

Mad rush for CNY biscuits

Family trying to keep up with demand

BY CHRISTINA KOH

IPOH: In the days leading up to Chinese New Year, the Yee family will be swamped with orders for their *Gunung Rapat hong piah*, a thick crispy biscuit with a sweet gooey centre.

Yee Trading Biscuit Factory assistant manager Jess Yee Yoke Leng, 27, said they were often unable to keep up with the demand although they baked about a thousand 500gm-packets of the biscuit everyday.

Each packet contains about 12 pieces of *hong piah*, which means fragrant biscuit, made of flour, onions, lard, sugar, salt and sesame seeds with a molasses filling.

Jess said the business started from the days when her mother, Wong Chin Haw, 54, would cycle around Gunung Rapat here, selling the biscuits.

"My mother, who is from Taiping, had learnt to make *hong piah* when she was a girl.

"About 25 years ago, she would cycle down back lanes and sell the biscuits to housewives who would be cooking in the kitchen at 5pm," she said.

Jess said that her father, Yee Ah Lek, on seeing his wife struggling to bake the *hong piah*, decided to put aside his construction worker job to help out.

Today, the business is a family affair with Jess, her sister Yoke Cheng, 34, and brother Yoke Loong, 33, and their

parents managing the business.

To keep up with the orders, the family expanded from their operations from a factory in Gunung Rapat to a bakery in Taman Ipoh Jaya and a store in Jalan Sultan Iskandar here.

The *hong piah* is now baked in modern ovens in the bakery, while the biscuits at the Gunung Rapat factory are made traditionally by Jess' father in a clay oven similar to the ones used to bake the Indian bread *naan*.

"We have customers and suppliers who sometimes export the biscuits to the United States, Taiwan and Australia," said Jess.

The shops sell about 50 types of biscuits and snacks, including 15 baked by the family such as peanut candy, "Husband" and "Wife" biscuits, and *pong piah*, another version of *hong piah* made with margarine instead of lard.

Jess explained that the "Husband" and "Wife" biscuits were usually one of the gifts given by the family of a suitor to the family of his prospective bride during visits to propose and discuss marriage plans.

"The 'Wife' biscuits are made of wheat flour, molasses, vegetable oil and are usually sweeter than the 'Husband' biscuits, which are saltier and have a red bean curd filling," she said.

A 500gm pack of *hong piah* costs RM5 while a 150gm pack of either "Husband" or "Wife" biscuits costs RM3.



HOT FROM THE OVEN: Wong sorting her famous 'Gunung Rapat hong piah' at the family's bakery in Taman Ipoh Jaya yesterday. — STARpic by LEW YONG KAN



Rasli: Says victims gave assessment of losses

Langkawi fire losses up to RM2m, says district officer

LANGKAWI: The fire that razed 120 houses in Bukit Malut here last Sunday caused losses amounting to RM1.99m, Langkawi district officer Datuk Rasli Basir said.

He said the figure was derived from assessments made by the homeless victims themselves.

He said initial police investigations of the blaze showed that there was no element of sabotage.

"Also destroyed were eight boats," he said when briefed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi about the blaze during the premier's visit here on Thursday.

Rasli said none of the 60 victims from 124 families were injured in the blaze.

He said the victims had received food, clothing, mattresses, toiletries and more from Government, non-governmental organisations as well as individuals.

THE WEATHER

MORNING

AFTERNOON

Forecast provided by Meteorological Services Dept valid from 7am - 7pm

LOCAL WEATHER		
PEN. MALAYSIA	SABAH	SARAWAK
Isolated rain over Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. Elsewhere fair.	Fair over all residencies.	Isolated rain over Sri Aman, Kuching and Samarahan. Elsewhere fair.
Isolated thunderstorms/showers over West Johor, N. Sembilan, Selangor, Pahang, Perak and Malacca. Elsewhere fair.	Isolated showers over West Coast, Labuan, Sandakan and Interior. Elsewhere fair.	Isolated thunderstorms/showers over Limbang, Bintulu, Miri, Sarikei, Kapit and Sib. Elsewhere fair.

For the detailed report see: thestar.com.my

WORLD WEATHER					
Min(°C) Max(°C)			Min(°C) Max(°C)		
Kuala Lumpur	22	33	partly cloudy	Los Angeles	08 23 clear
Amsterdam	02	05	rain	Manila	22 30 clear
Auckland	18	24	cloudy	Mecca	18 30 clear
Bangkok	25	33	partly cloudy	Mexico City	07 20 partly cloudy
Beijing	-08	00	clear	Montreal	-10 -01 partly cloudy
Berlin	-03	00	rain	Moscow	-10 -08 snow
Brussels	00	06	rain	New Delhi	06 20 clear
Cairo	06	18	clear	New York	-02 04 clear
Copenhagen	-01	03	rain	Paris	-01 03 partly cloudy
Dublin	03	08	cloudy	Rome	01 06 partly cloudy
Frankfurt	-02	03	rain	San Francisco	06 17 clear
Geneva	-04	00	snow	Seoul	-12 -03 partly cloudy
Hanoi	12	22	rain	Singapore	25 32 partly cloudy
Hong Kong	10	19	partly cloudy	Sydney	19 31 rain
Islamabad	03	17	cloudy	Taipei	08 15 partly cloudy
Jakarta	24	30	rain	Tokyo	-01 05 partly cloudy
Johannesburg	16	28	partly cloudy	Toronto	-08 -01 clear
London	05	07	partly cloudy	Washington	-03 06 clear

Flats near sinkholes 'safe'

Chang: 'Ipoh has lots of underground limestone and erosion holes are likely to occur from time to time.'

IPOH: The Sungai Pari Towers, around which two sinkholes appeared in a span of one month, are safe for dwelling.

State Urban Development and Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Chang Ko Youn said Ipoh City Council engineers had inspected the flats and found the structure to be strong.

He said the 15-storey building was on a firm footing and the Mineral and Geoscience Department had started to study the land surrounding the flats.

The department, he added, would be presenting the results of the study to the state government soon.

"Ipoh has lots of underground limestone and erosion holes are likely to occur from time to time.

"But high-rise buildings in Ipoh are constructed on a firm footing and will not be affected by sinkholes," he said when contacted here yesterday.

Chang added that the sinkholes at Sungai Pari Towers could have occurred due to a burst pipe underground.

A second sinkhole - which appeared on Feb 2 just 2m away from the first one that appeared a month back - had caused the main road leading to Block C of the flats to cave in.

The 200 residents of Block A were distressed because the sinkhole, measuring 3m by 2m and 1m deep, appeared near the ground floor units.

After learning that the building was structurally sound, shopkeeper Kumar, 47, whose house was nearest to the sinkhole, said he would not move out from the flats.

"I am not afraid because I too believe that the sinkhole appeared due to a burst underground pipe near a sewer.

"Besides, if the structure of the building is not stable, cracks should have appeared on the walls of my flat unit now, but it is not so," he said.

Unesco drops claim M'sia breached rights

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government's efforts to convince Unesco that Malaysia's judiciary was transparent, just and independent succeeded when Unesco decided to drop claims that the country breached human rights during Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's trial.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said this decision was made at the two-day Commit-

tee of Convention and Recommendations (CCRE) meeting at Unesco headquarters in Paris, beginning Sept 29 last year.

Allegations of breach of human rights on Anwar had been registered in 2000.

Hishammuddin said the case was deliberated at CCRE meetings eight times between 2000 and last year.

He said the Education Ministry had been making efforts, including preparing

replies to CCRE, to dispel the allegations.

"All these efforts boiled down to the fact that the rights of the former Deputy Prime Minister were not violated and that the country's judiciary was independent and was based on principles of justice," he said.

Hishammuddin said Malaysia's argument was proven right when the Federal Court freed Anwar. — Bernama