

IMPACTING CHANGE THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SMART PARTNERSHIPS (Part 2)

*November 2008
Volume 10, Issue 11*

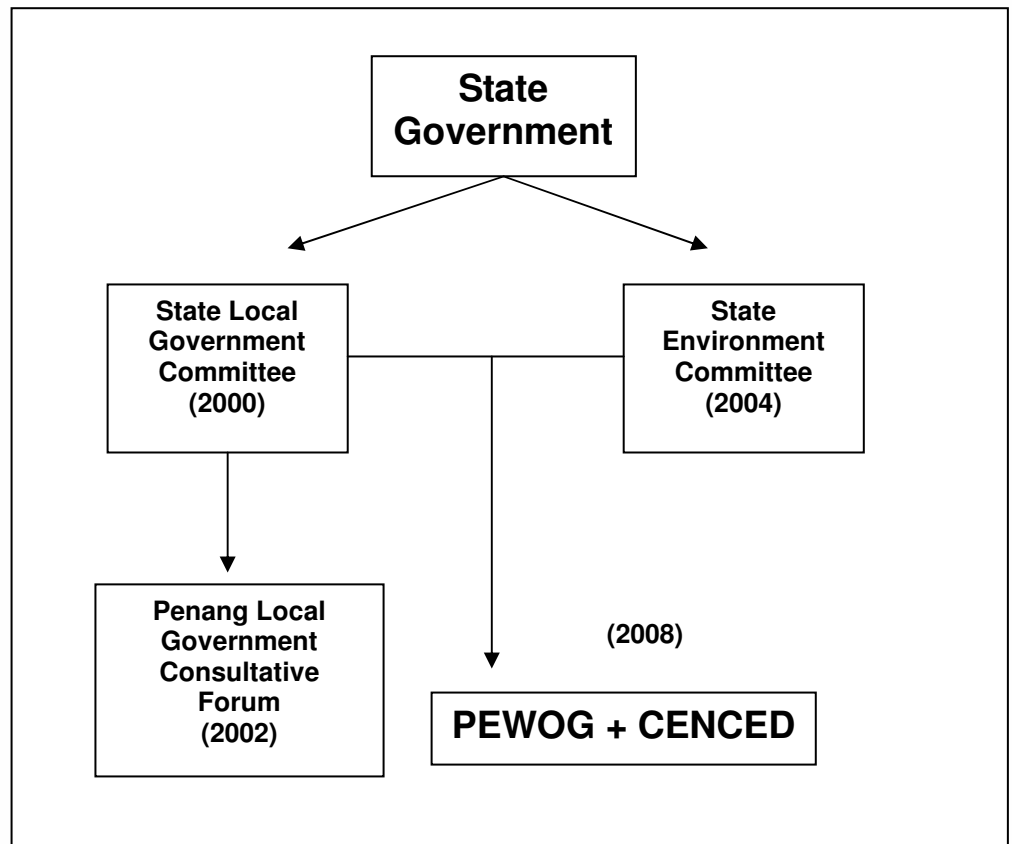
PP14554/4/2009 (021387)



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The chart below shows the relationship of PEWOG with the State Government. CENCED (Centre for Community and Environmental Development) a registered arm of PEWOG, was also formed in 2008 to offer consultancy services to the Government and private sector as well as conduct community programmes.



4.5 Membership

PEWOG is made up of 50 or more individuals and bodies from the community, government and private sector in Penang.

Community members include:

1. Island Park Rukun Tetangga (Neighbourhood) Movement (RTIP)
2. Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), Penang Branch
3. Penang Inshore Fishermen's Welfare Association (PIFWA)
4. Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP)
5. Dalat International School

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6. Green Lane Community Centre (GLCC)
7. Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)
8. Individuals from the community.

Government members include:

1. Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP, Municipal Council of Penang Island)
2. Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP, Municipal Council of Seberang Perai)
3. Jabatan Alam Sekitar (Department of Environment, DOE)
4. Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran (Drainage & Irrigation Department, DID)
5. Pusat Racun Negara, Universiti Sains Malaysia (National Poisons Centre).

Private sector members include:

1. ESH Resource Management Sdn. Bhd.
2. Eurasia Express Sdn. Bhd.
3. Idaman Bersih Sdn. Bhd.
4. NKH e-waste Trading
5. Pinang Mutiara Enterprise Sdn. Bhd.
6. Sinaran Matahari (SIMA)
7. Alif Teknologi (M) Sdn. Bhd.
8. Jusprint Sdn Bhd
9. Cycle Trend Industries Sdn Bhd
10. MWF Merit Enterprise
11. Island Hospital
12. Lam Wah Ee Hospital
13. WEBSMITH ATP SDN. BHD
14. Pinang Resources Sdn. Bhd

4.6 The Recycling Programme in Penang has three phases as follows:

Phase One:

Pilot Project of the Community Recycling Programme and Awareness Campaign from 31st July 2001 to 30th July 2002 (one year)

Phase Two:

Information Collection and Dissemination Programme from 31st July 2002 to 30th July 2003 (one year), and

Phase Three:

Expansion of the Community Recycling Programme from 31st July 2003 till present.

PEWOG has also organized awareness campaigns, seminars, workshops and exhibitions to promote recycling. Appreciation Certificates have also been awarded to recycling agents, organisations and individuals who are active in recycling in the State.

Through PEWOG's Awareness Campaign, about 120 communities and other bodies have started their recycling programmes with or without assistance from the government.

Ongoing and future programmes include the separation of wet and dry waste at household level and its collection, community composting as well as the establishment of community resource recovery centres. Penang is also the first State to publish a recycling guidebook as well as a manual for household composting. We are looking into big scale commercial composting to help remove around 40-50% of wet, organic waste from the waste stream.

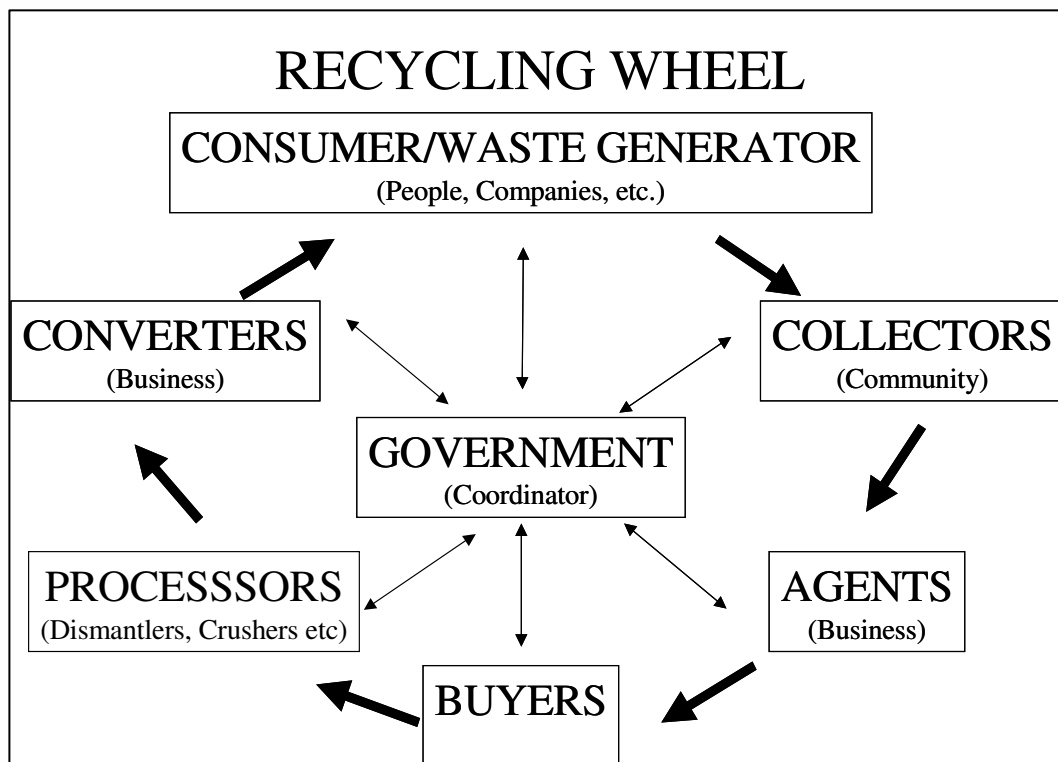
In 2002, the Federal Ministry provided funds to local governments to build waste recycling collection centres. Penang was fortunate to receive these funds and has built several centres. On 12th October 2002, the Chief Minister of Penang launched the Community Recycling Programme organized by PEWOG, after a 2-year pilot project proved successful.



Today, Penang's waste recycling and safe disposal programme includes (1) waste recycling of inorganic general waste, (2) safe disposal of hazardous waste, (3) composting of organic waste and (4) recycling and safe disposal of e-waste (electrical and electronic waste).

Like in other parts of the country, recycling and safe disposal of chemical and healthcare waste is supervised by the Department of Environment (DOE).

Penang has a unique network of stakeholders with each playing an important role in recycling. The model of this network and mechanism can aptly be illustrated in the figure below developed by the Penang Environmental Working Group (PEWOG) in 2005.



Source: Penang Environment Working Group (PEWOG), 2005

The Recycling Agents are the people who buy or take the recyclables from the Collectors. Many are business persons or companies that trade in recyclables – they buy and sell these items. Some are non-government organizations (NGOs) that collect the recyclables free-of-charge from donor Collectors.

The Buyers buy recyclables from the Recycling Agents. They either buy every type of recyclable (Wholesale Buyers) or only certain types of recyclables (Specialists Buyers). They sort the recyclables and then send them to local or overseas companies for processing and conversion.

Processors are factories or plants which dismantle, crush, shred and bale recyclables but do not manufacture products from the processed recyclables. The processors are usually specialized processors. Convertors are factories which turn recyclable materials, raw or processed, into new materials or products which are then sold to the Waste Generators (Consumers) for use and subsequent disposal.

The six players or stakeholders – the Waste Generators, Collectors, Agents, Buyers, Processors and Convertors – form the rim of the Recycling Wheel.

The Government is the body or organization entrusted by the people to plan, build and maintain infrastructure and to carry out general services, including solid waste management. The Government, being the hub of many activities in human society, has the most critical role to play in the Recycling Wheel – as a planner, coordinator and motivator, and interacts with every other player in the recycling process. Its policies and directions will help to guide and stimulate the growth of recycling in society.

It can be seen from the Recycling Wheel, that Recycling is an active process involving different people in different ways. Every citizen has a part to play and every part is equally important.



Household composting efforts are being promoted and have gained strong acceptance among the people of Penang.

The private sector has developed strong recycling networks and businesses for certain commodities such as paper and metal. However, other linkages need to be further strengthened to cover commodities such as plastic, glass, wood etc.

Penang currently records the **highest recycling rate** in the country (with the national average figure estimated at around 5%). Recycling rates in the state have risen phenomenally from just 0.06 % (in the years when estimated rates were first projected) to a 2007 level of about 18%.

A more systematic data capture and recording system has been implemented throughout the years to obtain voluntary data from recycling agents and stakeholders by both the local authorities in Penang.

However, difficulties in capturing data are compounded by complacency and sometimes, outright unwillingness of some recycling agencies to provide data on a regular basis. This situation will hopefully be remedied by the enactment of the SWM Act, which would require mandatory registration of recycling ventures, which in turn would facilitate a better mechanism of data capture.

Table 1 on the following page shows the total waste generation and recycling rates from 2001 to 2007. A sharp rise in the recycling rate between 2001 (0.06%) and 2007 (18.05%) may be attributed to reasons such as the increased awareness of the people with regard to recycling efforts and the promotion of the recycling concept through the mass media and activities of groups like PEWOG and the Green Crusaders. Higher recycling rates directly influences waste diversion from the landfills, bringing about cost and landfill-space savings for the local authorities.

Assuming the cost of solid waste disposal is RM27.00 (US\$8.20) per tonne for domestic waste, the amount saved by diverting from the landfill through recycling is estimated at **RM5.15 mil (US\$1.56 mil)** in the year 2007 alone.

The actual figure is actually higher as the amount of recyclables is underestimated and a portion of these are sourced from industrial areas, which would otherwise have cost RM32.00 (US\$9.70) per tonne for collection and disposal.

Table 1: Total Waste Generation & Recycling Rate For State Of Penang (2001- 2007)

YEAR	Total Waste Generated MPPP (Metric Tons)	Total Waste Generated MPSP (Metric Tons)	TOTAL IN PENANG (Metric Tons)	Recycling MPPP (Metric Tons)	Recycling MPSP (Metric Tons)	TOTAL RECYCLING IN PENANG (Metric Tons)	PENANG RECYCLING RATE (%)
2001	200,198	395,008	595,206	319.63	20	339.63	0.06%
2002	241,828	468,177	710,005	3,844.74	260	4,104.74	0.58%
2003	274,884	456,729	731,613	22,669.29	24,858	47,527.29	6.50%
2004	283,335	536,283	819,618	44,093.17	93,777	137,870.17	16.82%
2005	320,699	512,286	832,985	40,209.93	96,032	136,241.93	16.36%
2006	360,909	583,714	944,623	73,693.00	119,964	193,657.00	20.50%
2007	438,964	617,575	1,056,539	65,195.00	125,504	190,699.00	18.05%



Source: SERI 2008

In 2007 alone, the value of recycled items that has been transacted is estimated at RM66.6 mil (USD 20.1 mil)

Other efforts by PEWOG other than recycling include:

1. Household & Community Composting Programme – done in partnership with LA21 Projects by the local authorities.
2. Environmental Education
3. Environmental Protection
 - a. Sea Pollution Control and Fisherfolk Assistance Project
 - b. Chemical Free Cleaning
 - c. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Programme (2004- Feb 2008)
 - Batteries 1,597 kg
 - Fluorescent Tubes – 12,269 units
 - d. PC Recycling & E-waste Programme (2004-2008 Aug) 25,050 kg

PEWOG has also achieved recognition from international agencies as follows:

- Best National Rukun Tetangga Project
- Member of Regional Centre of Excellence, Penang
- Korea Environmental Industrial Association 2007
- AIT Partners Network Meeting, Kampuchea, 2005
- Penang–Thailand E–Waste Team to Europe 2007

Conclusion

The local government is primarily responsible for implementing the ISWM strategies by putting in place the appropriate mechanism and infrastructure. This provides a more conducive environment for the various stakeholders to play active roles in the resource recovery process (via the 3Rs) as well as participate in the household, community and municipal composting programmes.

The new State Government is envisaged to play an important role in promoting the separation of waste at source, especially into organic and non-organic fractions. Recyclable items can then be easily recovered from the non-organic component and organic waste transported to composting plants either at the community or municipal level for processing. The action plan for composting starts with programmes on the “low hanging fruits” (stakeholders such as schools, wet markets, hotels and hospitals, where waste is concentrated and the participants are willing and ready to adopt recycling strategies). After learning from this, the programme will move to other “potential adopters” and eventually target even the “hard core” and difficult stakeholders.

A smart partnerships strategy will be very beneficial to the Government as well as civil society. This is based on a “bottom-up” approach where by civil society is involved and its input considered even at the elementary planning and design stage of projects. The Government also gains in that there is a lot of energy and goodwill harnessed from the people to supplement the gaps and lack of manpower resources and expertise, wherever these arise. Work is also carried out with greater efficiency, competency, accountability and transparency in compliance with good governance principles.

§ Khor Hung Teik

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Dato' Dr Ong Hean Tee, Chairperson of PEWOG for providing useful insights and for allowing the use of his materials and slides in the preparation of this paper.

GEORGE TOWN - A FORGOTTEN CITY

Introduction

For many Malaysians, there was much pride when word was received that the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had inscribed George Town and Melaka on the UNESCO World Heritage sites (WHS) list. This is an honour not only to the two cities in particular, but also to Malaysia in general. The inscription on the WHS list is an acknowledgement of something special and significant in the domain of world culture and heritage.

Although there are 878 UNESCO WHS, most are monumental structures such as the Great Wall and Taj Mahal and natural features such as the Stone Forest in Yunnan province, China. There are few towns or cities that are actually on the WHS list. George Town and Melaka are now in the company of famous cities like Lijiang (China), Luang Prabang (Laos) and Ayutthaya (Thailand). Even as the banners and streamers proclaiming George Town and Melaka as WHS are being put up and congratulations are brandied about, it is useful to note that the recognition is largely for the built environment and way of life that had developed in the past and that remain roughly intact.

Development in the past, of course, did not happen in an administrative vacuum. There were political and administrative structures that enabled the built environment and a life style to be gradually developed. It is useful to remember some of the important milestones in the evolution of the administration of the cities, including some of the important personalities whose names are long forgotten, except on the name plates of some roads. This article is to give due recognition to important milestones in the evolution of the George Town local authority and some forgotten personalities who have played an important role in helping the city to be judged as WHS worthy.

George Town – memories of a ‘Forgotten City’.

The case of George Town is laughable if not seriously ironical. While the city is now trumpeted all over the world as the latest UNESCO WHS, the very name ‘George Town’ is a strange term of reference to most Penangites and almost all Malaysians. Part of the reason is that the locals have never fully accepted the names given by the colonial rulers. Although the city is named after King George III of Great Britain, the locals usually use ‘Tanjung’ (promontory in Malay) or just ‘Pho’ (town or city in the local Hokkien dialect) when referring to the city. Almost all road names in the city, such as Burmah Road, Kimberly Street and Pitt Street, have their equivalent local names, and asking the locals for directions using the English names will almost always get one nowhere.

The English road and place names were largely used to honour personages in appreciation for their contributions to society but these were often people that few locals knew about. On the other hand, the local names imbued certain locations with indigenous flavour because they indicated the historic character of the localities, or perhaps some important geographic feature or social routine in the public consciousness. For example, Burmah Road is ‘Gu-chia Chooi’, meaning ‘bullock-cart water’ in reference to the bullock-carts that were used to ferry water from the Botanical Gardens area to the city. Carnarvon Street is known as ‘Lam-chan Nah’, to indicate its flood-prone characteristics when the place was first settled. Kimberly Street is known as ‘Swa-tou Kay’. ‘Kay’ means ‘street’ in Chinese while ‘Swa-tou’ refers to a port city in Southern China from where many Chinese migrants began their journey to Malaysia (see Goh Ban Lee, 1989a; Khoo Su Ning, 1993).

Unfortunately, not only is the name ‘George Town’ not often used, but many historical events associated with the City have been neglected and forgotten. With the current interest in local government elections and the push for official city status, it is imperative that the historical events of George Town be recalled and remembered.



George Town – a leader in local democracy

For many Malaysians, the history of George Town began with the founding of a settlement on the island of Penang in 1786 by Francis Light which he named Prince of Wales Island. There were, of course, already settlements on the island before this event. But as the saying goes, history is written by the victors and the contributions of the earlier settlers have been largely forgotten.

It is important to note that Light was not a commander of the British government on the lookout for opportunities to seize properties. He was an employee of the East India Company, a British chartered company based in India. The settlement was therefore under the control of the trading company until it came under direct British rule as a Crown colony in 1867.

PENANG
ECONOMIC
MONTHLY

George Town quickly attracted settlers from the neighbouring countries. This is reflected in the built environment within the older parts of the settlement – the same central features that would lead to the UNESCO listing for the City many generations later.

For students of the history of urban evolution and local government in Malaysia, George Town not only has a very interesting past, but has also achieved many notable firsts. As early as 1800, the tax-payers of George Town organized among themselves to play a role in the management of the town and the amount of rates they paid to the government by forming what is later known as the 'Committee of Assessors' (City Council of George Town, 1966). This Committee of Assessors evolved into a local council, although the members were largely self-appointed and later officially appointed by the British Resident, the power holder in the settlement.

In the history of elected representation in local government, it was George Town that took the lead. In 1857, a hundred years before the country achieved independence, the rate-payers of George Town were allowed to elect three out of the five municipal commissioners. A similar election in Malacca was declared void because of "the paucity of votes and utter indifference of the community" (City Council of George Town: p 19). It was the first time that Malaysians elected their representatives in the government, albeit only in a partial election exercise.

Unfortunately, the experiments of local democracy did not last very long. In 1913, elections were abolished and the colonial government of the Straits Settlements reverted to appointing all municipal commissioners.

It took almost 40 years before local government elections were reintroduced in any local authorities. Again George Town took the lead. In 1951, nine out of the 15 municipal commissioners were elected. Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council held its first partial elections in 1952 and in the following years, similar elections were held for the state capitals of the Federation of Malaya.

In 1956, George Town Municipal Council became the first local authority in Malaysia to be fully elected with the president of the council chosen from among the councillors. The first person in the country to hold the post of an elected head of a local council was Goh Guan Hoe, popularly known as G. H. Goh, a lawyer by profession and a member of the MCA, which was part of the Alliance government, with UMNO and MIC as the other component parties.

On 1st January, 1957 George Town was accorded city status by Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain as the country was then still a British colony. Although many local leaders played a part, it was largely the work of Cunyngham-Brown, the appointed president of George Town Municipal Council from 1952 to 1956, who was largely instrumental in the process of George Town successfully obtaining city status. The earliest written record concerning the city status of George Town was a hand-written note by him to the then Municipal Secretary cum Treasurer S. V. Adams which read, "Isn't it about time we became a City?" The note was dated 19th July, 1954.

The formal decision to petition the Queen of England to grant city status to George Town was made on 31st August, 1956 at the Ordinary Meeting of the council when Municipal Councillor Abu Bakar, who was then also a Penang state assemblymen proposed “that the Council resolve to submit a Humble Petition to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty-in-Council to grant to this Municipal Council a Royal Charter raising the status of the town of George Town to that of a City”. The motion was seconded by Councillor Lim Huck Aik, a prominent lawyer. Among the councillors present included Goh Guan Hoe, Nyak Hashim Nyak Puteh, Abdullah Ariff, S. M.. Hashim, Yeoh Oon Chuan, Ong Kee Yeam, Chan Siew Teong, A Balakrishnam and S. M. Md. Idris. Most of these names have largely been forgotten by all except their family members. The only exception is Md. Idris, the long-serving and very well-known president of the Consumers Association of Penang.

The ceremony was officiated by the British High Commissioner, the highest representative in then British Malaya. The event was so important that among the attendees were the sultans of Pahang and Perak, the Resident Commissioner, Ong Yoke Lin, the Minister of Transport and Mohd Khir Johari, the Assistant Minister of Commerce and Industry. Also present was Minister of Works, Post and Telecommunication Sardon Hj. Jubir who later became a governor of Penang, as well as Wong Pow Nee and Dr Lim Chong Eu who later served as the first and second Chief Minister of Penang respectively.



Although Goh was commonly referred to as mayor when George Town was made a city, he was officially a president of the council because the law to change the nomenclature from president to mayor was only passed in December 1957. By then, the Alliance had already lost its majority in the city council. Officially, D. S. Ramanathan of the Labour Party was the first mayor of the city of George Town.

In the early 1990s, the MPPP, with the consent of the Penang State Government, honoured the first mayor of George Town and Malaysia by renaming Scott Road in the Jesselton residential area as Jalan D.S. Ramanathan. Unfortunately, some residents saw it fit to desecrate the name plates every time the council put up new ones. Instead of trying to catch the anti-social culprits responsible and throwing the books at them, the MPPP placed the name plates about 15 feet above the ground. It was an example of the council not enforcing the law but choosing an easier way out to solve the problem. Fortunately, good sense has prevailed and the Jalan D.S. Ramanathan Rd. name plates are now located at the normal height.

Apart from being the leader in establishing local democracy, George Town was also a leader in the provision of services. It built the first sports stadium in the country, the City Stadium in Dato’ Kramat. The local council ran a public bus system serving the city and the Penang Hill funicular railway. It provided electricity and water, and even ran several mother and child clinics. Indeed, in the very early days of settlement, the City was responsible for providing fire brigade services.

Although a local authority, George Town City Council was given the honour to play important international and national roles. For instance, the council was allowed to award the City Freeman to four pre-eminent persons and the Royal Malaysian Navy. They were Prince Akihito of Japan who is now the Emperor of Japan, South Australia Premier Don Dunstan and Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra. The last Freeman of the City of George Town is Tun Lim Chong Eu, the second Chief Minister of Penang who served from 1969 to 1990.

However, the image of George Town and its local government suffered a severe blow when the City Council was taken over by the Alliance State Government and placed under Chief Minister Wong Pow Nee on 1st July, 1966. A Commission of Enquiry under Dato’ Justice Abdul Aziz Mohd Zain was set up to investigate the council. Although no one was charged for corruption, the Aziz Commission did establish “that acts of maladministration, malpractices and breaches of the law were committed by both the councillors and officials of the City Council” (Athi Nahappan, 1970, p. 27).

The City Council never fully recovered from the disgrace. In fact, it was never given any opportunity to recover. As of 1965, local government elections in Malaysia were suspended and the Local Government Act of 1976 abolished them altogether.

The George Town City Council was dealt a death blow on 1st July, 1974 when the Barisan Nasional State Government under the leadership of Dr Lim Chong Eu (now Tun), established the Penang Island Local Government Management Board (LPKTPP) by merging the City Council of George Town and the Penang Island Rural District Council. It is fair to say that the move was not intended as a plot to destroy the City Council of George Town. It was part of the restructuring of local government following the Athi Nahappan Report in 1970. (The pros and cons of running very large local councils could be base material for writing up several Master's theses).

The LPKTPP was renamed Maljjs Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (Penang Island Municipal Council - MPPP) in 1976 following the Local Government Act. It is important to note that in the legislation to create a single local authority for Penang Island, it was specially provided that "the status of the City of George Town as a city shall continue to be preserved and maintained and shall remain unimpaired by the merger hereby effected". Unfortunately, this provision has been largely ignored or forgotten.

Newspaper reports generally have not included George Town in their lists of cities in Malaysia. Indeed, even former Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and former Minister of Housing and Local Government Tan Sri Dr Ting Chew Peh had reported in 2003 that George Town had in effect lost its city status. Every time a town was given city status, there would be calls by Penangites for a similar status to be restored for Penang Island or George Town. (The issue of Penang Island becoming a city is discussed in 'City status not Penang's priority' in *The Sun*, 1st July, 2008).

The recognition of George Town as a UNESCO WHS is the best news the city has received for a long time. But it is important to note that this honour is the result of hard work, perseverance and commitment by many individuals and organizations. Many of their names have appeared in the press since the WHS listing and as such need not be repeated here.

The forgotten heritage crusader

However, just as Penangites have largely forgotten about the City of George Town, they have also forgotten one of the most important and committed persons in pushing for conservation efforts in George Town. His name is Alex Koenig.

Alex, as he is popularly known, is a German national who came to Penang in 1976 as a non-graduating student in the School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He fell in love with George Town and Penang. He not only talked about the attractions of the city to fellow students and friends, but also took steps to educate them about the value of conservation. He played a role in the conservation conference hosted by the MPPP in 1984, marking the first time heritage and conservation were publicly discussed and acknowledged as an important issue in Penang.

As part of the effort to promote the importance of conservation among the government officers, he not only helped to obtain a grant from the German Government Agency for development assistance (GTZ) to sponsor three MPPP officers to Germany, but was also their guide to the heritage sites of the country. Since then, he has been a tour-guide to many Malaysians, including the writer of this article and some federal government town planners on their visits to heritage cities in Germany.

He was employed by the MPPP from November 1990 to February 1993, with assistance from the GTZ. He helped set up the Conservation Unit in the MPPP. Alex has played an important role in setting the foundation of conservation activities in George Town.

More specifically, he was instrumental in designating the Armenian Street area as a comprehensive conservation project, including the selection of Syed Alatas building as an example of what restoration could do to transform a run-down and neglected building to its former state. The building was owned by the MPPP and was at that time rented out to a bottle recycling outlet.

Along the way, he was instrumental in bringing Dr. Seigfried Enders, a German conservation expert from Frankfurt to George Town, Penang. Working with the staff of the MPPP Town Planning Department, Enders contributed extensively in the identification of heritage buildings in George Town.

Alex was also instrumental in getting the French Ambassador to be interested in the restoration of Syed Alatas building. As a result, the French Government contributed in sending Didier Repellin, a UNESCO conservation expert, and four French craftsmen to help in the restoration project.

The Federal Government and the MPPP have also contributed substantially to the project.



The restoration of the Syed Alatas building located at Jalan Armenian was completed in 1994 and the occasion was officiated by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. It is believed that it was the visit to the Syed Alatas building that led the Prime Minister to visit the nearby Kampung Melayu mosque. The visit resulted in an allocation to restore and upgrade the mosque. The Syed Alatas building is now a museum for Muslim artifacts.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that Alex played a very important role in the groundwork that subsequently led to the listing of George Town as a Heritage City by UNESCO. His contribution was not only limited to his actual work and assistance in seeking financial and technical assistance, but also his commitment to the idea of conservation. Although Alex did step on a few toes in his enthusiasm for conservation, it is fair to say that the early education of many people in Penang and Malaysia with regard to the heritage value of the built environment was largely due to his efforts.

It should also be noted that in the early 1980s, conservation and heritage preservation were 'dirty words', so to speak. Alex's crusade for heritage conservation was accomplished under very trying conditions.

Despite being retired in Berlin, Alex still comes back to Penang regularly. If there are any foreigners who truly deserve a Penang state-conferred honour, he would be on top of the list.

There is much left to be done

It should be emphasized that the WHS listing by UNESCO is not because George Town has been very well conserved from a physical or historical point of view. Rather, it is listed largely on the basis that there are special features with potential for further enhancement and on the premise that the people and the government, particularly the local authorities, will fulfil their obligations to make the city a world renowned place to visit.

The WHS listing is not a status cast in stone. Failure to follow the heritage protocols and mismanagement can very well lead to delisting. For instance, UNESCO de-listed the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (Oman) because of the great reduction of the number of oryx and the drilling for oil in the vicinity. It has also threatened to de-list The Three Parallel Rivers in Yunnan (China) and the Buddhist Shrine of Badhnath in Nepal for allowing conflicting development projects nearby. Indeed, in Nepal, the police had to be on guard when the local council demolished an incompatible building nearby to ensure that the inscription of the Buddhist Shrine of Badhnath remained on the World Heritage list.

As part of the activities to promote George Town as a World Heritage City, the state government, together with the MPPP must reclaim city status by holding symbolic ceremonies to proclaim the said status. For instance, it can hold a commemorative ceremony on the first day of every year. The Local Government Working Group set up by Penang Executive Councillor in charge of local government, Chow Kon Yeow to study the issue of city status and other related concerns has suggested that the president of the MPPP be also designated as the Mayor of George Town.

The council should turn one of its properties into a municipal museum to house all historical documents, including the very well bounded minutes of meeting during the days of the City Council under the Socialist Front. The collections in the museum should be depositories that chronicle the photographs of past presidents, councillors, municipal secretaries and directors of departments and other workers. Pictures and photos of major projects with short explanatory notes should be displayed as well. The gift exchanges among visiting dignitaries should also be included as displayed material.



Conclusion

The inscription of George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage City is both an honour and an opportunity to promote the city as a great place for work and play, for bringing up families and for having a good balanced life. Such a privilege is a historic opportunity that may come only once in many generations, and thus must not be wasted and consigned to the heap of Penang's forgotten memories. **§ Dr Goh Ban Lee**

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International Headlines

Oil rises on dollar's retreat

Source: Excerpt of article in CNNMoney.com, 7 Nov 2008

SINGAPORE (AP) -- Oil prices rose in Asia after a two-day plunge, but they were vulnerable to another steep fall as evidence of a severe U.S. recession continues to mount.

Light, sweet crude for December delivery was up \$1.50 cents at \$62.27 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange by late afternoon in Singapore. Oil prices overnight fell \$4.53 to settle at \$60.77 after dropping \$5.23 the previous day.

"There's a lot of gloom and doom right now," said Victor Shum, an energy analyst with consultancy Purvin & Gertz in Singapore. "Mounting bad news on the economic front is negatively affecting oil."

A slew of grim economic news Thursday led traders to dump oil on concerns over weakening demand for crude products, such as gasoline.

"Oil continues to trade in lockstep with stock markets," said Shum. "More bad news could push oil into the \$50s."

Oil prices have fallen nearly 60% since peaking at \$147.27 a barrel in mid-July.



China's \$586-billion stimulus plan could boost world economy

Source: Excerpt of article by Don Lee in Los Angeles Times, 10 November 2008

The planned spending, more than expected, should have a global effect, analysts say, potentially providing an important lift to a faltering global economy.

China unveiled plans Sunday to pump about \$586 billion into infrastructure projects and other stimulus measures to bolster domestic demand and shore up its economy.

The massive two-year stimulus package, which one analyst described as China's version of America's New Deal, represents one of the most aggressive actions to date by a country to counter the effects of the global financial crisis.

China's plan would include tax cuts, a loosening of credit and government spending through 2010 on a wide range of programs, including construction of low-income housing, transportation systems and the development of rural infrastructure, the official New China News Agency said.

Analysts welcomed the larger-than-expected stimulus package, which amounts to a hefty one-sixth of China's annual economic output. They said the spending would help businesses, boost demand for commodities and raise consumption.

China's announcement appeared to give an immediate lift to investors' confidence, as stock markets today rose in Asia and Australia. Chinese stocks jumped the most in seven weeks, gaining as much as 5.9% in morning trading.

With the U.S., Japan and much of Europe staring at recession, China's role looms ever larger because it has been a major driver of global economic growth in recent years. China's rapid expansion has spurred trade and commodity purchases and prices. Many multinational companies are looking to China's large market to help them ride out the turbulence of the worst global downturn in decades.

But China's economic growth has slowed sharply this year, to an annual pace of 9% in the third quarter compared with nearly 12% for all of last year. Tens of thousands of Chinese factories have closed this year, and more are at risk as export orders from the United States and elsewhere shrink. China's real estate market has also been sagging, damping investments and consumer spending.

Before Sunday's announcement, some analysts had predicted that China's economic growth would fall to as low as 6% next year -- a disturbing prospect for Chinese officials because of the threat of rising joblessness and the risk of social instability. Analysts said the stimulus package would probably lift growth next year to 8% or higher.



Wall Street falls, unable to shake economic woes

Source: Excerpt of article by Madlen Read in Biz.yahoo.com, 10 November 2008.

NEW YORK (AP) -- Wall Street caved in to its economic anxieties and closed lower Monday, giving up an early rally over a stimulus package in China and refocusing on the acute pullback in spending that is pummeling U.S. companies.

Stocks got only a short-lived boost from China's \$586 billion plan to boost its economy through a mix of spending, subsidies, looser credit policies and tax cuts. The package could benefit multinational companies with business in China such as General Electric Co. and Caterpillar Inc.

But Wall Street's optimism quickly waned, as it has tended to do since the mid-September downfall of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and government takeover of the troubled insurance giant American International Group. Market participants realized that while China's stimulus is a positive sign that governments around the world are working to fix the global economy, the stimulus itself will likely have only a limited effect in the United States.

There was little news Monday to placate investors concerned about the health of corporate America. AIG got more money from the U.S. government, but the nation's struggling automakers have yet to hear whether they, too, will get federal aid. And electronics retailer Circuit City Stores Inc. filed for bankruptcy protection.

With few signs of recovery in the economy, investors aren't confident enough to make big bets on stocks, although they look cheap; the major indexes are down about 40 percent from their October 2007 peaks.

NOTES:



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When we heal the earth, we heal ourselves. ~ David Orr

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