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Ong aims to make Ipoh a lively place at night



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IPOH: There are many things Ong Boon Piow wishes to accomplish.

Although a political newcomer, the 29-year-old knows he has to pace himself in his new job as the state assemblyman for Tebing Tinggi.

He told the *New Straits Times* the best thing he could do was to take things one step at a time so his "political stamina" would last till the end of the term.

"I need to focus on issues affecting my constituents first, and then slowly work on my own agendas for the betterment of Ipoh."

Ong says his hands are full dealing with complaints from his constituents about the unsatisfactory services of the Ipoh City Council.

"Almost 90 per cent of the complaints I receive daily are about poor collection of rubbish, uncut grass and clogged drains. My constituents, largely middle-class people, feel the Ipoh City Council is not doing its work."

He said one of the more challenging aspects of representing a constituency with a large number of middle-class voters was fulfilling their expectations.

"The degree of expectation is higher. They want to see that action is taken promptly, and the result thereof is sat-

isfactory to them ... I am doing my best to live up to their expectations," he said.

A mechanical engineering graduate of Universiti Putra Malaysia, the Malacca-born Ong wants to do more than just look after the municipal issues faced daily by his constituents.

He also wants to accomplish his most important personal agenda — turning the city into a vibrant and lively place at night.

"I want to help breathe the nightlife back in the city centre. Just look at it now. It is almost dead after 8pm."

With thousands of people jamming the roads in the city centre during the day, downtown Ipoh acquires a totally different colour at night.

Over the years the city centre, due to the absence of human activities, has been dubbed a ghost town even by tourists who want to sample its nightlife.

Ong wants to change this.

"At present, the night hustle-and-bustle takes place in suburban areas such as Shatin Park, Bercham, Ipoh Garden, Silibin and even Menglembu.

"While the idea of developing suburban areas was good, no one foresaw the impact it would have on the city centre itself," he said.

He believes the trend can be re-



Ong Boon Piow
 Tebing Tinggi assemblyman

versed, provided parties like the Council, the Perak Tourism Action Council, the police, trade and industry chambers of commerce, public transport providers and concerned non-governmental organisations are prepared to work together.

Ong, a self-employed freelance engineering consultant and the Perak DAP political education director, said that three things needed to be done to attract suburban folks to the city centre.

First is to get transport providers to restart night services of buses and

taxis; second to get more policemen on the streets to curb petty thefts; and lastly to organise sports, performing arts and cultural activities in open areas at night.

But Ong, who defeated the BN's Datuk Chew Wai Koon by a majority of 2,515 votes, admits that his ambition of enlivening Ipoh at night will be a herculean task.

"That is why I want to move towards this aim step by step ... not by leaps. I do not want to fire out so early because the journey is still a long way."