the Forest

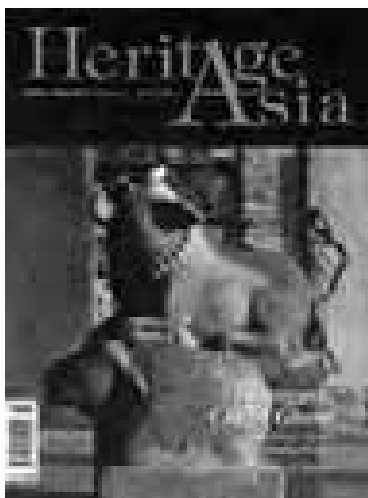
##### Orang Bunyian, Hantu, Weretigers,

##### Pawang and Bomoh

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- The Hantu of Yesterday
- Weretigers
- Pawang and Bomoh

##### Fascinating Wildlife

- Big Games
- Trapping Elephants
- Unsung Secrets



### HERITAGE ASIA VOLUME 4, NO. 2 JANUARY – MARCH 2007

Price : RM12.00

#### About the magazine

A quarterly magazine which is now into its 4th year of publication. It is a Malaysian magazine whose objective is to bring to the people of the world the rich heritage that exists in Asia.

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- Exciting Shipwreck Found off Malacca by Michael Flecker
- Death in the Mines : On the trail of a Killer Disease by Dr Ho Tak Ming (a medical practitioner in Ipoh and author of Doctors Extraordinaire)
- Cosmopolitanism, Colonialism and Nationalism : Remembering Lim Boon Keng by Philip Holden
- The Tomb of Genghis Khan : An Enduring Mystery by John Man

- Moving Art : A Mongolian Renaissance by Gwynn Jenkins
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- Pucuk Rebong by Anita Kandhavel
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- Auction : Christie's
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