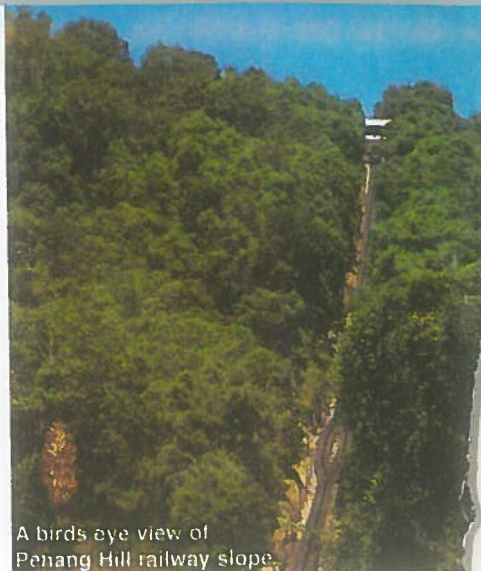
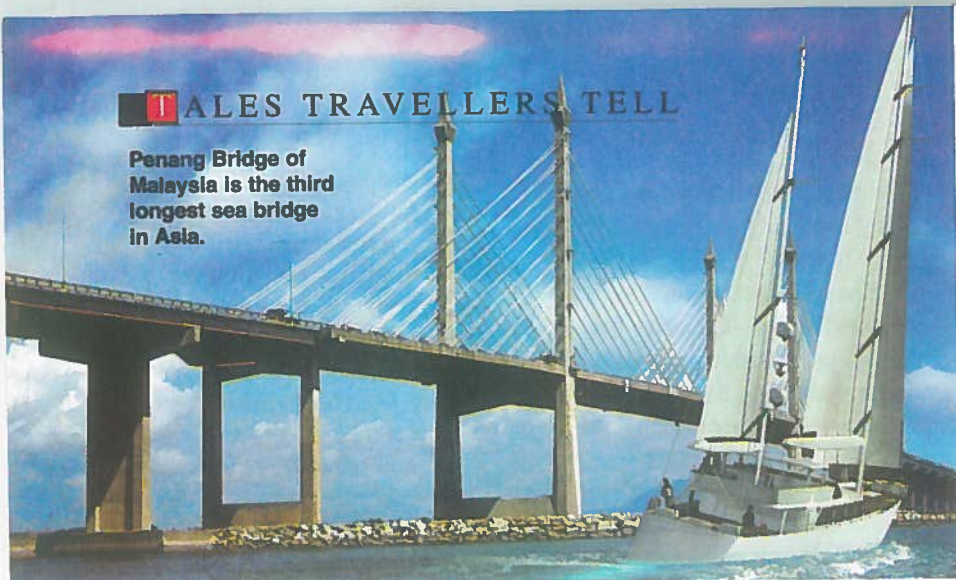


TALKS TRAVELLERS TELL

Penang Bridge of Malaysia is the third longest sea bridge in Asia.



A birds eye view of Penang Hill railway slope.

Trek to Air Itam at Penang

The trek is a refreshing and rejuvenating experience for all those trying to steal a few moments of tranquillity and serenity. ■ by Murli Menon

I booked into the City Bayview Hotel, in Penang. It was the middle of August, but the weather was pleasant. Penang is an island in Malaysia, 350 km from Kuala Lumpur. The excellent highway makes driving a pleasure and it takes five hours to reach Penang from Kuala Lumpur. Penang is known in Malay as Pulau Pinang, which means beetle-nut island.

The highway crosses the 23-km-long Penang Bridge just before entering the city. It is worthwhile to mention here that this bridge over choppy backwaters is the third-longest bridge in Asia.

The nearest international airport to reach Penang is Kuala Lumpur. Penang is also connected to Singapore and Bangkok by direct flights. Alternately, one can take the train from Kuala Lumpur Central to Penang, which takes a little more than eight hours. This train departs at 8.45 pm and arrives at Penang station at 5.45 am the next morning. The train journey is equivalent to 2nd-class air-conditioned travel in India.

Penang is dotted with beaches and



The hill train passing through a bridge.

in learning when learning loses its meaning?"

Correction method

In my time, the teacher would mark us wrong even if there were small mistakes and often when there was no mistake at all. We never would look up at the teacher and dare to ask her, why she did it. But today the scene is different.

During training, they teach you if a child has made fewer mistakes on a page they should be considered as right answers because perhaps they may have happened due to the speeds of the flow of thought and the speed of writing not matching. But do the teachers communicate this reason to the students? The tendency of the student is to get the idea that he or she is special and all his mistakes would be taken lightly.

As adults they continue with the wrong spellings and usage of language in their field of work. Even small differences in spelling and wording can change the meaning. Sometimes it can be a question of life and death, when it comes to medical reports and prescriptions.

I know of a corporate communication professional, who uses 'being proud on' someone instead of 'being proud of' someone. She is a blogger as well. Blogs often are found to be infested with such language errors. With nobody to edit them, they get away with such crap. Even journalists today are not spared by this disease.

When they post their requirement for inputs on Facebook their language is hilarious. Either there is an editor above them to take care of their mistakes in the final article or the mistakes are not taken into consideration at all and the draft with errors goes to print. Such articles have been seen in big newspapers, too.

When this printed matter is seen by children, who are advised to read newspapers to improve language and knowledge, they end up picking up what is wrong. Thus the vicious cycle continues.

We must also not forget that while it is important to follow the rules of grammar, we also need to embrace the fact that in this age of texting and emoticons, the English is in a transition phase and popular slang finds its way in the common expression.

Ms. Pushpa says, "Today with present technology one need not know how to spell the words properly. As we write, the computer corrects the word based on the context and sometimes leads to grave errors the way you mentioned. Mistake is a mistake but our approach is important. If the student is made to realise the importance of whatever he or she is learning results could be satisfactory.

Prof. Ramola highlights another aspect of it, "It is important that while setting the course evaluation in place, a few answer sheets – maybe the first five test – answer could be shared with the student on a one – to-one basis so that these errors are pointed out and the use of correct language is encouraged. Otherwise later in life the student will suffer enormously in his career and may face a defeatist element when his or her colleagues and officers will make fun of the poor language used. The consequences can be far more serious later in life. Children can pick up language quickly and correctly if they are truly taught with sincerity and attention. A true teacher will always

help and properly advise a student and with enormous patience."

According to Gloria, "First of all I would like to thank you for bringing up such pedantic topics up front which are major and majorly ignored issues in the field of education. As a teacher my heart aches when I have to go against the system and deduct the marks and fight for not following the contemporary trend. This is because I feel responsible for the growth of the learners and if I don't point out the mistakes then how will my students improve? And the student psychology says that marks have vital effect on a student's psychology. Awarding and deducting marks trigger different parts of a student's mind. Deducting marks for some mistake makes a student realise that he should not repeat it. But, if we let go of the flaws, then the CCE's much propagated 'all round development' would fail in its meaning."

On the other hand, Rajeev Katyal opines, "It is true that mistakes made as a child and corrected at that point in time are forever ingrained in our memory. We must also not forget that while it is important to follow the rules of grammar, we also need to embrace the fact that in this age of texting and emoticons, the English is in a transition phase and popular slang finds its way in the common expression. Also, as slang is a way to connect with the youth of the country, being 'proper' is not always the way to go." ■

CHILD IS A CHILD IS A CHILD

Old for elder

While cleaning the vegetable basket of the refrigerator, I found an apple which apparently was there since long as it looked shrunken and shrivelled. My younger son, aged

five, happen to come around me and I gave the apple to him to eat.

He after looking it all round returned it to me saying, "Amma, I won't eat this 'Old' apple. You give it to Dadaji".

— Padmini Singh

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Toy train chugs through a jungle track.

hills. Penang Hill is a verdant hillock covered by dense forest, located nine km from the city. The view from the highest point at Penang Hill is nothing short of majestic. Thick, equatorial forests surround this picturesque hill, nestled in a canopy of green. The skyscrapers of faraway Penang can be seen from the summit.

Verdant terrain

Air Itam is a village near Penang Hill, which is accessible only on foot. One has to trek through various shades of green, mountain-streams and thick, dipterocarp forests. One experiences the thrill of passing through verdant undulating terrain and varied tropical landscapes at every step of this adventure. Tropical flora, insects, birds and butterflies can be seen at close quarters during this jungle walk.

The most soul-stirring part of the trek is walking over dried, tropical leaves of various shades of brown. This is an unforgettable experience as one can observe the variety of colours, shapes and forms of the dried leaves that stretch for miles together. One should be careful to plan the trek so that one returns to the base camp by nightfall, as night trekking is bound to be difficult for tourists.

Resting in a small clearing in the forest, by the side of a gurgling stream, your head nestling on the



Starting point to a rejuvenating climb on Penang Hill.

roots of a tall tree is an unparalleled experience. Lying thus, on a soft bed of dried leaves, is one of the most powerful tools for relaxation and harmonising your energy with nature.

Serious trekkers can continue their treks to Penang Hill. After spending a few hours communicating with nature, one reluctantly begins the descent to the camping-site. This gentle trek is a naturalist's delight and is suited for trekkers ranging from children to silvers. As the altitude is below 350 metres, it is easy on the lungs.

The gentle trek to Air Itam is a refreshing and rejuvenating experience for all souls trying to steal a few moments of tranquillity and serenity, away from the vagaries of modern life which has become more stressful than ever before.

How to get there

Penang is connected by air from Kuala Lumpur, Chennai, Singapore, Bangkok and Jakarta. The city centre is approximately 20 km from Penang airport.

Penang is also connected by rail from Kuala Lumpur. The overnight train journey makes it convenient for Indian tourists arriving at Kuala Lumpur international airport. Air Itam is a 9-km drive from the centre of Penang city.

Where to stay

The City Bayview Hotel in Penang is centrally located and offers comfortable rooms at affordable tariffs by Indian standards.

Where to eat

Lots of small restaurants serving Indian and Chinese cuisine dot Penang. You get freshly steamed vegetables with soya and boiled rice at Yaun vegetarian at Transfer Road, which is a short walk from City Bayview Hotel. The boiled spinach and sweet and sour vegetables is as delicious as it is nutritious.

Woodlands, which is good value for money for Indian, vegetarian food, is also in the vicinity of this hotel. Fresh fruits, including water-melons, papayas, tender coconuts, durians, mangosteens and pineapples, are available at the local market. ■