

## The Story of Ting Pek Khiing



## The Builder of the Hundred Day Miracle

## Chapter 1

### A Son of Bintangor: Humble Beginnings of a Fuzhou Pioneer



In 1945 (some sources record 1944), a baby boy was born into a large but modest family in Bintangor, Sarawak. He was named Ting Pek Khiing, whose ancestral roots traced back to Fuzhou, Fujian. Growing up in a household with many mouths to feed, few could have imagined that he would one day become **Tan Sri Datuk Paduka Dr. Ting Pek Khiing**, one of the most legendary figures in Malaysia's construction history—the visionary builder who completed a five star hotel in just one hundred days and led the construction of Sarawak's largest hydroelectric dam.

Bintangor, situated along the Rajang River in central Sarawak, was one of the earliest settlements established by Fuzhou immigrants. In 1901, under the leadership of Wong Nai Siong, the first wave of settlers from Minqing, Gutian, and other parts of Fujian arrived in nearby Sibu to clear the land and establish new communities. Ting Pek Khiing's parents were among the many Fuzhou immigrants who made Sarawak their home, earning a modest living through farming and small scale trading. Growing up amid hardship, the young Ting developed the resilience and determination that would later define his entrepreneurial spirit.

His formal education began at Prophet English-Chinese Primary School in Bintangor, a mission school that laid the foundation for his early learning. He later attended Kai Chung Middle School before completing his secondary education at Methodist Secondary School. Having studied in both Chinese and English medium schools, he became fluent in both languages, a skill that would later enable him to bridge the worlds of the local Chinese community, British companies, and government institutions with equal ease.

## Chapter 2

### A Timber Beginning: A Construction Contractor at Twenty Two

At the age of twenty two, the ambitious young Ting Pek Khiing made the first significant move of his business career. With neither substantial capital nor influential connections, he relied on the experience and relationships he had built through the timber trade to begin undertaking small scale construction projects.

In Sarawak during that era, abundant timber resources made the timber industry the starting point for many Chinese entrepreneurs. Ting's timber business provided him with a stable source of cash flow while introducing him to the construction sector. The transition from timber trading to timber construction was a natural progression. He recognised that timber was not merely a commodity but the essential building material for homes. Determined to integrate supply with demand, he sought to combine timber production with property construction, creating a vertically integrated business model.

In 1967, Ting made his first major entrepreneurial decision by establishing **Woodhouse Construction Sdn. Bhd.** as a wholly owned enterprise. The company's business

model was distinctive for its time. It specialised in building affordable wooden homes using locally sourced timber, enabling lower income families to realise the dream of home ownership. This philosophy of "building local homes with local timber" not only reduced construction costs but also stimulated the growth of Sarawak's timber processing industry. Woodhouse quickly established a strong reputation within Sarawak's construction sector, and Ting Pek Khiing's name soon became well known throughout the industry.

## Chapter 3

### The Legend of Speed: From Building Homes in One Year to Constructing a Five Star Hotel in One Hundred Days

In 1977, Ting Pek Khiing's career reached its first major turning point. Woodhouse was granted logging rights over **98,000 hectares** of forest, allowing the company to integrate its timber resources even more closely with its construction business.

In 1980, the **Bintulu Port Authority** commissioned the construction of **600 houses**, a project originally scheduled to take four years. Ting accepted the challenge and completed the entire development in just **one year**, while reducing construction costs by **40 percent**. This remarkable achievement established his reputation as one of Sarawak's most capable builders.

Four years later, in 1984, he undertook the construction of the **Damai Beach Resort** in Sarawak. The groundbreaking ceremony was officiated by then Prime Minister **Mahathir Mohamad**, a powerful endorsement that signified Ting's rise from being merely a Sarawak contractor to becoming a nationally recognised builder.

The defining moment of his career came in 1991. Malaysia was preparing to host the inaugural **Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA)**, yet the planned five star **Sheraton Langkawi Beach Resort** had not been completed. Ting accepted what many regarded as an impossible mission: to build the hotel within **100 days**.

Constructing a five star resort in such a short period seemed almost unimaginable. Yet Ting achieved precisely that. Through meticulous project planning, round the clock construction, and exceptionally efficient site management, he transformed architectural drawings into a completed luxury hotel in little more than three months. In the same year, he set another remarkable record by completing the **three star Hotel Delima** in just **53 days**. These two extraordinary achievements rewrote Malaysia's construction record books and earned him the **FIACB Malaysian Construction Industry Personality of the Year Award** in 1992.

## Chapter 4

### The Bakun Dam: A RM13.6 Billion Mega Project

The success of the Langkawi projects propelled Ting Pek Khiing into the national spotlight as one of Malaysia's most celebrated construction entrepreneurs. Soon, an even greater opportunity emerged—the **Bakun Hydroelectric Dam**, the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken in Sarawak.

Located on the upper reaches of the **Balui River** in central Sarawak, the Bakun Dam was designed to become Malaysia's largest hydroelectric power station, with an installed generating capacity of **2,400 megawatts** and a construction value of **RM13.6 billion**. Through **Ekran Berhad**, the company under his control, Ting successfully secured the contract for the landmark project.

Ekran became another cornerstone of Ting Pek Khiing's business empire. In 1992, he merged Woodhouse with **FCW Holdings Berhad** to form the publicly listed **Ekran Berhad**. Over the following years, he aggressively expanded the Group through a series of acquisitions, including **Wembley Industries**, **PWE Industries**, **Taiping Poly (Malaysia)**, and **Granite Industries**, building Ekran

into a diversified conglomerate with a market capitalisation approaching **RM6 billion**.

The Bakun Dam project marked the pinnacle of Ting Pek Khiing's business career. At the same time, however, it became the centre of considerable public debate. Issues surrounding the relocation of indigenous communities, environmental impact assessments, and construction delays drew sustained attention from the media and environmental organisations, making the project one of the most closely scrutinised infrastructure developments in Malaysia's history.

## Chapter 5

### The Langkawi New City: An Unfulfilled RM30 Billion Vision

In 2018, following the change of government after the Pakatan Harapan coalition came to power, Ting Pek Khiing, then in his seventies, once again became the focus of public attention. He announced plans to invest more than **RM30 billion** to develop the ambitious **Langkawi New City** project.

The proposal quickly attracted widespread criticism. Some questioned its commercial viability, while others raised concerns over its potential environmental impact. There were also doubts about whether Ting, given his age and financial circumstances, could realistically undertake a project of such magnitude. Tun Daim Zainuddin, then Chairman of the Council of Eminent Persons, publicly advised Ting to "enjoy his retirement." Ultimately, the project never moved beyond the proposal stage.

Perhaps this became the final unrealised dream of Ting Pek Khiing's remarkable career. The shelving of the Langkawi New City project marked the end of an era. The bold builder who had once believed that no construction deadline was impossible could no longer recreate the

extraordinary feat of completing a five star hotel in just one hundred days, as he had done three decades earlier.

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## Chapter 6

### Fortunes Rise and Fall: A Life of Triumphs and Setbacks

Ting Pek Khiing's life was marked by extraordinary highs and equally dramatic lows.

In 1991, he was declared bankrupt as a result of business difficulties, marking the first major financial crisis of his career. Nearly two decades later, in 2010, he once again faced bankruptcy proceedings. For a man who had dominated Malaysia's construction industry during the 1990s and controlled a publicly listed conglomerate with a market capitalisation approaching **RM6 billion**, confronting bankruptcy twice in his later years revealed another side of his remarkable journey.

Throughout these controversies, Ting seldom chose to defend himself publicly. Instead, his legacy was written in concrete, steel, and timber rather than words. The five star hotel completed in one hundred days, the 600 houses built within a single year, the **RM13.6 billion Bakun Dam**, the expansion of **Kuching International Airport**, the **BDC Flyover** project, and **People's Square at Pudu Raya** in Kuala Lumpur all stand as enduring monuments to his vision.

They remain lasting reminders not only of what he built, but also of a life defined by extraordinary ascent and equally unforgettable decline.

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## Chapter 7

### The Final Farewell: The Curtain Falls in 2020

At 3.30 p.m. on 16 October 2020, Ting Pek Khiing passed away peacefully at a private hospital in Kuching. He was 76 years old (79 by the traditional Chinese method of age reckoning).

He departed with his family by his side. Just days earlier, on 10 October, his fourth son, Ting See Ching, had been conferred the title of **Dato'** during the 84th birthday celebrations of the Governor of Sarawak. The passing of this construction titan marked the end of an era in Sarawak's business and development history.

### Conclusion: Speed and Legend

Ting Pek Khiing's story began in a humble household in Bintangor, rose through the wooden houses built by Woodhouse Construction, reached its zenith with the one hundred day hotel in Langkawi, and concluded amid the controversies surrounding the Bakun Dam and the unrealised vision of the Langkawi New City project.

He left behind an extraordinary portfolio of landmark developments, along with a series of remarkable records defined by speed: **600 houses completed in 365 days**, a

**five star hotel built in just 100 days**, and a **three star hotel completed in only 53 days**. Projects that many regarded as impossible became reality under his leadership.

Ting Pek Khiing was, in many ways, an **imperfect giant**. His career was marked by extraordinary achievements as well as financial hardship; he was celebrated as a philanthropist within the Chinese community while also remaining a developer surrounded by controversy. Yet regardless of how history ultimately judges him, his feat of completing a five star hotel in one hundred days has secured its place in Malaysia's construction history. The Fuzhou son from Bintangor spent a lifetime demonstrating a conviction that defined his career: what others considered impossible could, with determination and execution, become reality.