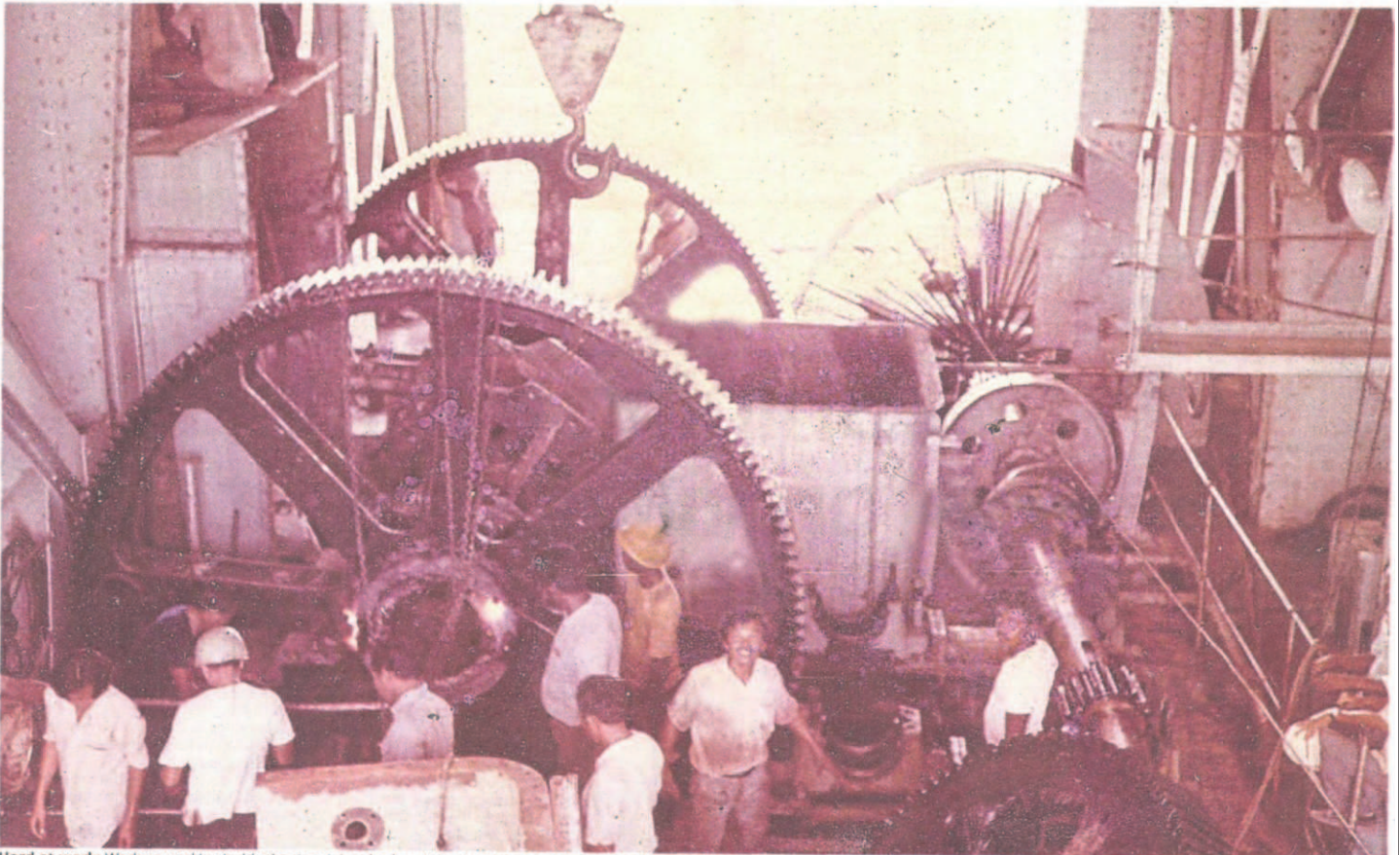


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Power for the people

Residents of Kampung Rawang Tin want a monument erected in their village as it was the first settlement in the country with electricity, thanks to a nearby tin mine. > 2&3



Hard at work: Workers working inside the tin mining dredge at the tin mining area in Rawang during the old days. The British installed a coal-powered generator at the site in the 19th century so that the mine could run for 24-hours a day.

Shining a light on village's past

Kampung Rawang Tin goes down in history as the first settlement in the nation's history to receive electricity supply



story by
**STUART
MICHAEL**

stuart@thestar.com.my

WE MAY be forgiven for assuming a bustling modern town will be the earliest to get electricity back in the day, but in fact a nondescript village –

Kampung Rawang Tin – was the first location in Malaysia to be lit up at night.

According to the book *Let there be power* produced by Tenaga Nasional

Berhad in 2000 in conjunction with its 50th anniversary, residents of the little village in Rawang were the privileged group to enjoy electricity in the 19th century thanks to a coal-powered generator that was installed in the area to light up the

tin-mining site and its vicinity.

It was 1894 when that first electric

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generator in British Malaya was installed in Rawang to support the mining industry.

The book documented the generator use, highlighting the numerous tin mines operated by tycoons Loke Yew and K. Thamboosamy Pillay, who were credited with contributing significantly to the growth of Rawang.

As electricity generation was in place in Rawang for its tin-mining industry, it naturally followed that the town had electric streetlights from very early on.

And the Rawang Railway Station was the first railway station in Malaya that had electricity supply.

The coal powering these generators was supplied from the nearby Batu Arang.

When World War II struck, Rawang fell to the Japanese army and the tin-mining sector rapidly deteriorated.

After the war, new villages were established by the British in 1951 during the Emergency.

One such village in Rawang is now known as Kampung Sungai Terentang.

Kampung Sungai Terentang villager M. Arumugam, 79, said both his parents worked in the tin mine in Rawang and he followed suit as soon as he was old enough.

"This was the best place to work as we had electric lights and we were provided with housing and even recreational space," said Arumugam, who had been in charge of the team that repaired the tin dredge known locally as *kapal korek*.

He retired as a supervisor in 1984.

Raju Palani, 71, who now lives in Taman Bersatu, Rawang, recalled that the electricity supplied to the houses in Kampung Rawang Tin was free of charge back then.

"The lights in Rawang Tin were so bright that my friends and I could play football at night in a field nearby.

"Even the town of Rawang itself was not lit up the way it was in this village.

"Inside the tin-mining site, I could see a huge generator where tonnes of coal were fed into the generator 24 hours daily to keep the mine operations going," he reminisced.

He said there was a *gurdwara*

built in what is now known as Taman Rawang Tin, to serve the many Sikhs working at the mines here.

M.B Raja, who had worked at Associated Pan Malaysian Cement (APMC), proposed that the government build a monument in the area to inform people about the history of the town.

"If we do not preserve this history, we will lose it forever.

"Nobody knows the exact site where the first generator was placed.

"It has since been taken over by another company and the former tin mine is now a manufacturing site for cement.

"People who live in Rawang should be proud of their township and have a sense of belonging as well as appreciate its history.

"We should have a monument of some sort so that the future generation will know about this

historical place and be proud of their heritage," said Raja.

Rawang was founded in the early 19th century and was one of the earliest satellite towns of Kuala Lumpur.

During the initial tin-mining growth of Kuala Lumpur, many mines were explored and opened north of Kuala Lumpur – originally starting in the Ulu Kelang area and gradually moving northwards past Selayang and towards Rawang.

The earliest estimate of Rawang's founding dates back to 1825.

It was the second area in Selangor to be explored for tin mining.

The tin-mining industry in Rawang developed concurrently at around the same time as the larger tin mines in Perak.

By the time the 1950s rolled around, there was a sizeable Chinese population, a large percentage of whom were Cantonese-speaking while the others were of Hakka and Hokkien-descent.

Rubber estates were also established around Rawang during this time.

In 1953, the first cement factory in Malaya, Rawang Works, was opened by the Associated Pan Malayan Cement company (now Lafarge Malaysia Berhad) which took over much of the land vacated by the tin-mining industry which

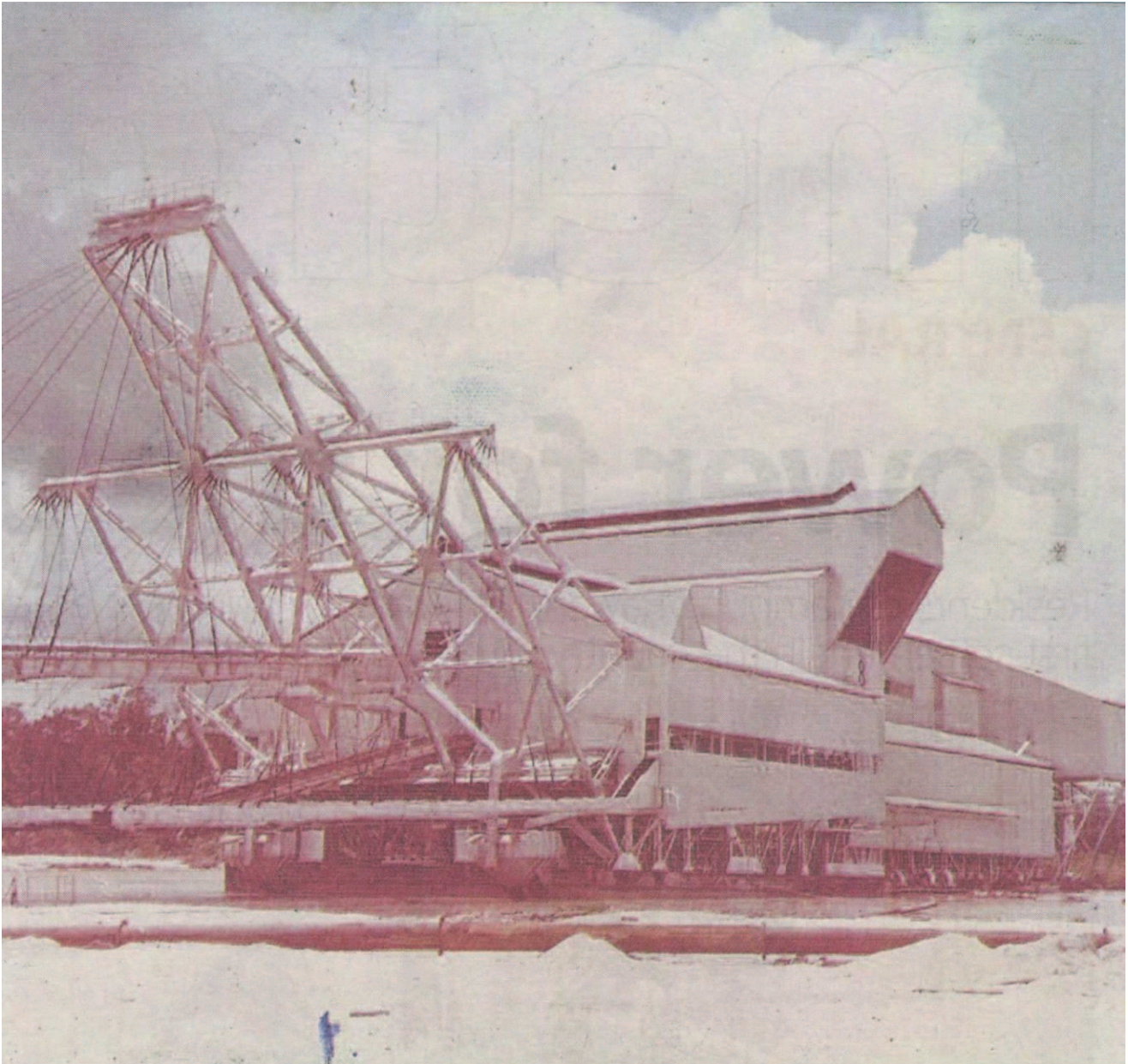
had by then moved westwards to Batang Berjuntai.

It also made Rawang one of the earliest towns in Malaysia to simultaneously have products in agriculture, mining and manufacturing.



Arumugam who now resides in Kampung Sungai Terentang, Rawang recalls that he used to work in the tin mine when he was about 18 years old.

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A picture of the tin dredge, known as 'kapal korek' in Malay, at a Rawang tin mine during the early days.

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1 Heavy machinery at work mining for Kampung Rawang Tin's cement factory.



2 Raju who lives in Taman Bersatu, Rawang, recalls when the Rawang Sikh Temple was built in 1939.

3 The tin mine in Rawang was the first place in Malaysia with an electric generator.

4 Workers working on the heavy machinery at the tin mine in Rawang.

— Photos:
FAIHAN GHANI/
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