UTAR NEW VILLAGE COMMUNITY PROJECT REPORT

NAME OF NEW VILLAGE:
CHEMOR 珠宝
PERAK

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<tr>
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ABSTRACT

I conducted my new village development project in Chemor, which is located at latitude 4.72 (4° 43’ 0 N) and longitude 101.12 (101° 7’ 0 E). It is in the state of Perak, Malaysia. Chemor is 346 meters above sea level and 184 kilometers north (339’) of Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur. Villages/small towns which are close to Chemor include the following:

Kanthan Bharu: 1.82 km to the north (0°)
Sungai Kuang: 1.88 km to the west (270°)
Kampong Dusun Gilip: 1.89 km to the south (180°)
Tanah Hitam: 2.56 km to the north east (45°)
HISTORY

Upon arriving to Chemor, I quickly made friends with uncle Ah Hong, who runs a coffin production and carving business. I am very thankful to have met him as he gave me many insights about Chemor. He was kind enough to take a few hours off to accompany me on my research and to help make it a success. He said the word Chemor means "Mud" in Indian Sanskrit, while in the Chinese phonetics it means "Jewel". He said Chemor is a multiracial small town which was once famous for tapioca plantations. Many of these planters are Hakkas. In the 1980s, Chemor boasted of being the biggest tapioca producing town in the world.

But in the late 1980s, the tapioca plantations gradually disappeared as heavy industrialization took place. "Silicon Valley" was the nickname given to Chemor by early 1990s and the main income was from electronic industry. The bulk of the investment from Taiwanese entrepreneurs who took advantage of the lower cost structures as well as abundance of skilled workers in this area.

There has not been much change in Chemor since the 1970's, with the exception of many new housing estates. With the decline in the electronics industry since the late 1990's, many electronics factories closed down.

After the downfall of the electronic industry, many Chemor residents moved elsewhere. Chemor was notorious for a large number of illegal workers working in New York's and San Francisco's Chinatowns, having gone there on the pretext of 'tour' but not making the return trip. The locals affectionately called this practice "jumping the plane".

Rubber plantations are the second primary economic activity in Chemor. These plantations developed in the 1970's. When the price of rubber declined in the early 1990's, the income of rubber tappers was drastically reduced. Most of the rubber trees were chopped down and were used for carpentry works.
Maps showing the location of Chemor
ECONOMY

As the years go by, industrialization has taken place in Chemor. Many businesses which produce cement, ceramics, electrical goods, carpentry items and many others have developed in this area.

*Shop lots in Chemor New Village*
Above are the snapshots of few business premises that I managed to get. These businesses have developed so much and have become an important source of income for local residents.
EDUCATION

Like many other places, Chemor is well established in terms of education. There are 5 primary schools and 2 secondary schools for the residents here.

Schools in Chemor New Village

SJKC Pei Cheng in Chemor became the first Chinese national type school to be adopted by Malaysian Airlines (MAS) under its Pintar programme. It was the 17th school to be adopted to help students do better in their studies. MAS hoped the use of its resources could help these schools become high performance schools and consequently help build model citizens for the country.
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

There are many places of worship in Chemor. Temples, “tokong”, churches and mosques are everywhere. The Gurdwara Sahib Chemor was built around 1914 to serve the Sikhs. The size of the Gurdwara Sahib Chemor building is 1 Rood and 11 Poles. This Gurdwara Sahib building was demolished in 1940 as it was poorly maintained. The present Gurdwara Sahib building was built in 1914. This single storey Gurdwara Sahib has a raised roof made of zinc sheets, which is rather distinctive. There are two rooms in the Gurdwara Sahib premises, which may be used by Sikh visitors.
INFRASTRUCTURE

The villagers of Chemor hold their events at a place called Kuala Kuang Hall. Every year, the government would spend some money to host events like singing competition to foster closer ties among villagers. The hall is also used for many other purposes like karaoke, dance classes, singing classes and badminton practice. Just outside the hall, there is also a basketball court that is used daily. The Chemor village youths would normally hang out in the basketball court or friends’ houses as there are no shopping complexes located in Chemor. For the older generation, however, they would normally hang out at the Chinese stalls to socialize with fellow senior citizens or they would play chess to pass their time. Such activities have built a very good relationship among the elderly villagers.

There is a clinic in Chemor that would see patients with minor injuries. The fee for the treatment is affordable. As the traffic flow here is slow, there are little or almost no accidents. The government has yet to see a need to build a hospital in such a rural area. The village head himself commented that specialist doctors would have a hard time earning a living in Chemor due to the low population and low pollution rate.
Some other infrastructures in Chemor New Village

Famous food stall in the village
FOOD

Like many other places in Malaysia, Chemor is famous for its wide varieties of food. The short period of time I was there, I saw many people crowding the food stalls, regardless of whether it served Malay, Chinese or Indian food. Samy Restaurant is well known, a force to be reckoned with, so to speak, in this part of Kinta district. Serving delectable Indian banana leaf cuisine, the place is routinely packed with factory workers from the various industrial parks within the vicinity, namely Tasek, Chemor, Kanthan and Sungai Siput. On weekends, even tourists stop by for a finger-licking good meal while on the way to Kuala Kangsar. Be there early, before 12 noon, to beat the crowd. But the patrons here do not mind sharing their tables, given the fact that the set up mostly consists of long tables.

One day, after roughing it around Chemor, I decided to have a simple and light lunch in Chemor town itself. The scorching hot weather did not help either, and the countless rounds we went searching for a “needle in a haystack” somehow rendered us hungrier than usual. Hoong Wan Fish Noodle Soup was a jackpot after a long and tiring day.
TRANSPORTATION

The traffic condition in Chemor is usually smooth flowing. Generally, each household has 1 or 2 vehicles for the whole family. The residents here would normally travel by motorcycle as the distance between destinations is short and easily accessible. Thus, a common problem is the lack of space to park motorcycles.
TOURISM

The magnificence of Seen Hock Yeen Temple often awes visitors. It has been attracting busloads of visitors from outstation on weekends and school holidays in recent years.
PROBLEM AND RECOMMENDATION

The main problem in Chemor is migration of teenagers to cities such as Kuala Lumpur or even the nearest city, Ipoh. The cities provide opportunities for higher paid jobs, and more entertainment as compared to Chemor area.

Perhaps more factories or other business enterprises need to be set up in Chemor to attract the younger residents to remain in this new village.

DISCLAIMER:

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