

# Birch House restored to its grandeur

**PENANG:** Restoration work on the 98-year-old Birch House in Jalan Datuk Keramat has finally been completed after two years.

The Light Emitting Diode (LED)-based lighting, which was installed around the facade of the two-storey building, was switched on recently to showcase its majestic splendour.

Ivory Properties Group managing director Datuk Low Eng Hock said the LED-lighting was common in other cities but this was something new to Penang.

"We hope this will bring a new era to George Town and we intend to install the special lighting effect at the Penang Times Square central recreation park upon completion of the project," he said.

The group's project planner Yeong Siew Yan said the RM2.5mil restoration work on the former tin smelting office started in August, 2004, and was completed just before Chinese New Year.

The developer has started piling works for Phase One of the Penang Time Square project.

Phase One comprises a

0.8ha open space and an 18-storey service suites and commercial units called *Birch The Plaza*.

"While restoration works were in progress, among the first departments to move into Birch House were the marketing, administration, finance, town planning, procurement and the quantity surveying in March last year.

"The last department, which moved in October last year, was the technical department," he said.

The heritage mansion was once owned by the founder of Eastern Smelting Company Lee Chin Ho.

Lee named the building after Sir Earnest Birch, the first chairman of the Eastern Smelting.

The company's name was changed twice, the first as Datuk Keramat Smelting in 1976 and later to Escoy Smelting in 1993.

The sales office at the Birch House will be open during the festive break from 11am to 7pm for those interested in inquiring about projects undertaken by Ivory Properties. For details, call 04-2108000.



**EYE-CATCHING:** Birch House, renovated at a cost of RM2.5mil, being lit up at night.

## Fomca seeks review of water Bills

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) has asked the Government to make several changes to the Water Service Industry Bill (WSI Bill) and the National Water Services Commission Bill (Span Bill) to safeguard consumers and ensure sustainable water supply in the country.

In a memorandum to the Ministry of Energy, Water and Communication, Fomca said members of the National Water Services Commission should, in the first place, be selected "very

carefully," through public voting if possible.

"We forward this memorandum to the Energy, Water and Communication Ministry to be incorporated into the Bills so as to safeguard the welfare and ensure that clean, safe and reliable water supply without disruption be provided to the consumers of Malaysia," said the memorandum, which was released to the media.

"The Span Bill does not specify clearly the criteria in appointing the commissioners

and gives discretionary powers to the minister to appoint and revoke," Fomca said.

On the WSI Bill, Fomca wanted the Government to review Section 89 which dealt with the disconnection of water supply for non-payment.

It said, the timeframe given to settle their water bills should be changed from 14 days to 45 days and, that the notice period for consumers to pay their bills before water was disconnected should be increased to 30 days. - Bernama