

# Penang aims to meet deadline

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

PENANG: The state aims to submit a presentation on Penang's nomination to Unesco's World Heritage List by February next year.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said the state planned to submit the presentation for Penang's joint-listing with Malacca "after the middle of this year but before the February deadline".

"We will discuss with Unesco whether we (Penang

and Malacca) can submit the presentations at different times and yet be considered jointly.

"We will proceed on this line as agreed to by the Federal Government," he said, adding that both states would give a complete history of the country.

He said this at a press conference about his forthcoming week-long trip with a Prime Minister's delegation to Morocco, Libya and Bahrain where he will meet heritage

conservationists at heritage towns and famous places like Casablanca.

On Friday, *The Star* reported Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) past president Datuk Nazir Ariff's call for a re-examination of Penang's joint-listing bid with Malacca.

PHT president Dr Choong Sim Poey said that state policy makers should work out ways of managing Penang's cultural resources.

Dr Koh said the state was working on a conservation

management plan that must be "administratively implementable, economically viable, socially acceptable and culturally compatible".

"The state secretary is heading a working committee and they have held discussions with me and people like surveyors and valuers and are organising an in-house heritage workshop next month," he said.

He said that authorities were finalising guidelines to be incorporated in a Local Plan

that would be exhibited with a public hearing.

He said that the guidelines from late 1980s were still relevant except for certain requirements from the Fire Department that had delayed the approval of restoration work.

"We are discussing with the department a new set of requirements for heritage buildings that are not the same as those for new buildings," he said.

## WRITE IN

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## Rep: Safety not adequate in drainage project

MALACCA: The construction of a drainage project on Jalan Hang Tuah is a "death trap" because Malacca Municipal Council has not taken adequate safety measures for motorists and pedestrians, said Durian Daun assemblywoman Betty Chew.

She said the construction on the 700m road had forced motorists and pedestrians to put up with building material piled up haphazardly on the stretch and that a 2m-wide drain had been left uncovered.

"Accidents can take place easily here as there is nothing to stop people from falling into the drain or tripping over the building material while crossing the road," she said.

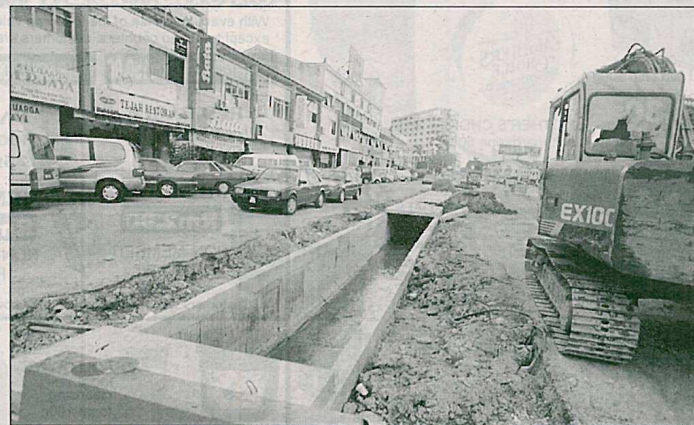
The building material and heavy machinery blocked two of the road's four lanes, she added.

She said the culvert on Jalan Hang Tuah should not be higher than the road as this would result in flash floods.

The drain project at one of the busiest spots in the town centre was not covered by banisters to alert motorists and passers-by, she said.

"Authorities should have made an announcement and warned the public before the project started," she said, adding that there was high volume of traffic in the area since most government offices, commercial buildings, two bus terminals, a market and other buildings were located on or near Jalan Hang Tuah.

She also urged the authorities concerned to co-ordinate and ensure traffic flow was not be effected when the roads were closed for the construction work.



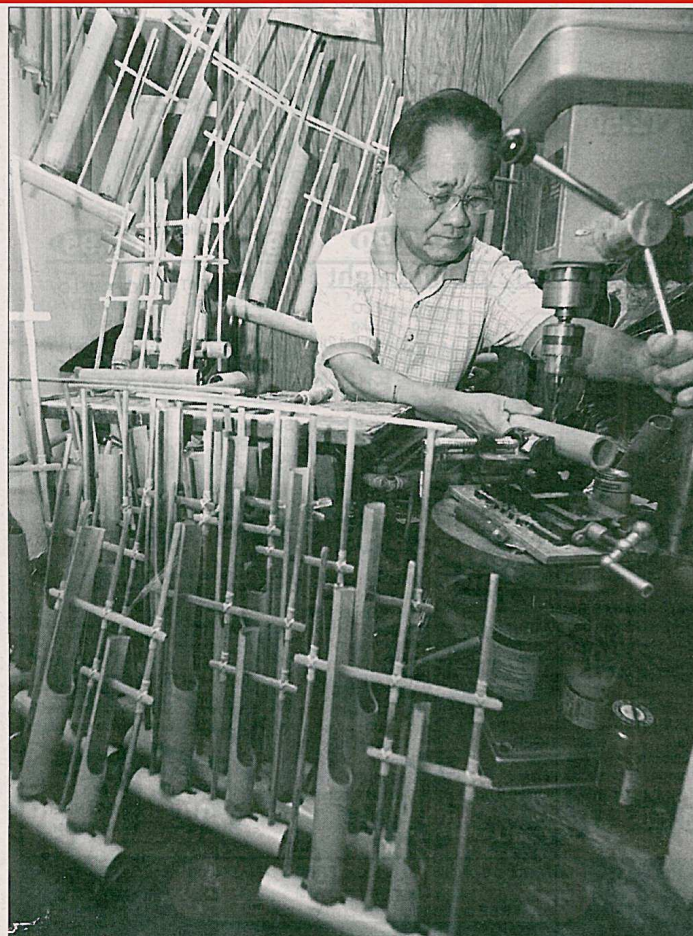
DEATH TRAP ... the widening works on the Jalan Hang Tuah drain to improve water flow.

## Big contraband goods seizure in Sandakan

SANDAKAN: Soldiers patrolling east-coast waters of the state recovered RM500,000 worth of cigarettes stashed near a shelter in a swampy area at Pulau Jampiras Dua near here.

Sandakan Customs chief Zainal Rajan said on Wednesday that the soldiers, acting on a tip-off, raided the shelter at about 3am before calling in Customs enforcement officers to check on the contraband goods.

He said the Customs team recovered 71,000 cartons of Indonesian and Filipino cigarettes of various brands valued at RM70,300 and of unpaid duties of RM414,000, reportedly the such biggest seizure.



BAMBOO CHIMES ... Ngeow making an angklung at his house-cum-workshop in Ipoh.

## Man in love with music unlike any other

By CHRISTINA KOH

IPOH: The angklung is a musical instrument that is often misunderstood, said angklung-maker and retired music teacher Ngeow Hon Voon.

He feels the angklung, which produces a wind-stirring or gurgling-water sound that can only come from bamboo, can hold its own in any modern orchestra.

Ngeow, 66, said an angklung team he trained in SM Hamid Khan, Tapah, once walked away with the first prize in a competition dominated by brass bands in 1977.

"People tend to not react well to the idea of angklung music. They misunderstand what the angklung is. When they have this mindset, it is difficult to change it," he said when interviewed at his house-cum-workshop here recently.

The angklung, he said, is a traditional instrument crafted in the form of bamboo chimes.

To play it, one has to shake an angklung that comprises either sets of three octaves, or a four-note chord, to accompany the music.

"It has been around for hundreds of years. In Indonesia and some parts of Malaysia, the angklung is used during traditional dances like the kuda kepang.

"There are angklungs in places like Thailand and Myanmar, but in different forms. The principle is the same - using bamboo to make music."

Since the competition, that

led him to switch from teaching English to music in 1978, Ngeow has made it part of his life's work to promote the instrument's beauty and uniqueness.

He said he first came across the angklung after listening to an angklung orchestra while teaching in Tapah in the early 1970s.

"I listened, and found myself liking the soothing and unusual quality of the music. I wanted to not only learn how to play the angklung, but to make it as well," he said.

In 1974, he attended an angklung-crafting course organised by the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry, and later formed the band of 35 students which went on to do their school proud.

Despite not having a musical background, Ngeow gave up teaching English, after 22 years, to tutor students in music for another 15 years until his retirement.

Along the way, he crafted angklungs, helped set up teams in Perak, and taught youths how to play the instrument.

Today, there are angklung bands in SMJK Ave Maria, SMK (P) Methodist Ipoh and SM Seri Ampang.

Ngeow, however, said there was a danger of the public forgetting the instrument's potential, especially youths.

"When I started (promoting the angklung), I was met with scepticism. There were people who discouraged me as they thought an angklung band

would not work. However, they soon realised the possibilities of what could be done with an entire orchestra.

"When played in groups, the angklung is unlike any other instrument," he said.

This father of two admitted that making an angklung was "backbreaking work".

He first sources the bamboo from orang asli friends in his hometown of Tapah, which he believes supplies the best bamboo that is harvested for up to RM3 a piece.

After choosing older bamboo for their more solid texture, he saws them into various lengths and soaks them overnight in salt water to kill tiny weavers that bore holes which ruin the angklung's fragile sound, he said.

He then dries them in the sun for several weeks before refining each piece by cutting a U-shaped gap on one side which determines the resonance of the pitch.

"The most difficult part is not the making of the angklung, but the tuning.

"The highest and lowest notes take much longer to tune as they requires trial and error to get the right pitch. I've spent an entire morning, and sometimes longer, to tune just one of these notes," he said.

To help him tune, he uses a meter to measure the pitch.

It takes two months to craft an angklung.

Those interested in the instrument may contact Ngeow at 05-546 3141.