

Living On TheHILL

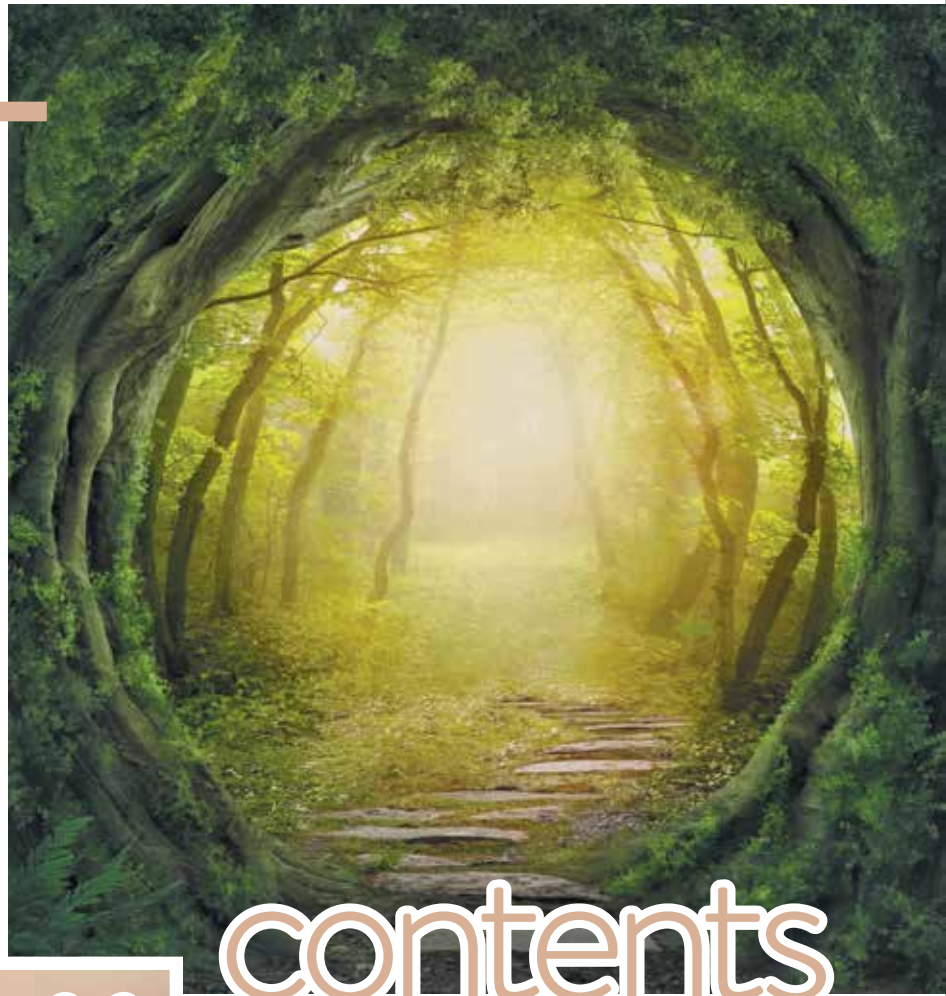
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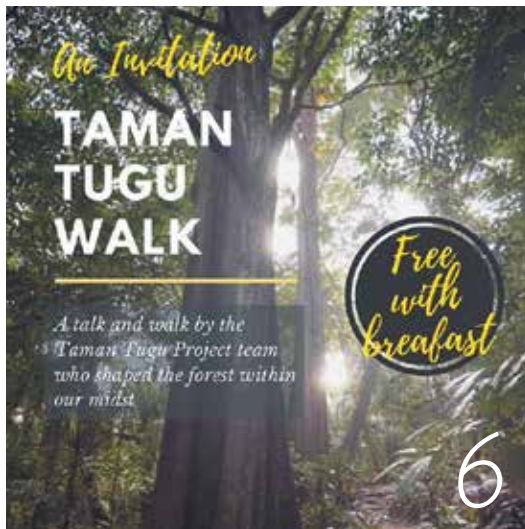
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**A Walk in Taman Tugu
KL City Plan update**



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The President Speaks

The last quarter of 2018 for BTRA and our neighbourhoods as a whole demonstrated the start of a fruitful relationship with DBKL and our MP's office. The first meeting with our MP, YB Hannah Yeoh, as well as the Gotong Royong in October in which YB Hannah participated, signalled her strong support for our community.

Additionally, the relationship with DBKL has turned the corner and the very hard-working BTRA Environment Sub-Committee has been in constant communication with DBKL to collaborate on various issues plaguing Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta. Residents may have noticed on-going repair and remedial work on public amenities — drainage blockages, tiles on pedestrian walkways, street name signs, increased frequency of de-fogging, among others. The extent of DBKL and Alam Flora work in our midst can be found in this issue. I would like to encourage residents to assist the Environment Sub-Committee by reporting such matters, if you see them, directly to DBKL or Alam Flora for faster action. Your direct reporting can make a difference.

A key development for Kuala Lumpur in general, and Bukit Tunku/Taman Duta in particular, is the release of the KL Local Plan. Finally, after about 10 years in gestation, DBKL released the draft plan at the end of 2018. Disappointingly, this was done without prior input or feedback from KL residents, but at least the Plan is now available for review. The SaveKL Coalition, of which BTRA is a member, intends to work with DBKL to ensure that the Plan meets the needs of a modern city, its residents, consumers, visitors and businesses without compromising the environmental sustainability and live-ability of our city.

Lastly, once again I wish to highlight membership of BTRA. We still do not represent all residents at The Hill. Therefore, our voice with DBKL and other government agencies is not as strong as it could be, especially if and when it comes to larger-scale city issues that will invariably affect our neighbourhoods.

Can I appeal to homeowners and house occupiers living in Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta who are not members yet to support BTRA, please? Membership options are Ordinary and Associate (but Associate Membership requires at least one Ordinary Member from the same household). For RM200 a year (Ordinary member) or RM50 a year (Associate member), you are supporting one of the most active and engaged residents' associations in KL. Long-time members can attest to on-going behind-the-scenes efforts by the BTRA Committee to produce results for our neighbourhoods in collaboration with public agencies.

Membership forms are available in every issue of this magazine, or to download from the BTRA website (www.btra.com.my). Forms are also available on the BTRA Mobile App, and you can pay through the App itself. If you have any questions about membership to BTRA, please email bukit.tunku.residents@gmail.com and we will respond.

With that, I would like to wish all Muslims Selamat Hari Raya AidilFitri.

Muthanna Abdullah

Neighbourhood Maintenance

Keeping our neighbourhoods clean and minimising undesirable elements are among the main tasks of DBKL. Even seemingly minor violations, such as broken street name signs or damaged pavements, can lead to larger problems. On the other end of the spectrum, abandoned properties that are left to fester and rot not only have a negative impact on the value of our areas, but also can pose serious public health hazards.

Thanks to the strong relationship between the BTRA Committee and DBKL, residents of Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta may have noticed various improvements to our areas. Here is some of the work undertaken in the last few months.

Replacement of street name signs found broken in various locations, possibly destroyed by strong winds and storms, or by reckless (or worse) drivers. Needless to say, this makes it hard for motorists to navigate their way around our streets, even with the help of Waze.

The frequency of de-fogging has increased in general, and specifically to counter mosquitos breeding in abandoned properties.

Indiscriminate dumping of garbage continues to soil our neighbourhoods. Such un-civic practices have been spotted along the SP Setia land on Jalan Bukit Tunku, especially near the site known as Kenny Hills Grande. Additionally, opposite Kenny Hills Grande (where one can admire the scenic KL skyline), rubbish has been found down the hill – water bottles, paper wrappers, plastic bags. Alam Flora continues to clear the area, and “no littering” signs may be placed along the pavement, to remind visitors to dispose of their trash responsibly.

Dalaman Tunku has seen its fair share of indiscriminate dumping of garbage, some left in garbage bags but have been torn, most probably by urban primates residing in our secondary jungle or other animals roaming the streets.



Remedial work

Along Laggak Tunku, which is the primary road that links Jalan Tuanku Abdul Halim (formerly Jalan Duta) at one end with Jalan Tunku at the other, there has been substantial work:

1. Repair or replacement of broken manhole covers identified during the Gotong Royong in October 2018;
2. Replacement of the roof of the bus stop located outside the tennis centre; and
3. Rectification of broken drains near Tijani 1 entrance/exit, as well as to the area outside Tijani 2 entrance/exit that floods badly when it rains.

Replacement of street light bulbs to LED bulbs by Tenaga Nasional Berhad is in progress.

The BTRA Committee strongly encourages residents of Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta to help by reporting such matters as mentioned above directly to DBKL. It is our collective and combined civic consciousness that will help upkeep our environment.

The Biggest Eyesores

Abandoned and derelict properties continue to plague the area. Active work on 15 abandoned properties is ongoing. These properties clearly pose a health and environmental hazard to all. DBKL has sent notices to registered property owners, as well as cleared debris and over-grown vegetation, and continued de-fogging of the properties.

The abandoned properties are located across the Hill, including on Dalaman Tunku, Laggak Tunku, Lembah Tunku, Jalan Bukit Tunku, and Changkat Duta.

Leisure and Business: The Stories of Taman Tunku

Residents of Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta, and visitors to this suburb, are in for a refreshed Taman Tunku crescent soon. Refurbishments have been completed at the residential blocks C and D (near the exit gate) ahead of schedule, and upgrading is taking place at blocks A and B (near the entrance gate). Work on Blocks A and B are expected to be completed by August this year, after which the focus will move to the middle blocks of E to K (where CIMB Bank is currently located).

The developer, Selangor Properties Berhad, has rebranded this hub as “The Stories of Taman Tunku,” inspired by the living and working spaces that encourage residents, retailers and visitors to create and share their stories.

The outcome will see 19 exclusive retail lots, 32 renewed residential units and 34 refurbished units for business use. Additionally, there will be renewed duplex premium F&B spaces with

bespoke outdoor dining areas and landscaping within blocks A and B. The current ground floor retail lots in the middle blocks will have enhanced frontage for outdoor dining.

Although there is the inevitable minor disruption, the good news is that most of the current retailers have expressed their interest to be a part of The Stories of Taman Tunku.

What of parking space, one may ask, such a critical feature anywhere. According to Selangor Properties, the plan is to add more parking space at the front of The Stories. The traffic flow will be adjusted to make it smoother and safer for residents and visitors. There will also be covered walkways and pedestrian crossings between the blocks to allow safe and relaxed walks across the vicinity.

All 16 residential units in blocks C and D were leased out in short order, which indicates that Bukit Tunku is still a desirable premium location within Kuala Lumpur.

Artist illustrations prior to the printing of this story and are subject to change.



Leasing of Retail and Business use (SOHO) is open for blocks A to B and E to K. Enquiries at +60.12.633.6375; visit www.thestories.com.my for more information.



Kuala Lumpur Plan 2020: Update

DBKL released the long-awaited City Plan at the end of 2018. One might ask why it is called the “2020 Plan” when, usually, plans are published many years ahead of the scheduled implementation. DBKL had been working on the plan for more than 10 years and was supposed to gazette the plan around 2010. In fact, a draft Kuala Lumpur city plan was released in 2008. Much iteration has followed since.

The recently released Plan was gazetted with considerable controversy. The Committees of many interested Residents’ Associations were annoyed and disappointed that the Plan was gazetted without giving them the opportunity to express opinions on the latest iteration, even though the new Federal Territories Minister, Khalid Abdul Samad, indicated that feedback prior to release would be considered. His view was that it was better to gazette the plan and provide some certainty rather than endure more years of discussion. He added that once the plan was gazetted, feedback

could then be taken into account and a final plan could be developed.

The BTRA Committee had put in considerable effort towards assisting with recommendations for the draft Plan. With too many parties to satisfy, the draft Plan was not gazetted earlier, and residents of Kuala Lumpur were left without a plan, inevitably resulting in city planning without sufficient or clear regulations.

Due to the good working relationship between BTRA and DBKL, some guidelines (not regulations) were set by DBKL about 10 years ago. These guidelines have generally been followed. There have been attempts by developers to breach the guidelines, but DBKL has supported BTRA when the BTRA Committee objected to proposed developments outside the guidelines.

Generally speaking, those guidelines have been implemented in the city, which provides Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta continued certainty.



What's in the Plan for Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta

The Kuala Lumpur Plan 2020 consists of a number of books running into hundreds of pages. The overall theme is “Towards a World Class City.”

The plan is presented in two key formats. The first of these concerns **Land Use Zoning**, while the second concerns **Intensity Levels**.

For Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta, almost the entire area is zoned as Residential and classified as Residential 1, covering various levels of density up to a development of 40 persons per acre. However, Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta are classified as the second least dense level, which allows for a maximum of 12 persons per acre. This is at the same level that the DBKL guidelines set years ago.

In Taman Duta, the established condominiums have an allowable density of 400 persons per acre.

There is provision along Jalan Gallagher in Taman Duta for further development of 400 persons per acre (ppa). BTRA has already placed official objections to that development.

The Indian High Commission plots in Jalan Taman Duta are zoned as Institutional, and consequently also have been allocated a higher ppa.

Taman Duta has a further development restriction due to its proximity to Istana Negara. Building height is restricted to 122.92 metres from mean sea level.

For Bukit Tunku, the same regulations apply to zoning and intensity as those for Taman Duta. The current condominiums, including Tijani 2, are rated as R3 with an allowable density of up to 400 ppa. However, apart from the existing condominiums, no other residential plot has a higher density than the Residential 1 classification.

This all seems to be good news for Taman Duta and Bukit Tunku residents.

That said, there is one major concern. There is a large block of Government land between Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta. This area can be approached from Changkat Tunku off Jalan Tunku Putra and can be seen as jungle along Jalan Tunku (west side). This area has been designated as “Institutional,” which could mean any type of government building. Certainly, this is a major concern for residents of the Hill. BTRA will be working with the authorities to ensure that no such buildings are planned in that area, which is largely secondary jungle at present.

BTRA Members Take a Walk on the “Wild” Side

Taman Tugu, located opposite Taman Botani Perdana on the other side of Jalan Parlimen, is a 66-acre urban forest park right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Opened to the public in September 2018, it offers respite from the city’s concrete streets and buildings, and an oxygen-rich natural environment with approximately 7km of forest trails, of which 4km are now open.

On Saturday 4th May, between 30 and 40 BTRA members attended a morning talk and walk in Taman Tugu. They saw first-hand the extensive effort and investment that Khazanah has contributed to convert this former residential enclave into a formidable urban green space, with its trails, indigenous trees, walkways, nursery, surau and Hindu temple.

Led by BTRA President Dato’ Muthanna Abdullah, the BTRA group received a briefing about the Taman Tugu Project, with emphasis on conservation and preservation of the urban forest.

“Green spaces in our city seem to be under constant threat of development, so it was especially gratifying to know that Taman Tugu urban forest is just a stone’s throw from the Hill,” said Dato’ Muthanna.

“Residents of the Hill had an opportunity to see how this historical corner of KL has been transformed into a valuable environmental asset for those who want a bit of a walk among lush greenery or simply find some refuge from the city’s concrete jungle,” he added.

The trails of Taman Tugu vary in distance, from 1.6km to 5km, including easy trails for seniors. During the pre-walk briefing, participants were informed that plastic items, such as water bottles or food containers,

are not allowed in the park. Furthermore, there are no dustbins along the trails, which means that visitors must take their trash with them when they leave.

BTRA was motivated to serve as Community Partner for the 4th May walk to introduce residents of Bukit Tunku and Taman Duta to Taman Tugu in a group outing.

“Taman Tugu is not far from our neighbourhoods, and is easily accessible with convenient parking facilities. As the Community Partner for this event, we could do something as a group, similar to last October’s Gotong Royong, and strengthen our collective community spirit at the same time.

An Invitation

TAMAN TUGU WALK

Free with breakfast

*A talk and walk by the
Taman Tugu Project team
who shaped the forest within
our midst*

8 am | Saturday 4 May, 2019
Meeting Point: Taman Tugu Nursery

An initiative by: Majlis Perwakilan Pembahuk (MPP) Segambut Sub Zone 3

Community Partners: BTR, BUKIT TUNKU, PPRD

Supporting Partners: TAMAN TUGU PROJECT

Kindly RSVP here: <http://bit.ly/TamanTuguWalk>



“Thanks to Khazanah, residents and visitors to KL have one more green space in which they can enjoy the natural environment, learn about our indigenous flora and fauna, or simply get some exercise. I encourage residents of the Hill to visit Taman Tugu often,” Dato’ Muthanna said.

Building Green Legacy for KL

What could have easily become a commercial tourist attraction or another high-rise property development in our midst, Khazanah sought feedback from various stakeholders to determine best use of this prime asset. The eventual decision was to create a multi-component not-for-profit urban public park and protect the secondary forest within it, serving social, recreational, educational, and environmental conservation needs. Among its green assets will be approximately 5,000 trees sourced from nurseries.

The **Taman Tugu Project** website provides interesting and useful background and a detailed look at the journey to make the Taman Tugu urban forest a reality. Recounting how it all began back in 2016 — meetings and the various tender processes, consulting with MNS and FRIM on conservation and tree selection, mobilising and engaging groups and organisations to help shape Taman Tugu, and launching the park to the public in September 2018 — the results thus far are a testament to the far-reaching benefits of public-private-civil society collaboration for green space preservation in KL.

For updates on activities at Taman Tugu, find and follow on Facebook and Instagram @friendsoftamantugu.

References:

Taman Tugu Project:
www.tamantuguproject.com.my/en

The Move Towards Green Energy

Micro Energy Holdings

As the spotlight and conversations on climate change (or climate crisis, as some are now calling it) heat up, there is a greater urgency to address the situation across the spectrum. There are calls by climate experts, conservationists, environmentalists, scientists and other related agencies to fast-track policies and action to at least slow down, if not stop, the damage. Witness the Greta Thunberg-led student strike on 15 March in which more than one million students across 125 countries called for real action on climate change, as well as the Extinction Rebellion non-violent civil disobedience action in London during the week of 15th April.

Whatever the outcomes of these and other initiatives, individuals do have some control over their energy choices and consumption practices.

Natural sources of energy are readily available the world over. Such sources are sunlight, wind, rain, plants, geothermal heat and tides; they are renewable, and unlike fossil fuels, do not produce harmful greenhouse gases, one of the main contributors to climate change. The use of energy from renewable sources in day-to-day power generation helps combat the pollution that is harming the planet. In Malaysia, renewable sources such as solar, mini-hydro, biomass and biogas are the forms most appropriate for use.

Green energy is now used to replace fossil fuels in all major sectors – commercial, industrial and residential – serving as an efficient and environmental-friendly source. The use of solar energy sources in the residential and commercial sectors is gaining popularity in the urban areas of Malaysia. Home-owners and commercial enterprises in the Klang Valley are taking the lead in installations. Apart from addressing environmental concerns, these users will benefit from real dollar savings and a shorter return period on the investment.

Two critical elements can determine and encourage use of green energy sources: cost, and legislation.

Investment cost and return

Advances in renewable energy technologies have lowered the cost of the various components of these technologies, such as solar panels and wind turbines, placing the ability to produce energy in the hands of people rather than in the hands of oil, gas, coal and utility companies. In Peninsular Malaysia, the most common use of renewable energy is solar, due to its equatorial location and approximately 12 hours of daylight each day. The cost of installing a solar photovoltaic system is derived from basically two main factors: the system size installed; and the type of panel used. The larger the size, the lower the cost; the higher the panel quality, the higher the cost.

In the residential or commercial sector, a 10-kilowatt solar photovoltaic system can reduce a monthly average TNB bill of RM600 to approximately RM50 using a highly rated panel manufacturer. In 2011, such an installation would have cost at least RM110,000, compared to RM65,000 today.

In the commercial sector, there are incentives for users of renewable energy – for example, tax relief entitlement of 24% CTA (Capex Tax allowance) and 24% GITA (Green Industry Technology Allowance). Therefore, if a company installs a 10-kilowatt system size or more, it would benefit from these tax allowances. These incentives are meant to assist businesses to reduce the investment cost in renewable energy by nearly half, and to generate a return on investment within a three-year period.

Not all households or commercial companies install a full solar photovoltaic system. Some prefer to use a smaller system that may be able to save them up to

50% on their current energy expenditure. The choice is entirely up to the property owner.

Legislation and Government Programmes

The specific addition of “climate change” to the portfolio of the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology and Environment is a positive move by the government. It shows that there is a recognition to address this issue from the top.

Among the actions and initiatives by the government are:

- ⚙️ Introducing the Sustainable Energy Development Act 2011;
- ⚙️ Joining the International Renewable Energy Agency to reduce the use of fossil fuels in power generation in 2011;
- ⚙️ Establishing the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (within the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change) as the statutory body to work hand-in-hand with the Energy Commission (Suruhanjaya Tenaga) to meet the Renewable Energy Transition Roadmap and realise the government’s target of 20% renewable energy in the national power mix by 2025; and
- ⚙️ Introducing the Net Energy Metering programme in 2016 to encourage investment in green technology (solar, mini-hydro, biomass, biogas); this is the second programme after FIT that ran from 2011 to 2015. FIT was a solar photovoltaic initiative by the Ministry to encourage Malaysia’s renewable energy uptake.

Under the latest value-added enhancements to encourage the use of renewable energy introduced in 2018 by the Minister YB Yeo Bee Yin, energy produced from installed solar photovoltaic systems will be consumed first, and the excess exported to TNB on a “one-on-one” offset basis.

The scheme is applicable to all residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors as long as they are TNB customers.

Using the power of the sun to generate energy could save consumers thousands of ringgit in electricity consumption expenditure each year, while at the same time contributing to action that will help to mitigate the potential damage on the environment.

Micro Energy Holdings Sdn Bhd has the authority via registration with the Sustainable Energy Development Authority to act as a solutions provider in solar technology. Since 2011, the company has installed solar technology in more than 1,000 homes and commercial enterprises in Malaysia and was recognised as one of the fastest moving companies in the SME category in 2017. Parties interested in a one-hour complimentary consultation may contact Jasvin at 019.216.1635.

References and Sources:

- ⚙️ Micro Energy Holdings Sdn Bhd: www.microenergyholding.com
- ⚙️ IRENE: www.irena.org
- ⚙️ KWTBB: www.tnb.com.my/kumpulan-wang-tenaga-boleh-baharu-kwtbb
- ⚙️ SEDA: www.seda.gov.my
- ⚙️ MIDA: www.mida.gov.my/home/tax-incentives-for-green-industry/posts/





BTRA SECURITY SCHEME

COST

RM250 a month, paid a year in advance. In the event of early termination, the unexpired balance shall be refunded, less RM100 administrative charge.

Please return this portion with your payment. You will receive a sign and an electronic tag, to be mounted on the gate, gate post or a nearby wall, and the guards' contact details after we receive your cheque. The sign and electronic tag are properties of BTRA, and must be returned if your subscription is terminated.

Amount : RM3,000 for 12 months
Payee : **Bukit Tunku Residents' Association - Security**
Forward to : Adam Smurthwaite
15 Dalam Tunku
50480 Kuala Lumpur

BTRA member (Please tick)? Yes No

(If not, you need to become a member first. Please email bukit.tunku.residents@gmail.com for a membership form)

Subscriber's Name

Bank

Cheque No - Amount RM .

House Address

Email Address

House and Mobile 1. - 2. -
Phone* (of residents,
not of landlord) 3. - 4. -
5. - 6. -

*To enable the Caller-Line Identification system to trace your emergency calls, please give us a list of the phone numbers that might be used to call the guards. Note that if your mobile phone does not send out its ID and displays "Private number" at the receiving end, then your call cannot be traced.



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I hereby apply for membership of the Bukit Tunku Residents' Association Kuala Lumpur in the appropriate category:

Ordinary Member - Owner or Resident of property
- Representative of Management Corporation of condominium

Associate Member - Applicable to family members of Ordinary Member residing with Ordinary Member
- Resident proprietor of condominium

Corporate Member (Applicable to corporation owning one or more properties in Bukit Tunku)

Name :

Address :

Postcode : City :

Residence Phone: - Fax: -

Office Phone : - Fax : -

Email Address :

Mobile : -

Occupation :

Signature Of
Application

Date : / /

(Dd/mm/yy)

Cheque No : -

Amount : RM .

Property Ownership (Please tick) : Sole Owner Joint-owned Company-owned

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION/ VOTING

- Ordinary / Corporate RM 200 – voting rights
- Associate RM 50 – no voting rights

A Journey to Dharamsala and Meeting The Dalai Lama

Curtis S Chin

"Eighty-eight years is a long life." And so, it is. But it is not whether you live a long time or a short time, said His Holiness the Dalai Lama to me. "What is important is to have a meaningful life."

Those words of wisdom still resonate — a year since my journey to Dharamsala to meet with the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and 1989 Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Call it karma — the actions that in one life lead to consequences in another — or call it luck. My journey from a California conference to a private audience with the Dalai Lama in India had originated months earlier in Thailand with a simple question: "Do you think I could ever meet the Dalai Lama?" Naively, I had asked a good friend from Nepal, aptly named Karma. "Let me check," he said.

Months later, after one introduction had led to another, I received a simple e-mail. "I will be able to schedule an audience for Ambassador Curtis Chin on Wednesday, 25 May 2016 here in Dharamsala," it read. "He would need to be in Dharamsala at least a day before the audience. Please confirm..."

While serving as U.S. Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank under U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, I had sought to encourage that multilateral financial institution to focus on "people, planet and partnership" with particular regard for the poorest and those most in need.

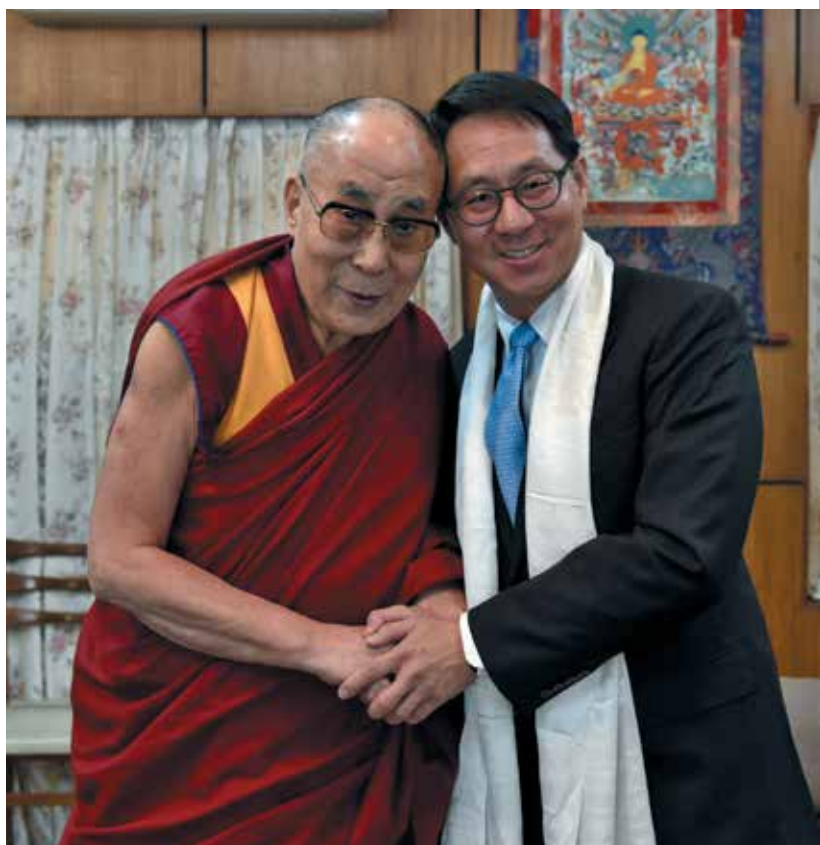
Now no longer bound by diplomatic guidance as to whom I could officially meet, I wanted to

build on my long-time commitment to the Himalayan region and learn more first-hand of the education and development of the Tibetan refugee community.

My journey to Dharamsala, however, would offer up other lessons. My schedule seemed set in April 2016.

From LA to Dharamsala, with an unanticipated but important detour

First was the Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles — an annual gathering of 3,000 leaders in business, government, philanthropy and civil society at the storied Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. I would be speaking at this "Davos with palm trees" as part of



my role as inaugural “Asia Fellow” at the non-profit, nonpartisan Milken Institute economic think tank.

From there I would journey back to Bangkok and then to Dharamsala in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh — home to the Dalai Lama since 1960. After the Chinese military occupation of Tibet, the Dalai Lama had fled into exile in India in 1959. Thousands of Tibetans followed, and today Dharamsala is the seat of the Central Tibetan Administration, in essence a Tibetan government-in-exile.



The small, bustling city comprises Lower Dharamsala and a higher, hillside Tibetan enclave called Upper Dharamsala or McLeod Ganj. South of the Himalaya, McLeod Ganj — sometimes referred to as “Little Lhasa” or “Dhasa” — sits between the plains of India and the Tibetan plateau. A narrow two-lane road that winds slowly upwards past shops and food stalls of every sort connects Upper and Lower Dharamsala. And it was to the once cedar tree-filled British hill station of McLeod Ganj — named after Sir Donald Friell McLeod, a lieutenant governor of Punjab — that I would journey.

But as always, life intervenes. This time it comes, as it does all too often, in the form of late-night calls and messages. My mother, 88-years-young, had taken ill and was in the hospital.

Speeding home to Virginia, I am blessed to be able to join family and friends and spend two weeks with my mother, Ethel Kim Hom Chin, before she passed away on a Friday, 20th May. Hours later, I am on a re-scheduled flight to India, and would return in the autumn for my mother’s burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

And so, my own long days’ journey to Dharamsala begins with unexpected thoughts of life and of death. I travel eastward to London, and then onward to Delhi.

Finally, touch down

Arriving in Dharamsala on Sunday, I am met by a new friend, Tenzin Jigme, from the Central Tibetan Administration’s education department. He and Kalon Ngodup Tsering, the education minister, would oversee my week in Dharamsala.

In a scene to be repeated many times, Tenzin presents me with a simple white scarf, or *kathak*, in a traditional Tibetan offer of greetings and well wishes, at Kangra Airport. The small and efficient airport is located in Gaggal about 14 kilometres from Dharamsala.

Onward we go by car. In McLeod Ganj, we quickly find ourselves amidst maroon-robed Tibetan monks and nuns, mixed with international and Indian visitors in what is now the centre of the Tibetan community in exile and an important tourist and pilgrimage destination.

The atmosphere is Tibetan, even if the altitude is not. Average elevation at about 2,082 metres, or 6,831 feet, is far less than the 12,000-foot altitude of Lhasa in Tibet. But the streets are filled with sights and sounds that remind me of my earlier trips to Tibet.

Tenzin takes me to drop off my bags at my home for the week — the Hotel Norbu House. The Tibetan-owned



hotel sits on the hillside across from the Tsuglagkhang compound that includes the Dalai Lama's main temple complex and his official residence. From my balcony, I have a sweeping view down the valley to Lower Dharamsala, and see hawks soaring above the dusty Indian plains below.

Lunch follows with the education minister. And, this being where Tibet meets India, Tibetan food is definitely on the menu. Tibetan-style dumplings known as momos, filled with cheese, vegetables or mutton, are a favourite. So too is thukpa, a Tibetan noodle soup. Dharamsala is also home to several restaurants and cafes serving up Indian, Bhutanese, Japanese, or Italian and other western food.

A place for spiritual discovery

Over the next five days, I travel with Tenzin regularly to the Tsuglagkhang, joining pilgrims and visitors as they say prayers and walk clockwise, always clockwise, around the central temple. An inner circuit, or kora, takes me around the temple core. An outer circuit takes me through the surrounding forests.

Every morning, a pageantry of everyday life unfurls inside and outside the temple compound. A smiling Tibetan woman offers up beautiful Tibetan bread that looks like giant pancakes. Fresh vegetables are laid out for sale by vendors.

Tibetans, young and old, with prayer beads or small handheld prayer wheels, as well as people from what

seem all walks of life with their own reasons for being there join me each day. I offer prayers and light traditional Tibetan butter lamps for my mother.

My agenda includes visits with Tenzin to some of the more than 70 schools established to provide a modern education to Tibetan refugee children, and help preserve the Tibetan language and culture. I also meet Tibetan entrepreneurs and teachers. A library and a museum offer context and history about the Tibetan diaspora.

At Men-Tsee-Khang, I learn of efforts to preserve Tibetan medicine and astrology. It is a college, clinic, museum, research centre and astrological institute all rolled into one, and consultations are available.

Dharamsala now draws thousands of visitors each year. Some volunteer with the Tibetan community. Others shop for Tibetan arts and crafts, study Buddhism, or practise meditation or yoga in a break from the urban life.

A trek in the forests of the Dhauladhar mountains above Dharamsala is easy to arrange. Even easier is the short walk from McLeod Ganj to nearby Bhagsunath temple, a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva with a fresh water spring, and to the village of Bhagsu.

For shopping, McLeod Ganj is full of choices from local street stalls to a cooperative producing beautiful Tibetan carpets. I visit The Norbulingka Institute, established in 1995 to teach and preserve traditional Tibetan art forms. There I watch artisans create intricate wooden carvings, paint traditional thangkas (Tibetan Buddhist painting on cotton or silk appliqué), forge metal statues and produce beautiful embroideries.

For a taste of the British Raj, I visit St. John in the Wilderness Church. Built in 1852, the Gothic-style church with beautiful stained-glass windows has survived earthquakes as has a cemetery filled with history. Lord Elgin, former Governor-General and Viceroy of India, is buried here.

That Friday, I attend the swearing-in of Lobsang Sangay, following his re-election as the political leader or, Sikyong, of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama, as spiritual leader, presides over the inauguration ceremony, and urges Tibetans to remain united as a community.

In the presence of His Holiness

Seeing His Holiness reminds me again of the heart of my own discoveries in Dharamsala. That Wednesday, I had the chance to meet privately with the Dalai Lama. With folded hands near my forehead, with a humble bow, with head bent and with palms joined in respect, I offered a traditional white scarf.

The Dalai Lama took the kathak, and with a blessing placed the scarf around my neck. For the next half hour, we spoke of education, of Tibet, of China and of America.

“I love America,” said the Dalai Lama with a smile. “And America loves you,” I replied.

We spoke of life, of death and of living a meaningful life.

I showed the Dalai Lama two photos of my mother. In one, she is a young nursing student in Baltimore, Maryland. In the other, one of her last photos, she is frail but smiling.

He took the photos, looked at them and slowly spoke.

“You are born... You die. This is life,” said the Dalai Lama. And then he placed the photos on his forehead, closed his eyes and began to say a blessing in Tibetan.

I was not sure whether to cry or to laugh. Five days earlier my mother had passed away, and now I sat looking up at her photos, on the forehead of the Dalai Lama.

Nearly one year later, I prepare to fly again to Los Angeles. It is the 20th annual Milken Institute Global Conference. Fittingly, the theme this year is “Meaningful Lives.” In May 2016, I journeyed to Dharamsala and found joy, comfort and blessings in an unexpected place and time.

That too is the magic, or karma, of travel.

Curtis S. Chin is a Milken Institute Asia fellow and has served as a trustee of World Education Services of New York. He is a former U.S. ambassador to the Asian Development Bank, where he pushed for strengthened governance, risk management and development efforts focused on people, planet, and partnership, particularly on infrastructure projects in Asia's least-developed nations. Curtis's role with the ADB and now with Milken Institute enables him to travel throughout Asia, a region for which he has a strong affinity. He is a regular editorial contributor to leading dailies in the region, and can be seen on business TV programmes providing analysis and commentary on Asian affairs. Find and follow Curtis on: [Twitter@curtisschin](https://twitter.com/curtisschin); Facebook www.facebook.com/curtis.chin.940; Instagram www.instagram.com/asiaminute

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Roots & Shoots: Youth Engagement for Positive Change

Roots & Shoots Malaysia

“Roots creep under the ground to make a firm foundation. Shoots seem new and small, but to reach the light they can break through brick walls.”

Roots & Shoots Malaysia was established in January 2015 to activate the “seeds of goodness” among young Malaysians. Its mission is to engage, educate and empower youth of Malaysia with the tools to embark on service-learning projects that have a positive impact on the natural environment, wildlife and human communities.



This purpose aligns with Roots & Shoots members all over the world, collaborating with a common desire to make a difference — in classrooms, home schools, nature centres, neighbourhoods, refugee camps, zoos, scout troops and beyond.

“We believe that this powerful, youth-driven network fosters a fun, flexible and supportive environment where young people and adults alike come together to share ideas, inspire each other, execute successful community service projects, and participate in special events and global campaigns,” said TP Lim, President, Roots & Shoots Malaysia.

Strongly motivated and inspired by founder Dame Dr. Jane Goodall’s messages of hope and peace to make this world a better version of itself, Roots & Shoots Malaysia aims to build understanding in all Malaysians that they hold the power to effect positive change.

In the words of Dr. Jane: “every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference.” This is an important message to share, and since 2015, projects and events with schools

and corporations have served to re-affirm this belief in the power of change.

Roots & Shoots Malaysia Award

This year, in collaboration with Yayasan Hasanah, the CSR arm of Khazanah, Roots & Shoots Malaysia launched the Roots & Shoots Malaysia Award. This award was created to give young Malaysians a platform to gain experience and volunteer with partners in various fields related to the natural environment, wildlife and human communities.

This year, the Award is set around the theme of Voices of the Rainforest: Protecting Our Shared Heritage with a specific focus on the Central Forest Spine of Malaysia. All selected participants will be able to volunteer at up to three partner organisations between July and September. These partner organisations are:

1. [Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre](#)
2. [EcoKnights](#)
3. [Free Tree Society Kuala Lumpur](#)

4. *Fuze Ecoteer*
5. *Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs*
6. *Malaysia Primatological Society*
7. *Nuvista Media*
8. *Perak State Park Corporation*
9. *Persatuan Pelindung Harimau Malaysia*
10. *Persatuan Rimba Komuniti Kota Damansara Selangor*
11. *Project GreenSmiths*
12. *Roots & Shoots Environmental, Wildlife Conservation and Humanitarian Society*
13. *The Habitat Foundation*
14. *Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre*
15. *Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia*

Schools Outreach

Roots & Shoots Malaysia has worked with many international schools and their students across Kuala Lumpur on service-learning projects that contribute to solving issues plaguing the natural environment, human society and wildlife. One such project was with Sri KDU International School on a “Pull-Ring Campaign” in 2017. The Year-8 classes — subsequently known as Eco-Kids — banded together to collect more than 3000 ring-pull tabs to create a prosthetic limb. Inspired by their collective efforts, the Eco-Kids managed to rally other students to their cause. To date, Sri KDU international Eco School Students have

participated and collected over 190kg worth of ring-pull tabs. Their aim now is to collect more than 1000kg of ring-pull tabs to be melted and used to create new prosthetics for both elephants and humans who have lost their legs.

Another project, with Nexus International School, involved fundraising for orang utans. The Nexus Learners devised a ceramic pottery project in which they made and sold ceramic orang utan pen pots. Such was the level of craftsmanship that Roots & Shoots Malaysia sent Dr. Jane photos of the ceramic orang utan pen pots. It was gratifying to hear that Dr. Jane was extremely impressed with the handiwork. Additionally, these Nexus Learners sold all the orang utan pen pots that they had crafted, raising approximately RM2,500.

“According to Dr Jane, it’s all about going beyond awareness and taking action. Any person can claim to be aware about a problem, but it takes an exceptional individual to be part of the solution. This is the spirit of Roots & Shoots.

“As young Malaysians look towards the future, we want them to realise that they hold the answer to many of the issues of today’s society. If we can tap into their potential and inspire them to be our agents of change and messengers of peace, Malaysia and all Malaysians will be better because of it,” added Mr Lim.



Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots is a programme of the Jane Goodall Institute



The programme, which began in 1991, is about making positive change happen for people, wildlife and the environment. It started with 16 Tanzanian high school students from nine schools. “They were extremely worried about the destruction of the coral reef by illegal dynamiting; poaching in the wildlife parks and reserves, and lack of government will to prevent or punish this; lack of help for street children; ill treatment of animals in markets; lack of environmental education (back then) in schools,” said Dr. Goodall. “They wanted me to fix everything! I suggested that, working together, they might be able to do something themselves.” Thus, the Roots & Shoots programme was born.

With more than 150,000 members across 130 countries, the Roots & Shoots network connects people of all ages who share a desire to create a better world. Through service projects, youth-led campaigns and an interactive website, Roots & Shoots members are making a difference across the globe.

Every year, on 23rd September, Roots & Shoots Malaysia celebrates International Day of Peace. In 2018, 30 members commemorated the day by building a Giant Peace Dove and decorating it with paint. It was held at Kiara Park TTDI.

References and URLs:

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- EcoKnights: www.ecoknights.org.my
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- Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs: www.ideas.org.my
- Malaysian Primatological Society: www.facebook.com/malaysianprimatologicalsociety
- NuVista Media: www.facebook.com/nuvistamedia
- Perak State Park Corporation: www.royalbelum.my/eng
- Persatuan Pelindung Harimau Malaysia: www.facebook.com/ngo.rimau
- Persatuan Rimba Komuniti Kota Damansara, Selangor: www.facebook.com/KDCFSociety
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- Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia: www.turtleconservationsociety.org.my

Discovering the Tranquillity of Luang Prabang

Hannah Merican

Often overlooked in favour of Cambodia and Vietnam, Laos is a hidden gem located deep in the heart of Indochina. Its former royal capital, Luang Prabang, had been on my bucket list for a while, and after recommendations from friends, I booked my flight for the end of February.

I arrived in Luang Prabang on a Friday afternoon. Throughout my four-day stay, I realised that whatever I was doing — whether it was sitting in a French-style bakery eating or visiting the majestic Kuang Si waterfalls — I could feel the sense of peace and calm that many people often talk about when they visit Luang Prabang, a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of city life.

So, if you're thinking of visiting Luang Prabang, here are my recommendations.

When to visit

November to May marks the dry season in Laos. December and January seem to be favoured months to visit, as the weather at this time is particularly pleasant with daytime temperatures of between 19° to 22° Celsius. The mercury starts to climb in March to as high as 38° Celsius in May.

The rainy season between May and October is when temperatures start to cool once again with afternoon showers and the Mekong sometimes flooding in August and September. However, if you want to visit Luang Prabang at a quieter time, this would be the perfect time to do so! Thanks to the constant rain, the lush greenery of Luang Prabang's environs is brought to life with flowers in full bloom. If you are thinking of visiting in September or October, make sure to catch the annual Dragon Boat race on the Nam Khan river.

Sights and Sounds

Located between the confluence of the Mekong and Nam Khan rivers, Luang Prabang is the type of place where you can try as many outdoor activities as you like — hiking, zip-lining, driving to visit elephant sanctuaries — but it is also perfectly fine to just sit back and watch the world go by. Experience these scenic views at your leisure.

Kuang Si Waterfalls: Known as **the** attraction to visit in Luang Prabang, the majestic turquoise-green waters of Kuang Si do not disappoint. Located 30km from central Luang Prabang, the waterfalls are easily accessible by tuk-tuk, car or motorcycle. For that picture-perfect Instagram-able moment, make your way there early in the morning to avoid crowds. The cascading waterfalls span several hundred metres and are made up of pools or basins where one can swim

Kuang Si Waterfalls





Mount Phousic Sunset

in certain areas. Some areas are closed to the public for safety reasons. The waterfalls are also home to the **Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre**, a sanctuary for native moon bears that are hunted by poachers.

Mount Phousi: Meaning ‘sacred mountain,’ Mt Phousi is the home of **Wat Chomsi**, which features a statue of Buddha inside a grotto and another statue of a reclining Buddha. It offers spectacular views of the sunset and is a fairly easy climb of around 300 steps to the top.

Morning market: Rise and shine for a short walk to the market. Unlike the night market, the morning market in Luang Prabang is geared towards locals and offers a wide variety of fresh produce, such as passion fruit, galangal and keffir leaves.

Night market: Open from 1700 to 2200 every night, the night market is a great opportunity to try street food, shop for souvenirs, or sample a Beer Lao or Lao Lao Whiskey.

Wat Xieng Thong and Royal Palace Museum: Rent a bicycle or take a leisurely stroll to the temples and palaces located around central Luang Prabang. Wat Xieng Thong is one of the most impressive with its gilded wooden doors, and honours the religion, royalty and culture of Laos. The Royal Palace Museum was once the residence of King Sisavang Vong and was converted into a museum in 1995.

Gastronomic Delights

Similar to Thai food, Lao cuisine is rich in herbs and spices but with a slightly milder after-taste. As a former French colony, its influence can be savoured by the presence of many French bakeries in Luang Prabang serving fresh (and authentic!) baguettes and patisseries daily. Aside from street food, the dining scene has grown in recent years with a few notable restaurants worth checking out.

Manda De Laos: A family restaurant that has spanned several generations and is registered as a Unesco World Heritage Site, Manda De Laos is a

Manda De Laos

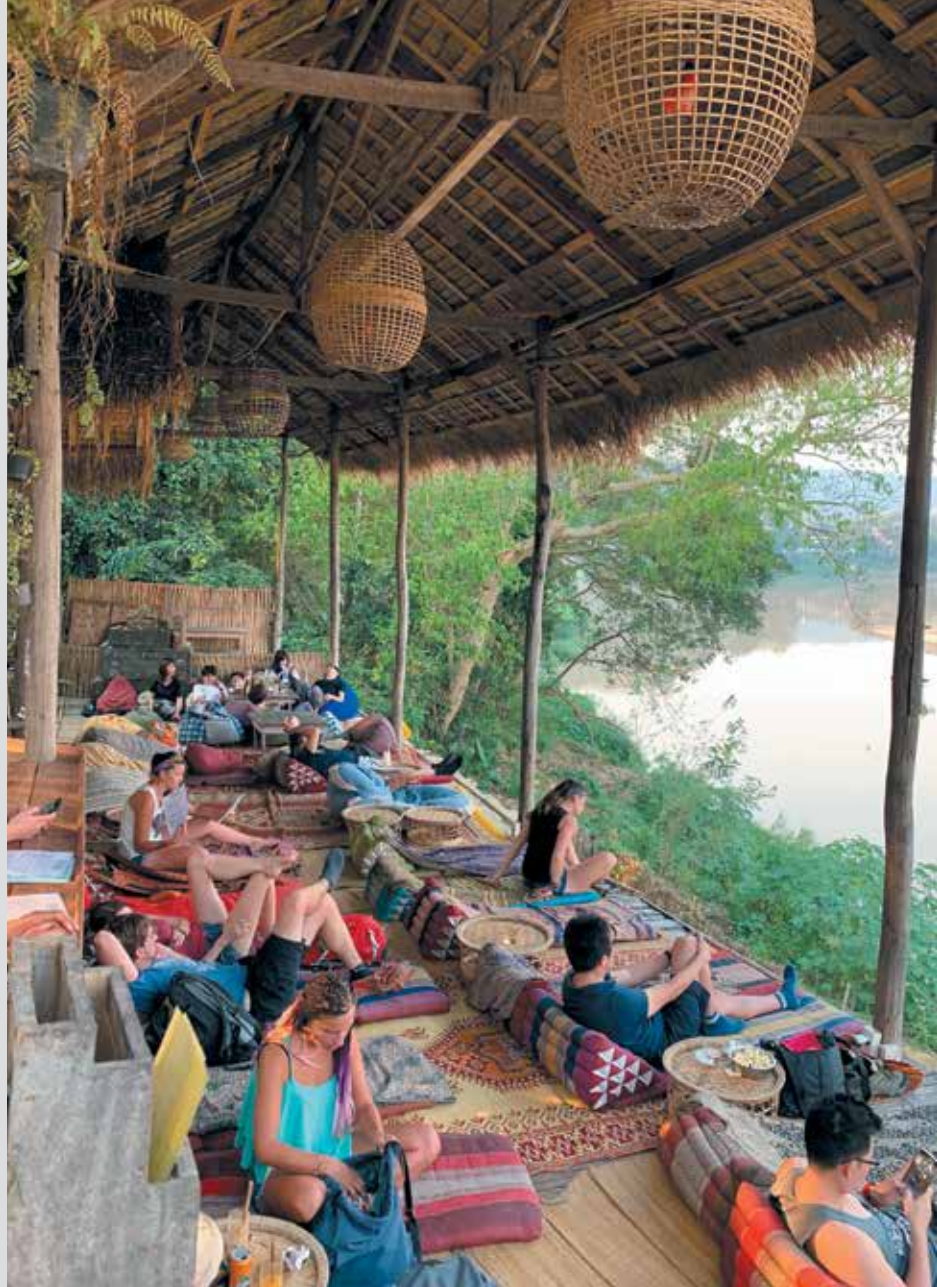


site to behold the second you enter its front doors. Surrounded by lotus ponds and coconut trees, the restaurant serves traditional Laotian food and features a bar offering signature cocktails.

Try their *Ping Kai* (Laos style fish salad), *Lam Kai* (Lao Chicken Stew), *Laap Moo* (a spicy mixture of marinated meat or fish mixed with herbs, greens and spices available in meat or vegetarian versions) served with sticky or white rice. End on a high note with their Choux banana that is bound to satisfy your sweet tooth.

Khaipean Restaurant: Named after the popular Laotian snack that means riverweed, Khaipean is part of the Tree Alliance offering vocational training to street children and young people in Laos. Its diverse menu consists of sharing plates ranging from chicken curry to green papaya salad with prawn and corn fritters. It also includes western dishes with Laotian influences, such as Beer Lao battered fish and chips, and grilled buffalo steak sandwich.

Utopia: Offering views of the Nam Khan river, Utopia is the perfect place to sit back and relax in a recliner cushion on a sunny day. A short walk from Luang Prabang's main street, Utopia is a hidden gem located in a rather confusing back alley. A must-visit for all travellers, this bar and cafe has a wide-ranging menu of food and drink to tickle your fancy. Bring a book to read, play board games or simply enjoy watching people as the place attracts a wide variety of young and seasoned travellers to its leafy hideaway. And in true utopian fashion, there are



Utopia

also daily yoga classes in the morning for those who are so inclined.

After spending four days in Laos, I can understand why many people view it as a well-kept secret. It's unassuming to outsiders but once you visit, you realise that it has a certain kind of charm to it. Right now, it is less well trodden than its neighbours of Vietnam and Cambodia, and it still has that relatively unspoilt vibe to it. One can find that exotic blend of old French charm and Laotian culture in its streets, buildings, and its cuisine. The country offers something for adventure seekers, nature enthusiasts, culture lovers, foodies, and of course, people who just want to unwind. And for all that's mentioned above, I'll definitely be back.

Hannah Merican is a culture lover and a foodie — she is always planning her next meal. She was a journalist in her previous life but is now a copywriter. In her personal time, Hannah enjoys creative writing, yoga, and planning where to travel to next.

A Sparkling Time Capsule: From The Mall to Sunway Putra

Flashback: in 1987, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched a major mixed property development on the fringes of Bukit Tunku simply known as The Mall at Putra Place. Introduced to Kuala Lumpur with much fanfare, it was said to be the largest such centre in Malaysia at that time, with a built-up area of 4.5 acres. It comprised retail shopping outlets, commercial units and a hotel. The retail centre had among its attractions an indoor market (Medan Hang Tuah), an indoor amusement centre called Starlight Express with its own rocking gondola ride, and the Tornado Roller Coaster, guaranteed to generate thrills for anyone who dared to try.

Long-time residents of Bukit Tunku may recall Japan's Yaohan department store and supermarket — the first in Malaysia — and The Legend Hotel at Putra Place. Finally, a supermarket nearby!

At the 1987 launch, one of the highlights was the burial of a time capsule on the premises. To be unearthed 100 years from 1987, i.e. 2087, a message from Dr Mahathir to Malaysians of the future will be made public. One can be sure he didn't predict that he would be the country's 7th Prime Minister at the age of 93!

Flash-forward to 2011: Sunway REIT Management acquired the property by public auction and subsequently spent approximately RM1 billion to upgrade and refurbish it, as well as add another 600,000 square feet of leasable space. Architectural inspiration came from **The Cora Sundrop Diamond** — the

largest known **pear-shaped** fancy vivid yellow diamond in the world, discovered in 2010 and deposited in The Vault at the Natural History Museum in London on 24 February 2011.

By 2015, the building had a new facade and layout — the colours of orange, yellow and red became the signature colour scheme. The exterior and interior atrium, clad with vibrant colour-faceted glass, created a distinctive design and experience to reflect its unique diamond heritage.

The façade of the old mall, pre-Sunway acquisition



Now known as Sunway Putra Mall (the 4th member of the Sunway Malls collection), anyone who visits will barely recognise or even recall the former iteration. New life was injected into the development: brighter, more colourful and cheerful, with a more diverse selection of retail outlets, restaurants and cafes, lifestyle and well-being services, and of course, anchor cinemas that generate decent foot traffic on a consistent basis.

The location itself has transformed over the years, making Sunway Putra Mall more accessible to people from across Kuala Lumpur. There are public transport services provided by LRT and KTM, sorely missing in its early days as The Mall. Workers based in the vicinity of Jalan Putra, and general consumers from further afield, can find a bit of respite from the

madding crowd of central Kuala Lumpur at Sunway Putra Mall, and still be within a stone's throw from the city centre.

One notable element about Sunway Putra Mall is that it is the first autism-friendly mall in Malaysia; it provides public spaces that meet the needs of this community, as well as specially designed parking bays. Sunway Putra Mall has designated Tuesdays (except public holidays that fall on a Tuesday) as its Autism-friendly Shopping Day from 10:00 to 17:00. The aim is to create an inclusive and comfortable shopping experience, while increasing overall understanding of autism.

The bright and sparkling façade of Sunway Putra Mall



There is also a Cat Playground, believed to be Malaysia's first Cat Assisted Therapy facility. For those who are not allergic to felines, this facility can be therapeutic, or just plain fun for cat lovers. Guidelines apply to ensure safety to humans and animals alike.

It remains to be seen what Dr Mahathir wrote in his time capsule message back in 1987, when the time comes. What will Sunway Putra Mall be like in another 60 or so years? One can only speculate and hope for the best for Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and humanity in general.



After

The spruced-up Atrium

The Atrium, pre-Sunway acquisition

Feedback? Suggestions? Comments?

If you have feedback or comments on Living On The Hill, or would like to suggest topics for future issues, or wish to contribute an article, please don't hesitate to email bukit.tunku.residents@gmail.com. Please enter "Living on the Hill" in the subject line for easy reference. We'd love to hear from you!

*(Contributions and correspondence may be edited for space and clarity)
Living On The Hill is available at www.btra.com.my/newsletter.*

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