

LIFE&TIMES **FAMILY**

PICTURES BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

Hopping down memory lane

Do you remember the games you played as a child?
Aneeta Sundararaj revisits several favourites

A WOMAN leads her young daughter to the starting line of a hopscotch game. The little tot is wearing a pair of really cute boots. Her mother starts to hop on each square in an attempt to show the little girl how to play the game. The girl stares at her mother, lost and shy.

"Scared, mummy," she whispers and grabs her mother's hand. Suddenly, a barefoot, 5-year-old boy who is watching nearby, runs to the starting line, hops on all the squares and back. Before he runs off to another game, he looks at the little girl, as if to say "this is how it's done".

"Show off!" teases one of the staff members at the Lalililatampung Game Show campaign organised by Oriental Arts & Culture Association (OACA).

Chin Yuen Seam, 47, one of the directors at OACA, says this episode highlights an important point: These games have not only managed to evoke nostalgia, but also raise awareness and interest in them among today's iPad generation (in reference to children who prefer to stay indoors and play with their electronic gadgets).

She says: "You know, we never had any adult show us how to play these games. There was no need to know English, BM or Chinese to play. We

had our own language. If you didn't understand the game, you watched and imitated. Or, someone will show you, like this boy."

When I mention that most of the children on the first floor of the air-conditioned building have footwear, Chin concedes: "We have to allow shoes because the parents are so afraid their children's feet will be injured and this is the only place we could find indoors."

Gone are the days when parents felt comfortable about their children playing outdoors and coming home bruised or scarred, says the expert in Chinese calligraphy.

NurElaine Aisyah Abdullah, senior manager at Eiken and a mother of three young children, shudders and says: "When you hear of children being kidnapped from parks... and then the haze, pollution and dengue, you want the children to come inside by 6.30 - 7pm. It's safer."

So children now find sources of entertainment indoors. The

38-year-old confides: "I do feel guilty sometimes. I feel we've somehow trained our children to become used to going to stores like ToysRUs. Every weekend, they can get a new toy."

Chin says: "Where got money to buy toys back then? With nothing more than a handkerchief, flowers tied together with string, unused coconut shells or even rubber-bands, we created great games such as Five Stones. First we had to go and find the stones. Now, you hardly see any child making his own game. Everything is bought. I know this sounds bad, but in the few days we've run this exhibition, I notice the children don't know how to look after the toys. We

have toy soldiers without heads, half the body broken and all."

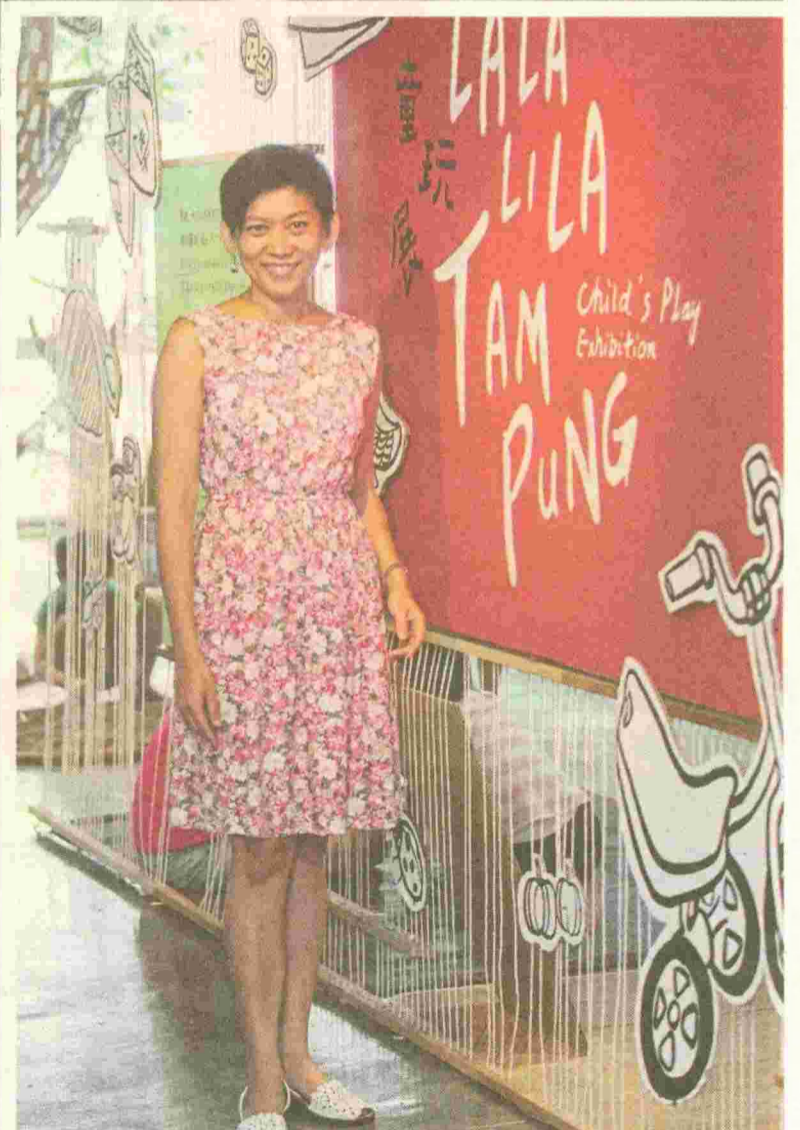
Elaine feels that because the games on electronic gadgets are "time sensitive", children aren't interested in these "old" games which have no time limit (or even a limited one). After all, you can play hopscotch 100 times if you like.

Lalililatampung Game Show

Where: Oriental Art & Cultural Association, 10-12, 1st Floor, Yayasan Eiken, Jalan 1/137C, 5th Mile Old Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur

When: Until June 14, 11am-7pm daily (Closed on Monday)

Admission: Free
 Details at www.facebook.com/OrientalArtCulturalAssociation

Oriental Art & Cultural Association director, **Chin Yuen Seam**.

She says: "We were showing the children how to skip with a skipping rope made from rubber bands. When one girl was skipping, the rubber band hit her shoulder and immediately she said, 'Pain-lah. Don't want to play'.

"We had to encourage her to go on playing. Some other children, after running around a bit, will say, 'Hot mummy, tired!'"

Shaking her head, she adds: "I don't remember anything like this. I come from what used to be the Salak



Simple childhood game but lots of fun.



Reliving a game of Batu Seremban.

TRADITIONAL GAMES

Here are some of the games your children (and you) can play at the Lalalilatampung Game Show Campaign.

Five Stones: This can be played alone or in groups. Throw all five stones into the air with one hand and catch as many as you can on the back of the same hand. Then throw up all the stones that are on back of your hand and try to catch them again in the palm of the same hand. The goal is to get through all the moves without dropping any of the stones. If you drop the stones or end up with no stones in your hand after your throw is complete, your turn is over. If you manage to catch at least one stone, you can continue playing.

Eagle Catch Chicken: This needs at least three players. One person will act as the eagle, another the hen and the rest are chicks. The hen and chicks stand in one line with the hen in the front spreading both arms to protect the chicks from being caught by the

eagle. Each chick will hold the ends of the clothes of the chick in front of him. The eagle should seek every opportunity to catch the chick. If one chick is caught, he becomes the eagle and that previous eagle retires. The game proceeds until the last chick is caught.

Coconut Shoes: This game involves using coconut shells which are tied to strings, with one end being held by the player. It requires two groups of 10 - 12 members each. The first player of each team walks towards the goal line using the coconut shells. The player returns to the starting line and then lets the next player do the same. The first team to finish the race wins while players who walk for more than two steps after a fall will be disqualified.

Handkerchief: This game requires at least four players. They will sit in a circle while one of them jogs around the outer rim of the circle with a handkerchief. This person is called

the runner. Those within the circle have to keep their eyes closed. The runner will drop the handkerchief on the back of a player and run away. If he makes it around the circle before the player realises that it's on her back, the seated player is out. If the seated player catches on, she must tag the runner. If she succeeds, the runner is out. If she fails to tag him, they play again, but this time the second player is the runner.

Congkak: This game requires two players and a congkak board (which is usually made from teak or mahogany) and 98 cowrie shells, marbles or seeds. There are either seven or eight holes on each side with one ibu on either end of the congkak board. The object of the game is to collect as many shells possible in your ibu. The efficient player is the one who figures out how many steps he needs to take in advance to gain an advantage over his opponent and collect as many shells as possible in his ibu.

South village and we would play for hours. No complaining."

On a positive note, Chin says she sees a difference in the children in the short time that they engage in play. "We've had over 600 children come for this exhibition. Initially one boy was very scared of everyone but soon, he was playing with the

other boys, all strangers, and getting along fine."

Equally important for her was seeing the joy in many of the parents and grandparents. She says: "When the children see their parents having fun, they feel that their parents have time for them. Sure, there are still mothers who will tell their

children to play and then use their smartphone to video them. But not many."

"In the end," says Elaine, "my hope is that this is just a start. Parents can come here, remember how they used to play, go home and continue to play with their children. That is our take home story."

T. rex
AUTOPSY

DINO MONTH
every Sunday from
14 June to 12 July at 10pm

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL
ASTRO CH 553

JURASSIC ADVENTURE
OLD WORLD, NEW DISCOVERIES.

SEE THE JURASSIC WORLD IN A NEW LIGHT.

Explore the prehistoric world in new and exciting ways at Petrosains! Touch a million-year-old fossil specimen or be a paleontologist for a day, as you discover amazing facts about the Big Bang Theory, genetics, dinosaurs and much more!

Gear up for an exciting Jurassic Adventure!

For more information, log on to www.petrosains.com.my

Closed on Mondays except during school and public holidays.

Petrosains Sdn. Bhd. (458560-01)