ABSTRACT

Kepong Ulu is populated mainly by the Chinese but has a small population of Indians also. The Chinese in this village are from the following dialect groups: Hakka, Cantonese and Hokkien. Kepong Ulu’s main tourist spot is the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia. From the aspect of economic activities, Kepong Ulu is famous for local food production such as Ban Mee and Yee Mee, and local biscuits. This village needs improvement in its basic facilities such as transportation and health facilities.
KEPONG ULU

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Kepong Ulu is a small but famous town. This is because there are a lot of factories located in this area. Besides, Kepong Ulu is also a tourist spot due to the existence of Forest Research Institute Malaysia, better known as FRIM, in that town. Majority of the factories are located near the homes and the residents themselves are the owners of the factories. The operation of these factories at Ulu Klang has contributed to the economic growth of the town. However, FRIM remains as the main contributor to the town’s economy.

Ulu Klang is a conducive place for people to rest and relax. This is evident people; by the number of town residents and outsiders who frequent this place for exercise. An entrance fee of RM1 is required per person, whereas RM4 will be imposed for transportation purpose.
Several factories in this housing area produce “Ban Mee” and “Yee Mee”. These are local noodles produced to be supplied to restaurants in the town, and also for sale in the morning and night markets.

Besides noodle factories, there are biscuit factories as well as a cocoa factory in Kepong Ulu. There are also mini-markets, home-styled coffee shops, mamak stalls, convenient stores and even a famous nangka (jackfruit) plantation within the vicinity. These amenities ease the residents’ lives as they do not have to travel up town just to shop for their necessities. In other words, Kepong Ulu is in many ways a self-sufficient village because the majority of the residents run their own business and have access to the basic amenities within the village.
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Kepong Ulu Chinese village is geographically located at 16km North West of the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. It is the nearest Chinese new village from the capital city. There is only a small population of Indian in this village. The Chinese community comprises the following dialect groups: Hakka, Cantonese and Hokkien.

Due to its strategic location near the capital city, the youngsters in this village normally do not move to other cities for working purpose. Therefore, till now they are still living with their parents or even grandparents. This is a good phenomenon for the family’s bonding and the population of the village could also be maintained steadily.

There are two main temples in Kepong Ulu; Fu Qing Tang and Tian Fa Wei Ling Miao. Fu Qing Tang is a temple that worships Guan Yin. Guan Yin is an important deity for the Chinese. The worshippers celebrate 3 important ceremonies for Guan Yin namely the birth of Guan Yin on Lunar 19th of February, the day Guan Yin became God on Lunar 19th of June and the day Guan Yin became a monk on Lunar 19th of September.
Meanwhile, Tian Fa Wei Ling Miao has a history of 26 years, and the temple’s construction cost a total of three hundred thousand Ringgit Malaysia. The deity of Tian Fa Wei Ling Miao is believed to be one of the emperors of China, Lee Si Min. The deity is known to help believers to solve disasters and cure ailments and He is also the protector of Kepong Ulu Village. The believers celebrate the birth of the God on Lunar 16th of May. More often than not, the temple will organize traditional Chinese Opera to celebrate the meaningful occasion. Other than these two temples, there are other smaller temples that worship different deities in the village.

*Tian Fa Wei Ling Miao*

*Traditional Chinese Opera*  *Chinese Opera Performance*
Besides these religious practices, the villagers in Kepong Ulu Chinese village have an interesting past time, star gazing.

There is an astronomy club called The Starfinder which was founded by Mr. Pang Kip Pin. Mr Pang works as a motorcycle foreman. Though not highly educated and with low English proficiency, he has dreamed to be an astronomer since young. With this passion and determination, he has established the astronomy club in the town and even helps students out from schools nearby by sharing information and lending them his high-tech binoculars and other equipment to view stars. When he is free, he would also set his equipment and view the stars with other villagers. For those who are interested in this activity, you could look for more information from the official website of Starfinder: www.starfinder.org.my or call 03-6275 8158 for details. As Mr. Pang puts it, ‘you are welcome to join as a member.’
TOURISM VALUES

The most attractive place in Kepong Ulu is FRIM. FRIM, as a world reputed centre for tropical forestry research, has more than 100 years of experience in forestry and forest product research. Many research students from universities like UPM, UKM, UITM do their research here. Students from primary and secondary schools, especially from the capital city, always have school activities in FRIM too.

FRIM provides camping areas; sports activities like football field, tennis court, squash, table tennis, badminton and basketball; picnic areas, jungle trekking areas and canopy walkway for the visitors. The canopy walkway is open to public from 9.30am till 2.30pm everyday except on Monday and Friday. The canopy walkway is made with the assistance of German researchers. Besides that, in FRIM one could also find a display of several traditional houses from different states in Malaysia. For example, there is a Rumah Terengganu built entirely from Chengal wood without using a single nail which was removed from Pulau Rusa and reconstructed in FRIM.

Besides that, many corporate companies like to organize their Family and Corporate Day in FRIM. It is indeed a very good place to relax due to its pollution free environment. There is also a big pond in FRIM which consists of rare Dragonfish, pirarucu (Arapaima Gigas). It is from the Amazon, South America and can live up to 17 years with a great length of 2-2.4m, and weigh up to 90kg. For more information, please view the website, www.frim.gov.my, or call 03-6279 7000 for further clarification.

Tourism Spot
PROBLEMS

Kepong Ulu has several small cottage industry businesses. The village is full of houses and factories and this provides many job opportunities to residents and has indeed helped to boost the country’s economy. However, as the saying goes, there are always two sides to a coin.

Factories built in this area provide many opportunities for the residents but at the same time, these factories have contributed to air pollution. Not only that, the river in this village is also polluted with the factories’ dump and waste. This will affect the resident’s quality of life in the long run. To overcome these problems, the authorities should not allow the factories to be constructed within residential areas.

The residents of Kepong Ulu need to be more aware of the cleanliness in this housing area. There are several garbage dumps and uncut grass in the residential areas. This could result in the breeding of mosquitoes and insects. It is suggested that the local council could perform a routine check in this area and that residents take the initiative to ensure the housing area is clean and dry.

In addition, the residents also need support from the government to build a railing along the river for safety purposes. Not only that, there should be notices or sign boards to warn the public of dead end roads which lead to the river.

Last but not least, residents of Kepong Ulu are in dire need of public transportation. Besides bus, there is no other public transportation available for the residents in this village. Even then, the bus only stops 30 minutes away from the village. In other words, the residents have to walk for about 30 minutes to Taman Ehsan Kepong in order to get a bus. This is indeed very inconvenient for the residents especially for the elderly who do not have their own transportation. Another added advantage of providing public transport is that it helps to reduce the traffic during peak hours. Easy access to public transport will also attract more tourists to FRIM.
RECOMMENDATION

The infrastructure in the village needs improvement. For example, an operation hall for the volunteer team (sukarela) on night patrol could be built. This is because there is no Police Station or “Pondok Polis” available in this village due to its small population.

Moreover, there is only one kindergarten in Kepong Ulu Village located in the housing area. Due to limited space, there are insufficient caretakers to look after all the children. To top it off, the housing area is unkempt and tall grass can be seen everywhere. This environment is dangerous for the children as it is the breeding ground of mosquitoes and other insects. Hence, residents of Kepong Ulu should organize gotong royong activities once a month to cut the grass and ensure the cleanliness of the housing area.

According to the Star Online (2009), residents of Kepong Ulu had lodged complaints to Selayang Municipal Council (MPS) regarding pollution problems caused by the factories in the neighborhood. Factories operating within the residential area have caused air pollution, water pollution, smell pollution and even noise pollution. In order to overcome to this problem, relocation plans should be underway.

Despite the fact that Kepong Ulu is located near the capital city, the transportation means are very limited. No bus goes into the village and the nearest bus stop is at least 500 meters away from the entrance of the village. If the residents are to depend on taxi services, their expenses for transportation will definitely double up as compared to taking bus solely.

DISCLAIMER:

Information contained in this report was compiled by the University’s students on voluntary basis. Although every effort has been made to check the accuracy of the report, the University accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any errors or omissions, if any, the University reserves the right to make changes on the information at any time without prior notice.

Should there be any queries regarding contents of the report, please contact:
Department of Soft Skills Competency
Tel: 03-79551511 ext 157 (Klang Valley Campus) 05-4662323 ext 2297 / 2299 (Perak Campus)