

**ABSTRACT**

Bidor, Perak is located in the south of Tapah and the north of Sungkai along the North-South Expressway that leads to Padang Besar and Johor Bahru. It is located in the District of Batang Padang. The population of Bidor as of 2005 was 32,094 people and it is predicted to increase to 44,564 people in 2020. There are a lot of economic activities in Bidor such as plantation, farming and commerce. One of the important sources of income of the new village of Bidor is from the tourists who are attracted to the local delicacies and agricultural products. The learning institutions in Bidor range from Nurseries or Kindergartens to primary as well as secondary schools

The small town of Bidor was part of the Gangga kingdom based on the artifacts that were discovered. But today, Bidor still has the traditional outlook of a typical old town. Many local folks are facing unsolved land ownership, financial and manpower problems in cultivating their products.

## INTRODUCTION

Bidor, Perak is located in the south of Tapah and the north of Sungkai along the North-South Expressway that leads to Padang Besar and Johor Bahru. It is located in the District of Batang Padang. Bidor was believed to have existed as a small village by the riverbank of the Bidor River in the late 18th century. Local villagers transported goods using their *sampans* (boats) to nearby villages along the river towards Teluk Intan in the Hilir Perak district.

During the tin-mining boom period in Perak, there was an influx of Chinese immigrants to Perak as a whole, including Bidor. The Hoklo (Hokkien-speaking) Chinese were believed to have originated from Teluk Intan. The influx of the Hakka and Cantonese came from Kinta Valley and Hulu Selangor. They came to Batang Padang to flee the local civil wars and Chinese clans or triad wars. Bidor used to be part of the Gangga Negara kingdom based on the historical artifacts that were discovered. It is believed that the area accepted Hindu-Buddhism around 900 years ago. The pioneer of the town was believed to be Syeikh Abdul Ghani, who also became the village headman after the founding of the settlements.

Bidor was closely connected to the Battle of Kampar during the Japanese advancement towards Kuala Lumpur in the south. On 29 December 1941, 501 Battery withdrew to Bidor fleeing Kampar. The column was again dive-bombed and machine-gunned just south of Dipang. Five men were wounded. The last entry in the 137 Regt War Diary was for 31 December, 1941, Lt Hartley's 30th birthday, when his battery and the other two of 137 Regt were all in the Bikam-Sungkai area.

In 1943, MPAJA's 1st Patrol under the 5th Regiment was assigned to protect Col. John Davis, who represented the Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had just established the Head Office (HO) of Force 136 at Blantan Hill, some seven miles north-east of Bidor township. The 1st Patrol was commanded by Huang Song (黃松) and his deputy Cai Dadi (蔡大地).

During the communist insurgency, Captain D. G. Lock was killed while bathing near Bidor on 2 October 1948 (att. K. O. Y. L. I.). Captain A. R. Pickin was killed in action at Bidor on 18 July 1948. Both of them were buried at the Batu Gajah Christian Cemetery. GHQ 26th Gurkha Infantry Brigade and the Royal Artillery's 95 Independent Field Battery (comprising 'Charlie Troop', 'Dog Troop' and 'Command Troop') were stationed in Bidor in the 1950s to quell communist insurgency. After Malaya gained independence, Bidor was under the command of the local Royal Malaysian Police 3rd Battalion General Operations Forces (formally known as Police Field Force) who was stationed locally. This unit was famous for its elite Senoi Praaq unit, a special unit consisting of Orang Asli (indigenous tribes) experts in tracking. The last 'black area' in Bidor, the Gepai Falls, was finally opened to the public in 1989 after a treaty was signed between the Malaysian government and the Malayan Communist Party.

The population of Bidor up to the year 2005 was 32,094 people and it is predicted to increase up to 44,564 people in the year 2020. However, many are not staying in the village.

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

There are a lot of economic activities in Bidor such as plantation, farming and commerce. One of the important sources of income for this new village comes from tourists. They will stop by the town for its well-known local delicacies and agricultural products such as Duck noodles, CB chicken biscuits, seedless guavas, *petai* and white coffee.

A market is situated in the town area. It is one of the places where villagers hang out and buy vegetables, fish and meat. The market has 113 stalls that sell vegetables, chicken and fish. There are 3 Indian, 3 Chinese and 3 Malay stalls selling chicken. During our visit, information was gathered from one of the chicken sellers who identified himself as Moorthi that his business hours were from 5.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. every day. Normally he would sell 80 to 90 chickens per day.

There are about 20 fish stalls in the market. We interviewed one of the oldest fishmongers who identified himself as Mr Lim. He related that he had been a fishmonger for 53 years. He works from 5.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. every day. He gets his supply from Ipoh. His business is not as good as before as most of the villagers have moved to big cities. Below is Mr Lim's photo at his stall.



*Mr. Lim's Fish Stall*

A majority of the stalls in this market sell a variety of vegetable. Most of the vegetable sellers come to the market early in the morning at about 5.00 a.m. and they return home at around 12.00 p.m. The stall owners are of different races. The variety of vegetables they sell are almost the same but they have their own specific customers. Here are some photos of the vegetable stalls.



*Vegetable Stall*



*Vegetable Stall's Owner*



*Pork Belly*

A pork shop named Sakura Meat is within walking distance from the market. This shop is only 2 years old and is one of the branch outlets. It operates from 6.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. The meat is delivered from a factory at Sungkai. The owner of the shop is Mr Low and his branch outlet manager Mr Seen claimed that most of his customers were Chinese and a small portion of the customers was Indian. Most of the customers are household customers from Bidor. Below is a photo of the shop:



*Shop that sells pork*

Besides the shop, there are also stalls selling pork. One particular stall operates from 4.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The owner of the stall is a 70-year-old Mr Lai, who has been selling pork since he was 13 years old. He sells 1 pig per day. He also sells his pork to the restaurants at Bidor. According to Mr. Lai there are 8 stalls selling pork and 4 pig farms in Bidor. Here is a photo of Mr. Lai and his stall.



*Student Interviewing a Stall Owner*

Somewhere away from the market is a place called Medan Buah-buahan. There's a stall selling only 'Jambu Merah' and Guava. The stall opens from 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Ms Noradiah, who has been working for 2 to 3 years at the fruit stall, said that all the fruits there are delivered from a farm.

Besides vegetable, fruit and meat selling, farming is also one of the economic activities at Bidor. Mr. Cheng, whom we interviewed, owns a farm of half an acre and

he plants different varieties of vegetable such as *Choi Sam (Sawi)*. He puts in a lot of time and effort working in the farm. His monthly income is only about RM300 to RM400.



*Vegetable farm*



*Pagoda Cake*

We visited Happy Angel's Cake House in Bidor. Its main outlet, at Teluk Intan, is owned by Mr. Koh Eng Seng. The main branch is 22 years old while the branch outlet is only half a year old. On 19 April 2004, this shop baked a cake specially for the Sultan of Perak. The icing sugar cake was of a one and a half feet pagoda design. There are 3 to 5 competitors around Bidor but Happy Angel's Cake House is the only bakery doing icing sugar. A hot item of this bakery shop is Coconut Bun, which is sold at RM0.90 each. The owner is able to sell around 200 pieces of Coconut Bun per day. Above is a photo showing the 'pagoda cake' made by the owner of the bakery shop.

## EDUCATION

The learning institutions in Bidor range from Nurseries or Kindergartens to primary and secondary schools. Among the kindergartens there are Sekolah Tadika, St Joseph and Tadika Sri Cemerlangku. The primary school is Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan (C) Choong Hua 2 and the secondary school Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan (SMJK) Choong Hua Bidor.



*Tadika Enrolment Banner*



*Tadika's Classroom*



*Tadika Sri Cemerlangku*

SMJK Choong Hua was established in 1955 before Independence Day. In the following year, there was a fund-raising show titled *Lei yu* (Rainstorm) for building more classrooms. In 1958, the school was moved to the current location. The activity named *Pindah Pasir* was held to fill up the lower ground with sand to widen the school field and classrooms. In this activity, most of the townsfolk worked as a team to carry sand. The local folks are full of care and team spirit.

In 1960, the name of the school was changed from Sekolah Menengah Choong Hua Bidor to Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Choong Hua Bidor. The following year, the Deputy Minister of Education officiated the opening ceremony of the new building of the school. In 1973, the Persatuan Ibu Bapa dan Guru (PIBG) was set up for further advancement and improvement of SMJK Choong Hua, Bidor. In 1975, the school management faced problems of lacking of facilities and shortage of classrooms due to an increase in the number of students. The school management decided to raise funds for the second phase of the project which included science laboratories.

In 1980, the second school was completed. YB Datuk Chan Siang Sun was invited to officiate the opening ceremony. In 1986, the school management commenced the

third phase of the project. Within six months, the third phase was completed. On 23 July 1987, the school had its opening ceremony for the new buildings.

In 1988 the school management needed a workshop (room) for *Kemahiran Hidup Bersepadu* (Integrated Living Skills) as directed by the Ministry of Education. In 1991, the school management decided to upgrade the facilities and built a three-storey building to accommodate the increased student population. The construction project started the following year. In 1993, the new building was named as the Science and Technology Building. YB Dr Fong Chan Onn and YB Dato' Loke Yuen Yew officiated the opening ceremony of the new building. The building consists of a *Kemahiran Hidup* workshop room, science laboratories, computer laboratories, a staff room, an audio-visual room, teachers' room, and a library.

In 1996, the school management led a donation campaign named Jogathon in order to gather funds for a school hall. In 1999, the construction of the hall was completed. Dato' Ku Ah Ming was invited to its opening ceremony on 24 July. In 2006, the school management raised funds through Jogathon for the Classic Chinese Orchestra Unit, a volleyball and basket ball courts. The buildings were ready the following year.

SMJK Choong Hua Bidor started with 3 teachers teaching and two classes of Form One students under the leadership of its principal, Ms Teng Siew Bee. Currently, there are about 1,056 students and 75 teachers.

The vision of SMJK Choong Hua Bidor is to be an excellent achiever. It aims to be one of the role models in education producing quality students who excel in the study of English, science and mathematics. In addition to academic study, students are encouraged to achieve 100% attendance in co-curricular activities and not to be involved in any illegal activities.



*SMJK Choong Hua School Building*



*Entrance of SMJK Choong Hua*



*School Security Booth*

## **TOURISM VALUE**

The small town of Bidor was a part of the Gangga kingdom based on the artifacts that were discovered here. But today, Bidor still has the traditional outlook of a typical old town due to its slow progress of development.

One of the main attractions that attract tourists from outstation is the Pun Chun Restaurant. Bidor is famous for its crispy chicken biscuits, and seedless guava.

If you travel along the North-South Expressway, take time to drop by this town for a meal. If you are coming from Sungkai, exit at the next interchange and look for the Bidor signboard. The distance from Sungkai to Bidor is 15.5 km and the toll costs RM2.10. If you are coming from Tapah, the distance is 15 km and the toll cost is RM2.00.

### **Pun Chun Restaurant**

Pun Chun Restaurant is located along Bidor's main street, which is only about 5 to 10 minutes from the Bidor toll station. The restaurant operates from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day. Pun Chun Restaurant is the restaurant which serves the best duck noodle in Malaysia. What is special about the duck noodles is its noodle soup. The soup is cooked with herbs, dried longan, wolfberries and ginger. The local people call the noodles *Wan Tan Mee*. If you do not like the soup version, you can have the dried noodles served with black ketchup sauce. The duck meat is cooked until it is tender and soft.

The other famous food in Pun Chun Restaurant is the duck drumstick noodles. The herbal duck drumstick is the ultimate reason for *Ngap Pei Meen's* tastiness. To complete the order, individual double boiled duck thighs are taken from a huge cooker and served together. Double boiling ensures that no water loss will occur and it also locks in the flavor and essence of the ingredients. For the soupy version, they

simply pour the whole steaming container of duck thighs with their herbal broth into a bowl of already blanched *wantan* noodles. Somehow the herbal broth tastes a little diluted if taken this way, making it less tasty if compared to the dry version.

In addition, Pun Chun Restaurant is also famous for its *Kai Chai Peng* (chicken biscuits), *Sat Kei Ma*, *Lou Por Pang*, *Hung Ngan Pang* (almond biscuits), *Kai Dan Gou* (egg cake) and *Ham Tan Soh* (salted-egg crispy cookies). This restaurant has been selling traditional Chinese biscuits for many years. Trays are filled with a good variety of cakes, pastries and biscuits.



*Pun Chun Restaurant*



*Duck Drumstick noodle (soup base)*



*Duck Drumstick noodle (dry)*



*Chicken Biscuit*

## **Fruits**

Bidor is popular for its fruits too. For example, there are seedless guavas, sour sops, dragon fruit, lotus-seed pods and seasonal *petai*. Among these fruits, one of the most popular is seedless guavas.

We interviewed a worker from the Medan Buah-buahan along the main street in Bidor. She addressed herself as Miss Noradiah, who had been working in the fruit shop for years selling seedless guavas and *jambu air*. It opens from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.



*Seedless Guava*



*Jambu Air*

## **Tourism**

The most well known attraction in Bidor is the rest shed where there are birds in cages. The birds in this place are very popular because they can sing to the public. Their soft and sweet voices made people feel comfortable and relaxed. Most of the elderly Chinese folks used to spend their leisure time there. It is entertainment for the local folks too. We met a retiree who identified himself as Mr. Wong, 58; he has six birds which are able to sing well. He kept them in the cages. Every day around 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., there are crowds gathering at the rest shed to watch and listen to the birds singing.



*Rest Shed of Bird Watching*

### **PROBLEMS**

In the course of our visit, we gathered from the local folks that they have the following problems:

(i) Most of the farmers do not have their own land. Many are planting their crops illegally on the lands which are owned by the government. Some pay rental for the land. Many local folks applied and appealed for ownership claim of the lands but in vain. Priority is given to farmers who plant oil palms. Many vegetable and fruit farmers find it hard to apply for the land.

Some were cheated by agents. An elderly illiterate man related that he was advised by his agent to sign some legal documents. Having faith in the agent, he signed the documents according to what was instructed. However, at a later date, he was frustrated to find out from his neighbor that he had signed a consent document to leave the land within 2 months.

(ii) The younger generation is not interested in working on the land.

(iii) The fertility of the land needs improvement. Many farmers do not have enough capital to buy fertilizers, insecticides and hire assistants to work on the land. The quality of their products is poor which do not fetch good prices. During the 1970s the farmers grew sweet potatoes, tapioca, sweet potatoes, papayas and bananas, but now they can just grow mango, guava and umbra. The quality of the papaya and yam bean (*sengkuang*) is getting very poor. The product's size is not consistent.

(vi) Hawkers in the old market in Bidor used to share a water pipe. Time is wasted to get water supply. The problem is solved with the establishment of the new market. Every hawker stall has piped water.



*Bidor Farmer Association*



*Farm*

**DISCLAIMER:**

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