

Clock towers above Parit

TICK, TOCK: Old clock towers are built not only to tell us the time. Many of us may not know the history they 'keep', especially regarding our National Day. Raja Khalidatul Asrin explores the significance of the small clock tower in Parit town, which is located in the Perak Tengah district

MANY of us, especially the younger generation, may not know the significance of clock towers.

Other than the huge clock tower at the Sultan Abdul Samad building in Kuala Lumpur, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of smaller clock towers all over the country.

They were built not only to tell us the time, but also as a symbol of our country's independence on Aug 31, 1957.

In Perak, clock towers are found in many towns including Kuala Kangsar, Parit Buntar, Sungai Siput, Kampar and Parit.

Parit, which literally means "drain" in Bahasa Malaysia, is a small and harmonious town located beside the magnificent Sungai Perak.

Befitting the National Day theme of "Sehati Sejiwa" this year, this town's population is made up of equal numbers of all races.

As visitors enter Parit, they will realise that most of the shophouses are painted yellow, including the clock tower in the centre of town.

"It was said that the residents collected money to build the clock tower.



A plaque with an inscription, 'Persekutuan Tanah Melayu'



The clock tower in Parit town was built to commemorate the nation's independence

"In fact, the names of those who sponsored money are written on a plaque by the clock," said Yi Fat restaurant owner Tan Yoke Moi.

Tan, 55, said the clock tower stood proudly in the middle of the town and was officiated by Tun Abdul Razak

Hussein, who was then deputy prime minister, on Jan 20, 1963.

"The clock tower, with its Moorish architecture and an inscription of 'Persekutuan Tanah Melayu', was built not to commemorate the birth of a town but for patriotic reasons," said Tan, who operates the Chinese restaurant near the clock tower.

Her restaurant has been in operation for more than 90 years. It was her grandfather who established it.

"I was born and raised here and had witnessed so many things in the past five decades," said the camera-shy woman.

Yi Fat restaurant is also an icon in Parit town, with its ambience resembling similar establishments in the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee's movies during the 1960s era.

Here, locals and foreigners can enjoy cheap chicken chop with rice and other *halal* Chinese delicacies.

True to Malaysia's spirit of unity, customers from different ethnic backgrounds enjoy the meals at the restaurant.

"The food is *halal* and many Malay policemen come here for lunch. We also serve a special brew of *hailam* tea," Tan said.

"Most of my customers are regulars and we all know each other."

She said heritage buildings covered a large portion of Parit town and the link to the past was still intact for its residents.

"This is a real traditional town, which is also famous for its durians. Not the *musang* king durian but the real *kampung* durian," Tan said with a proud smile.



Names of people who sponsored the building of the clock tower are inscribed on another plaque