

# 'Mossy' town growing with vigour

**MULTIFACETED:** From a modest fishing village, Lumut has grown into a booming township with a varying number of industries and home to one of the country's biggest naval bases, writes Sylvia Looi

**T**HE coastal town of Lumut has certainly come a long way from its humble beginning as a fishing village. Located 84km from Ipoh, Lumut, which is part of the Manjung district in Perak, was once known as Tanah Merah.

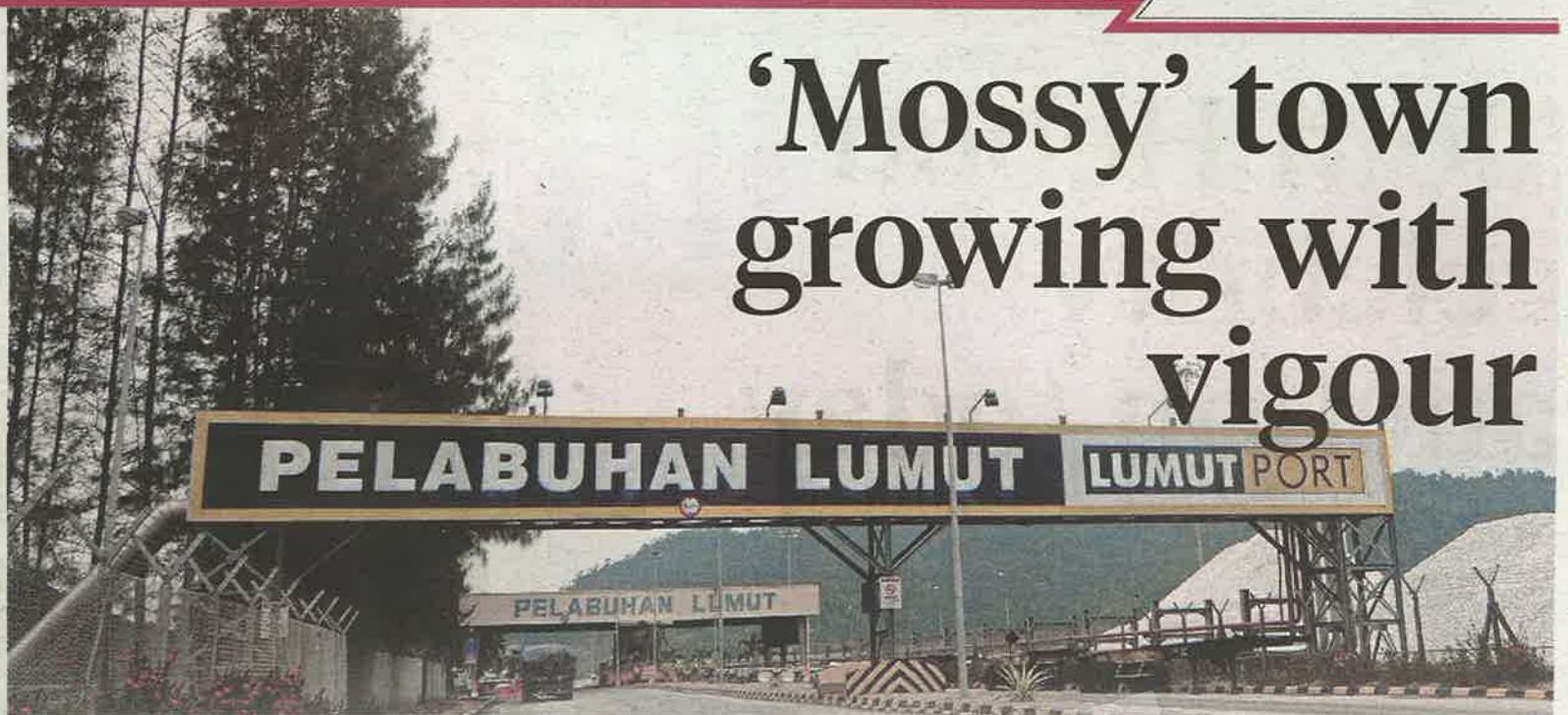
Until the middle of the last century, it remained largely a fishing village and it was during this time its name was changed to Lumut, which means moss.

It is believed the name came about because the beach in Lumut was once covered with moss.

According to a folktale, the area where Lumut was established was explored by a prince from Selangor, Raja Engku Busu. Today, his name lives on in the form of a hill behind the town called Bukit Engku Busu.

The village was often attacked by pirates who accessed it through the Straits of Dinding and after some time, villagers abandoned it, leaving behind a "ghost" village. However, after the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 between the British and

**Lumut Port is a catalyst for Lumut's development.**



**Lumut town is a hive of activities on weekends where tourists make a beeline to buy seafood products. Pix by Farhan Najib**

Perak royalty, the people returned to the village and fishing activities resumed.

Lumut experienced rapid trans-

formation when the Royal Malaysian Navy set up its base here in 1979. Today, it is also home to shipbuilding yards where naval and commercial ships, including patrol vessels and luxury yachts are built.

In 2009, the late sultan of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah declared Lumut the Royal Malaysian Navy Town. Since then, thousands of servicemen and their families have made this town their home.

The township also sees a hive of activities over the weekends and during public holidays, as it is the gateway to Pangkor Island, a popular tourist destination, as well as a haven for marine products.

Local resident Cheong Peng Choon, 58, said over the last three decades Lumut had developed by leaps and bounds.

"When the government decided



**Fishing boats moored at Pangkor Port.**



to build the naval base, all the villagers were relocated to Kampung Datuk Seri Kamaruddin.

"The pace of progress heightened when Lumut Port was constructed in the year 2000 which was followed with the setting up of a new industrial area."

Today, Lumut is also the location of two power plants, a large fabrication yard and several biodiesel plants that provide job opportunities for the residents.

Another resident Loh Eng Soon, 41, said Lumut started as an agriculture town and then developed into an aquaculture town.

"Now, the town is also into swiftlet farming, which is lucrative. Many old shophouses have been turned into 'swiftlet hotels'.

"The owners harvest the birds' nests which are highly priced in the market."

Although happy with the progress the town has seen, Loh, nonetheless, missed the good old days when one could experience nature in abundance.

He said Sungai Dinding used to be rich in fish and other resources but because of development, the numbers had dwindled tremendously.

