

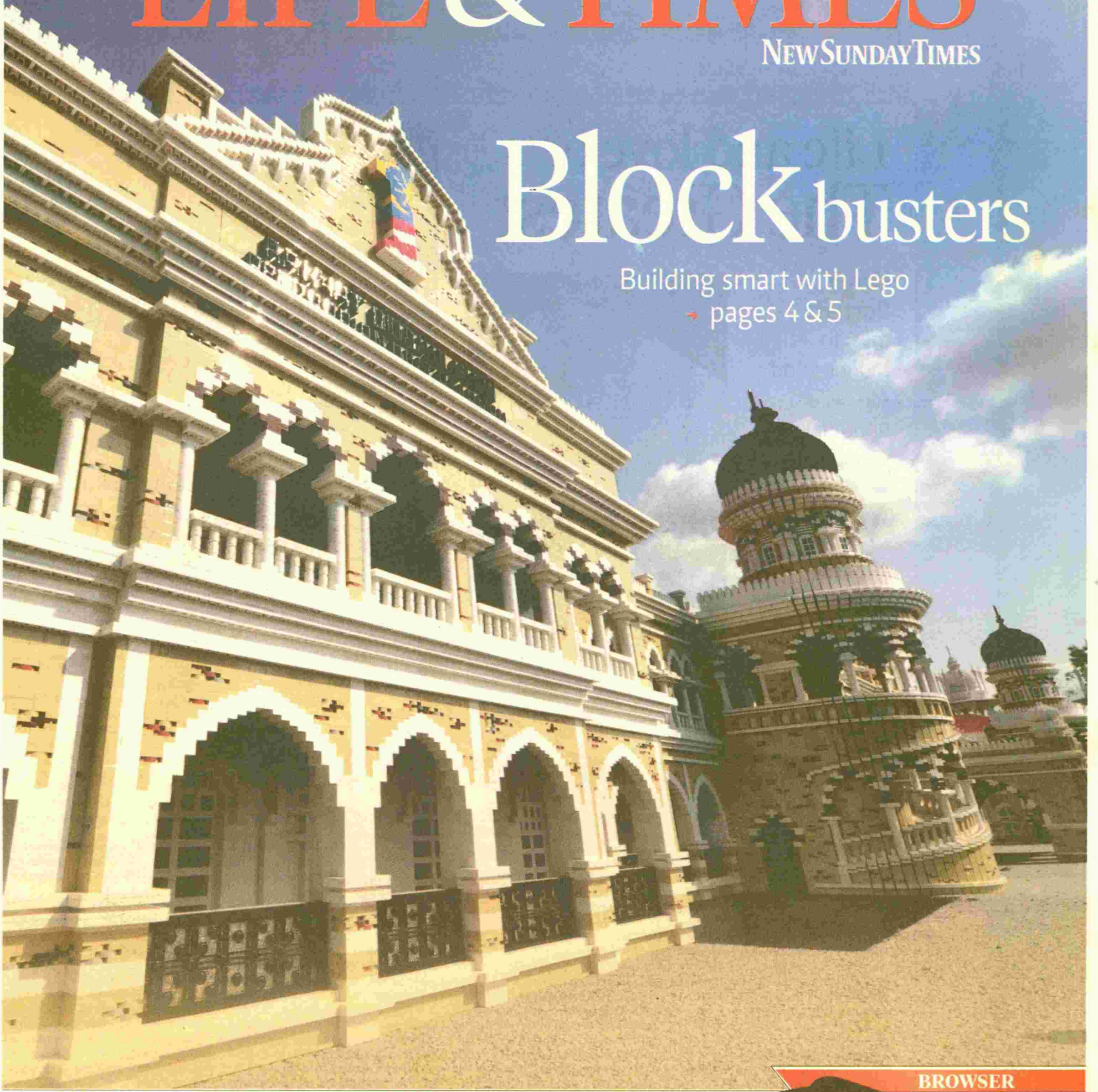
AUGUST 12, 2012

LIFE & TIMES

NEWSUNDAYTIMES

Blockbusters

Building smart with Lego
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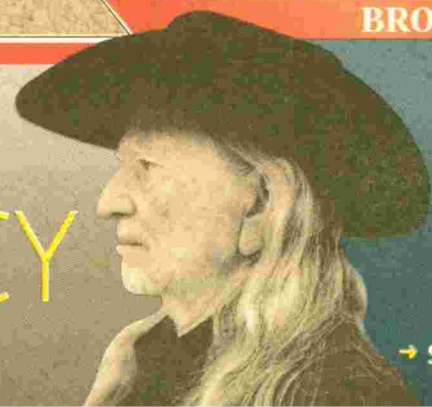
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LIFE & TIMES FAMILY

Worlds built together

With the Legoland Malaysia theme park set to open next month, **Aneeta Sundararaj** is reminded of the joys that Lego blocks bring to both young and old

“I NEVER thought that I would work in a theme park,” says Siegfried Boerst, 49, general manager of Legoland Malaysia.

The theme park in Nusajaya Johor Baru is set to open its doors on Sept 15, but Boerst gives *Life & Times* a peek into what visitors can expect, the rationale behind the building of the theme park and why playing with Lego, as opposed to the latest electronic gadget, matters to a child of the new millennium.

“I still have my first Lego set,” he tells us. “It’s in my mum’s house and my kids play with them.”

It gave him much joy watching the garage door open and close automatically. Boerst smiles at the thought, it’s obvious the memory still evokes in him a child-like fascination with Lego.

He adds: “Lego stimulates creativity and the imagination. Children can follow instructions or have an image of what they want to achieve. Many children will usually ask, ‘What else can I build with these blocks?’ or ‘Can I make something different?’ There’s no limit to what

they can create.

“My daughter will build houses using Lego. Then, she’ll mix it with other toys and create something else. For example, ‘There is a set that has imaginary heroes. Some children merged several parts of these characters and created a new hero altogether.’”

Clearly, he feels that Legoland bricks are a great tool to help students become more dynamic and improve their problem-solving skills, including out of the box thinking. Boerst adds that children play together when they play with Lego. “They interact and learn social skills. Not just sit in front of a computer and play games.”

He has also observed that playing with Lego has helped autistic children. “One of their problems is that they cannot express themselves verbally. So, these bricks help them to create things, which assist in the creative and communication processes. There’s no wrong or right in what they create. They have that freedom.”

A word that Boerst utters often in conversation is “freedom”. In a candid moment, it is clear why. He says: “I grew up in a time when Germany was divided into two. I lived close to the German border. And I was free in the West. I recognised that just a few kilometres away, where we had some family, it was not so. I have always wanted to travel but we couldn’t afford to. Today, I am aware that many people take freedom to move for granted.”

That sense of freedom underlies his enthusiasm about living in a country so far from his native Germany.

“We chose Malaysia to build the Legoland park because the people are becoming affluent and family values are still very important. Legoland park is something for the whole family to experience. Our target group is children between



“Legoland park is something for the whole family to experience.”

Siegfried Boerst

the ages of 2 and 12. The idea is to get the parents and children to work together. We always have the child in mind.”

Explaining some of the attractions in the theme park, Boerst says the one that will certainly appeal to parents who are determined to raise a generation of better drivers is the Traffic School. The school allows children to learn traffic rules and drive in a car made from Lego bricks. “We even give them a driving licence at the end.”

Feeling as though you’re listening to someone narrate a scene from Aldous Huxley’s seminal work, *Brave New World*, Boerst describes the 4D Cinema as where, “you not only watch the movie and hear the sound but, when it snows, you’ll also feel the snow falling down.”

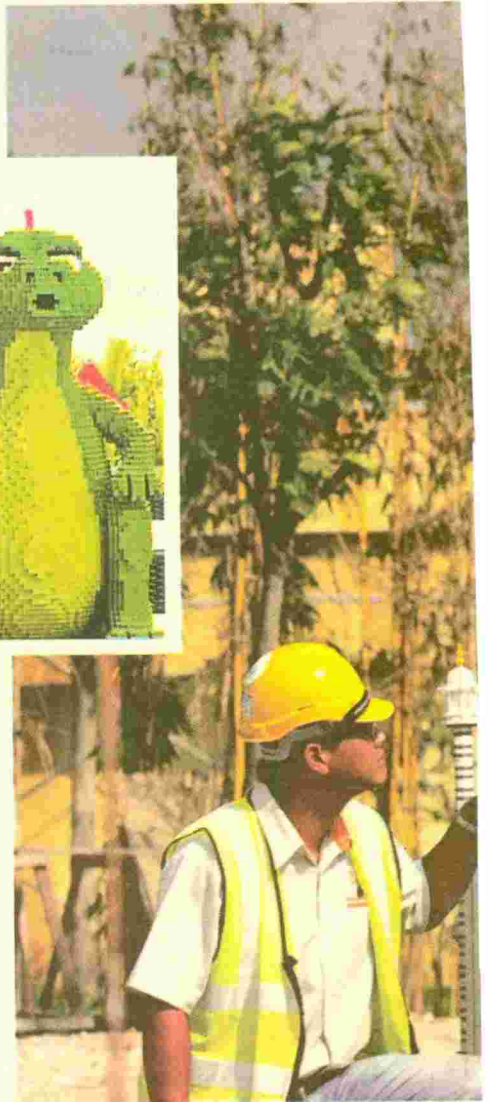
With the largest store in Asia, Legoland Malaysia will be the place to visit if you need to buy loose Lego bricks and pay for them by weight.

Finally, to adapt to the culture of the local region, Boerst says that there is a section dedicated to Asia. “There are miniature versions of iconic buildings from around

Asia like Singapore’s Merlion, Laos’ Angkor Wat, Brunei’s Royal Palace and China’s Forbidden City.”

The model of Petronas Twin Towers built entirely from Lego bricks took some 5,500 hours to design and build.

Boerst is looking forward to the theme park opening next month. With an almost bashful smile, he wonders if others will be as fascinated with his favourite — a miniature version of India’s Taj Mahal.



NST Digital Edition



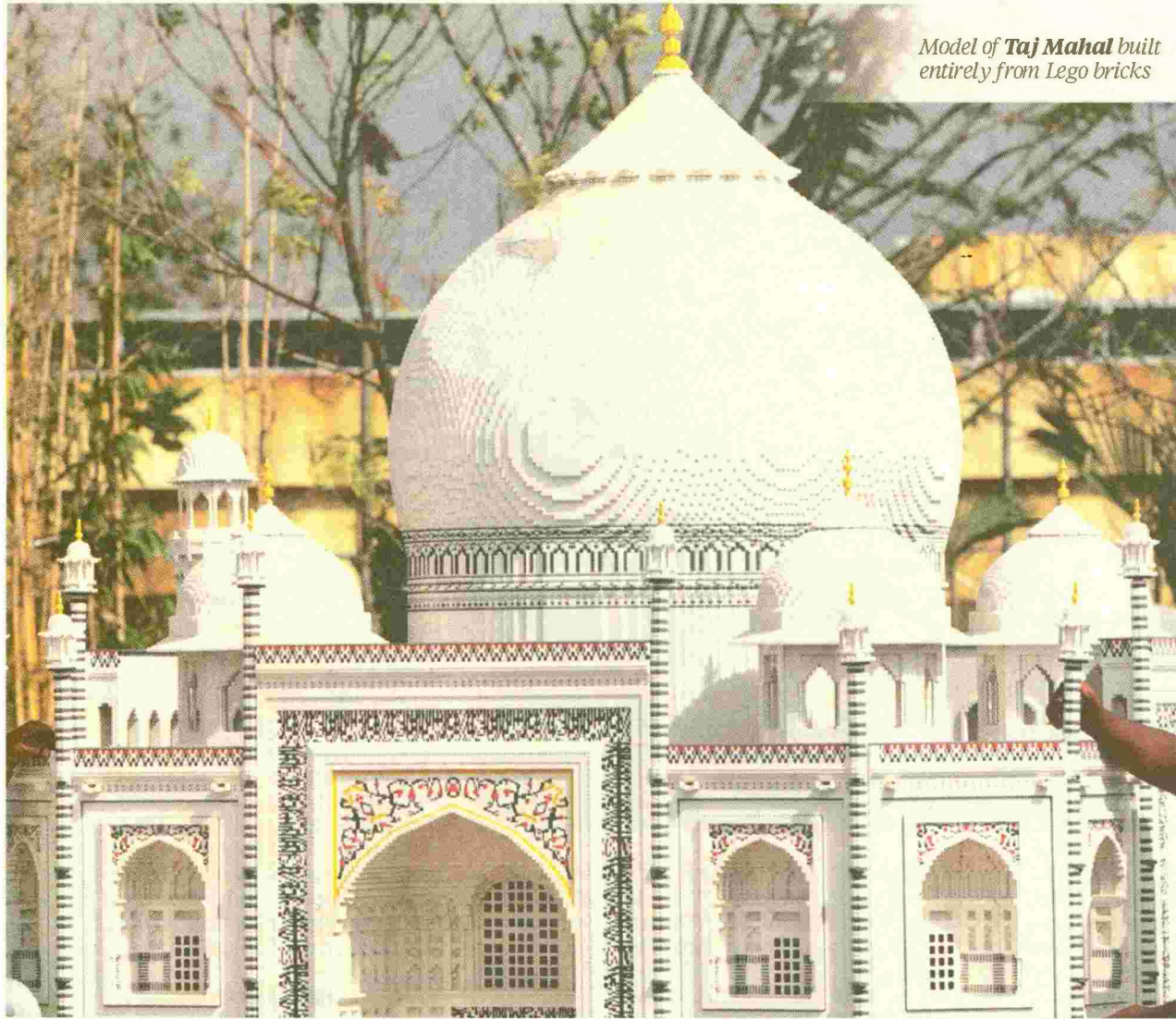
For video, go to subscription.nstp.com.my

To watch a Behind The Scenes video of how the Petronas Twin Towers was built using Lego bricks at Legoland Malaysia, click on the following link: <https://vimeo.com/46081293>



Model of Temple of Dawn in Bangkok

Model of **Taj Mahal** built entirely from **Lego** bricks



Lego building contest

“CREATIVITY, imagination, fun, learning, care and quality are pillars of the Legoland brand. We believe in play as an effective way of teaching children and the brand encourages creative learning. Besides that, we also want to inspire children to develop love for their country from a young age and this is a great start,” says

Siegfried Boerst, general manager of Legoland Malaysia as he introduces the Lego Building Craze Contest.

“This is the first Legoland building contest of its kind in Asia and it is set to take Malaysia by storm. The contest aims to inspire creative learning, foster students interaction, teamwork and develop national education values among pupils.

Each school can register five teams and each team can consist of up to a maximum of 10 students.

The competition is open to all schoolchildren aged between 4 and 14.

Every member of each winning team will receive five-day passes to Legoland Malaysia. For details, visit www.legoland.com.my

Largest store in Asia where you can buy loose Lego bricks



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