

WORLDNEWS

Defiant Inter insist Serie A football title is legitimate



MIHAS 2007

THE 4TH MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL HALAL SHOWCASE

9-13 MAY
KUALA LUMPUR
CONVENTION CENTRE,
KLCC, KUALA LUMPUR,
MALAYSIA



NST Online » CatchingUpWith

2007/03/25



ANNOUNCEMENT

- SYABAS: Disruption to water supply -- Wilayah Hulu Selangor
 - SYABAS: Disruption to water supply -- Wilayah Klang
- [...more](#)

News

- Frontpage
- Local
- Business
- Sports
- World

Columns

- Opinion:** Japan gangs up on organised crime
- Editorial:** An ...
- Letter from India:** The son slowly rises, ...

[More...](#)

Letters

- Moral values:** Caught in a Net of smut
- Hyperactive children:** These kids, families ...
- Vehicle standards:** Clear the air of black ...
- Language courses:** In plain English, it's ...
- Erectile dysfunction:** A rule of thumb for ...

[More...](#)

Features

- Go green, with green tea
- Go Dutch at Mid Valley
- Ask Laura Mercier**
- Tried & Tested:** The magic in your eyes
- It's all about smash hits

[More...](#)

Channels

- Sunday People
- Goodbites

Her work's not finished yet

By :

[Email to friend](#)

[Print article](#)



Sister Enda Philomena Ryan conducting classes soon after arriving in Malaya 52 years ago.

As the nation prepared for independence in 1957, a tireless Irish nun was composing a school song and helping a premier girls' school in Petaling Jaya take shape. WILSON HENRY revisits the convent where the first plans for Assunta School were made

AS soon as she set foot in Malaya, she plunged into the setting up of Assunta School. And 52 years on, Sister Enda Philomena Ryan is working just as intensely to raise RM1 million for a project to help poor and abandoned children from squatter settlements.

"The day after I arrived in Petaling Jaya, I was teaching the little ones in primary school and setting up the Assunta Secondary School in Changgai Road," she remembers.

The years of serving the poor and educating the young are etched in every line and crinkle on her 78-year-old face.

Today, sitting in the parlour of the St Francis Convent discussing building plans with another nun, Sister Enda is as energised as the 26-year-old Franciscan nun she was when she arrived two years before Merdeka.

"We hope to raise the money to put up a building for the Assunta Children's Society," she says.

"At the Assunta Children's Centre, the children will receive additional attention in their schoolwork. We want to help their parents as well by offering adult classes and opening a crisis centre."



Sister Enda Philomena Ryan is still at it — raising funds for a centre for poor and abandoned children

OTHER STORIES

- **50th Merdeka/Catching up with...:** He was there when Tunku said it
- He 'drew' the nation's story
- Merdeka... and sporting thrills
- Life's a happy journey
- Never again, says atomic blast survivor
- Sheer love of the game was all it took

CHECK 'EM OUT

- Top Ranked Internet-based MLM Pioneers **NEW!**
- Properties For Rent / Sale
- Jobs@Shell
- 3000MB Webhosting RM80/Year Only !

[Ads by Google](#)

KLGraphics Competition

Design a web-page and win RM2000. Malaysian entrants only.

www.KLGraphic.com

[Advertise on this site](#)

Travel

Blogs

On the Movie Trail

American Idol 2007

Zainul Arifin

NSTP Papers

Business Times

Berita Harian

Harian Metro

The Malay Mail

Search

Web NST

Google Search

It is not as big as the project she was entrusted with in 1955 — getting Assunta School started — but it is important to Sister Enda's Franciscan spirit of continuing to serve and making a difference in people's lives.

It was this spirit which led her in 1954 to offer herself when Michael Hogan, the attorney-general of pre-independence Malaya, went to Rome to see if the nuns from the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary could help set up a girls' school in Petaling Jaya.

Assunta School was to see to the education of girls whose schooling had been disrupted by the communist insurgency. They were from rural families who had been resettled in new villages in and around the new township of Petaling Jaya.

She boarded a steamer in December 1954, leaving Naples for Singapore. She took a train from Singapore and arrived in Kuala Lumpur on Jan 29, 1955.

"It was the time of the new villages and the communist threat, so you can imagine how we lacked facilities," says Sister Enda, who was born in Galbally in Limerick county, Ireland.

"We had clinics and classes for the poor in temporary locations off Klang Road and in Puchong."

There weren't many buildings near the convent in Jalan Templer — just the three bungalows belonging to the administrative staff responsible for the development of Petaling Jaya and the Ave Maria maternity hospital (the forerunner of Assunta Hospital) managed by the sisters.

"The convent's walls only went half way up," she remembers, "the top half was latticed for ventilation. When it rained, we had to use umbrellas indoors."

Every morning on rising in those days, the nuns would kiss the ground and greet the day with a biblical expression in Latin. But one day, instead of greeting the morning with *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (Behold the handmaid of the Lord) to emphasise humility, Sister Enda let out a piercing scream.

"I almost kissed a snake that was slithering on the floor," she laughs.

But snakes, poor living conditions and the heat did not deter Sister Enda from doing what she had set out to do.

"In 1957, the first batch of students from remove classes for Assunta Secondary School was being prepared. It was an exciting year since the country was also gaining its independence."

She recalls the celebrations on Aug 31, 1957.

"We could see the fireworks from our convent and we heard the radio broadcast. Something terribly important had taken place and you could feel it in the air.

"It was a proud moment," says Sister Enda, who became a Malaysian citizen in October 1966.

"We only got the secondary school building ready by 1958. But good Lord, you can imagine the amount of work that was being done in 1957 — raising funds, organising students for classes, and preparing them for examinations.

"After that first building went up, we continued raising funds. I remember we had all sorts of fairs — fun fair, food fair, you name it, we had it. It felt like the new nation taking its first steps."

Over the decades, the school has received many accolades and Sister Enda remained the familiar face of Assunta Secondary School until she retired in 1989. But her heart is still attached to the school and she serves on its board of governors and helps in any way she can.

"I still read the newspapers. I look at the obituary pages to see whether any Assuntarians have died or lost their parents or loved ones. I make it a point to attend the funeral," says Sister Enda. "It's an Irish thing I suppose, showing up at wakes and funerals, being there for people we know."

But her Irishness has not stopped her from being thoroughly Malaysian.

The headmasters and headmistresses of other schools used to call her Meenachi or Minah binti Ryan, names spun from her middle name, Philomena.

Despite her years and the countless generations of students who have passed through her hands, she still remembers their names and little details about them.



Sister Enda Philomena Ryan is still at it — raising funds for a centre for poor and abandoned children

"They are more than mere students or faces to me. They are the girls I saw grow up, go to work and get married.




"It's almost like watching Malaysia grow, and enjoying the remarkable experience of being a part of it."

Current rank : **4.7** (5-High 1-Low)











1 2 3 4 5



WEEKEND READ

Focus	Learning Curve	Sunday Interview	Catching up with
 <p>Bajaus carrying on a long tradition ROGAYAH Tanggal shapes a stove (lapohan) out of a mixture of clay and sea sand, air-dries it and fires it over open flames.</p>	 <p>Our Hot Challenge It's Earth Day today and climate change takes centre stage as the theme of celebrations around the world. What's in store for Malaysia in the coming decades?</p>	 <p>Yourhealth / Holistic Healing: A sick planet is not healthy for us Today — April 22, 2007 — is World Earth Day. It is a day dedicated to the health and future of our planet. It is the 37th anniversary of the event which evolved over a period of seven years in the 1960s in the United States when John F. Kennedy was President.</p>	

MY INTEREST

<p>► BEAUTY Go green, with green tea</p> 	<p>► TECH Klang Valley Streets: Section 14 micro world</p> 	<p>► MUSIC/GAMES Music: No Losers here</p> 	<p>► MOVIES/THEATRE Go Dutch at Mid Valley</p> 	<p>► MOTORING A fitting design</p> 
<p>► FASHION Style: For gorgeous mums</p> 	<p>► HEALTH A boon for kidney patients</p> 	<p>► DECO Simplicity spells success</p> 	<p>► TRAVEL Wild night in Tabin</p> 	<p>► FOOD At home in the cafe</p> 

Cuti-Cuti Malaysia

Visit Malaysia Year 2007 - Have fun & CUTI now!

www.cuti.com.my

Ads by Google - [Advertise on this site](#)

CORPORATE INFORMATION

About NST | Contact Us | Advertising | Subscribe Online | Privacy Policy | How To Get There

Write to the **Editor** for editorial enquiry or **Sales Department** for sales and advertising enquiry. Copyright © 2007 NST Online. All rights reserved.

