

MISC. HERITAGE NEWS –February to July2018

What we spotted of interest on the Sarawak and regional
cultural heritage scene in the last six months



The "Forgotten Beauty" exhibition by Tan Wei Kheng at the Rainforest Fringe, July 2018

NATION WIDE

Heritage management did not feature during the political campaigns during the 14th **General Elections** of 9 May 2018. After the elections, calls were made to reinstate a ministry of culture, arts and heritage to be separate from the ministry of tourism, but the new Government returned the current structure of Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, with under it, the Department of National Heritage. The Minister is YB Tuan Mahamaddin Bin Ketapi, a newly elected *Parti Warisan Sabah* (Sabah Heritage Party) MP.

The impact of the change of Government on the heritage conservation scene is still to be felt. (The Sarawak State Government remains unchanged, Sarawak being the only Malaysian State which runs its state elections on a different calendar).

[“Call made for PH to reinstate Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage”](#) - New Straits Times, 19 May 2018

[“Keep culture apart from tourism”](#)- The Star, 11 June 2018

Worth noting on the nationwide heritage scene is the new [“savemyheritage”](#) website set up by *Badan Warisan Malaysia*, the national heritage conservation NGO. The site will function as a platform for initiatives aimed at protecting specific threatened or endangered heritage. Great initiative, Badan Warisan!

SAVEMYHERITAGE EXPLORE SUPPORT SUBMIT CONTACT

Savemyheritage.org provides an informative and interactive platform where the public can identify heritage assets under threat, raise awareness, generate support and drive fund raising. [Support Our Causes](#)

Cause Of The Month

SAVING RAWANG'S LAST SURVIVING SINO-MALAY PALLADIAN BUNGALOW

The bungalow located at No. 4, Jalan Kaala Garing is the last surviving heritage building in the fast-growing township of Rawang.

The Sino-Malay- Palladian design wooden bungalow was built by the British mining company known famously Anglo-Oriental (Malaya) Ltd a subsidiary of the Anglo-Oriental Mining Corporation (later to become known as the London Tin Corporation).

The early...

[support this cause](#)

Featured Causes

SAVE THE 110 YEARS NORTH BORNEO RAILWAY, SABAH
Help and contribute for the Melalap Station conservation and restoration project

LIST MAXWELL SECONDARY SCHOOL KL AS NATIONAL HERITAGE
We need your voice! Sign the petition.

SAVE THE SETTLEMENT
Threat of development on the Portuguese Settlement

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EDUCATE | ENGAGE | EMPOWER

savemyheritage.org, as accessed 10/08/2018

SARAWAK

The **intention to revamp the Sarawak Cultural heritage Ordinance 1993** was restated by officials in relation to the Government’s suggestion to apply for World Heritage status for Kuching. “The state government can amend the Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance 1993 and set up relevant departments to help realise its vision of turning Kuching into a world heritage city” stated a Borneo Post article which reported Kuching North City Hall (DBKU) commissioner Datuk Wee Hong Seng saying: *“The government has created a heritage zone in Kuching which is a step forward towards realising the vision of making Kuching a world heritage city. This is the first step of many more steps which will be needed. More importantly, it will need the collaboration from many stakeholders. The government can drive its initiatives by making changes in the ordinance and set up departments to coordinate efforts to protect and enhance our heritage”*. Wee pointed out that there is also a need to source help from consultants and planning experts as the state pursues its development without having its heritage side lined, mentioned the article. *“For example, in our work on the Unity Park, we are working with many experts to maximise the landscape and highlight the heritage of the Unity Park. We will also need to crowd-source help from the public to bring awareness to our heritage.”*

[“Changes needed for world heritage city status”](#) – Borneo Post, 5 March 2018

The Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports also pointed to the **“the need to tighten the laws aimed at preserving (...) heritage buildings**, in view of several instances where some privately-owned buildings were given major facelifts or knocked down to make way for modern buildings”.

[“Minister points out need to beef up laws on heritage buildings”](#) - Borneo Post, 20 May 2018

In his winding up speech to the State assembly meeting, in mid-July, the Minister expanded on **Kuching's New Museum Campus** project, to be completed in 2020. The new five storey building, with 6,500 sq m of exhibitions, is to become the second largest South East Asian museum after the National Museum of Singapore and is expected to boost cultural tourism. Nearby, on Jalan P Ramlee, a 4 storey centre is also being built for administration and conservation, with research and laboratory facilities. Several partnerships, with institutions such as the British Museum, British Natural History Museum and the Reinwardt Academy Amsterdam have been set up to ensure global standards for the project. The original 1891 Museum building is also under restoration and will feature as an example of late 19th/early 20th century museology. The Minister also recalled the **works for five of the Brooke era forts** under the 11th Malaysia Plan: *Fort Lily* (Betong), *Fort Emma* (Kanowit) - (both to become regional museums), *Fort Hose* (Marudi), *Fort Sylvia* (Kapit) (with enhancement of the latter two existing galleries) and Fort Brooke in Julau (to be used as a rural community centre cum library). Works on the forts are to start this year, with expected completion in mid-2020, he said.

[“Minister: Sarawak Museum Campus slated for completion mid-2020”](#) – Borneo Post, 17 July 2018.

An **initiative to collect and document aspects of Sarawak's intangible cultural heritage** (food, oral expressions, social practices, rituals, traditional craftsmanship, performing arts, etc) was announced by the United People's Party (UPP) Pujut (Miri) branch, with a view to set up a virtual non-tangible cultural heritage museum. The project promoters called for documents and information to feed their data base and appealed for collaboration with interested civil society organisations. Contact: 'Miri Cultural Heritage Museum' Facebook page or email to MCHMuseum@hotmail.com.

[“UPP Pujut spearheads Virtual Cultural Heritage Museum project”](#)- Borneo Post, 4 March 2018

Keringkam is the prized Malay traditional headscarf embroidered with gold or silver thread. Renewed attention has been drawn to it as there remains only a few artisans mastering the craft of making keringkam in Sarawak. The Sarawak Museum campus project team has been researching the subject and among other initiatives is the production of a book of stories and anecdotes on keringkam making and owning, a project that was launched in March by a group of keringkam enthusiasts.

[“Keringkam book set for publication”](#) – Borneo Post, 15 March 2018

[“Making keringkam shine again”](#) – The Star, 16 March 2018

In relation to news that a large part of the movie on the White Rajahs, under preparation, may be shot in the Siniawan area, a member of the Sarawak Assembly from the area **called the State Government to list the Siniawan Bazaar as a heritage site** and to allocate funds for the upkeep of buildings at the old Bazaar. Indeed, the Siniwan Bazaar, which benefitted from conservation works some years ago with support from the Sarawak Heritage Society, is not yet listed and would clearly deserve it to anchor its protection.

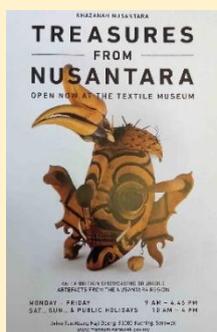
[“Call to incorporate old Siniawan Bazaar into heritage site”](#)- Borneo Post, 14 July 2018

Events

The **Kuching Heritage Race 2018**, themed “Culture meets Nature” took place on 27 January, with a route centered on Reservoir and Museum Park. It attracted over 300 participants and raised RM 40,000 for charities. The annual event which was in its third year, is a charity cum

heritage awareness raising initiative crafted by a team of individuals from the tourism industry and from the local culture and heritage scene.

[“Proceeds from Kuching Heritage Race 2018 go to charity”](#)- Borneo Post, 28 Feb. 2018



Further to the repatriation to Sarawak of a collection from the Dutch ex-Museum Nusantara which closed in 2013, an exhibition of a selection of some 30 items opened in May at the Pavilion building/ Textile Museum, Kuching, on the occasion of the International Museum Day. The **“Treasures From Nusantara” exhibition** will run until January 2019. (9am to 4.45pm from Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 4pm on weekends and public holidays)

[“‘Treasures from Nusantara’ opens at Textile Museum”](#)- Borneo Post, 17 May 2018

Sibu’s Borneo Cultural Festival (BCF) took place on 19-28 July. Among the attractions was a large, 53 feet high ‘Itut’, a traditional Melanau swing erected at Sibu Town Square. The Sarawak Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah suggested that the festival be elevated to a Borneo World Cultural Festival in future.

[“Melanau erect gigantic ‘Itut’ for BCF 2018”](#)- Borneo Post, 12 July 2018.

[“Abdul Karim wants to see BCF to be elevated to Borneo World Cultural Festival”](#)- Borneo Post, 29 July 2018

The annual **Rainforest World Music Festival** took place in July with an expanded scope of cultural and heritage-related events. This year’s Friends of the Sarawak Museum (FoSM) **“Cultural Snippets”** included nine talks ranging from traditional beads to Melanau wedding customs, boat paddles and keringkam scarfs. The festival was complemented, for the second

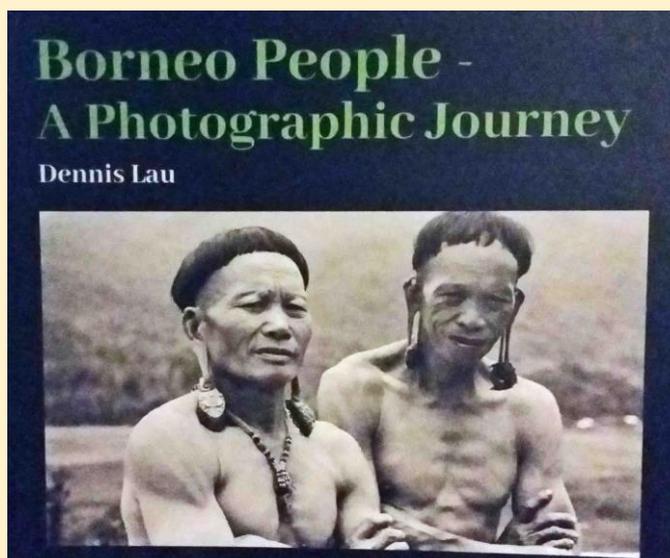


year, by the **Rainforest Fringe Festival**, which also featured a number of significant heritage related events. Highlights included an exhibit by the Brooke Trust on the extraordinary life of Ranees Margaret, wife of the second Rajah Charles Brooke; “Forgotten Beauty”, a beautiful exhibit of painted portraits of Sarawak tribal elders by Tan Wei Kheng; “Borneo People, a Photographic Journey”, a photo exhibition of Sarawak native people by praised Sarawak photographer Dennis Lau; and “The Carpenter Street”, by Siew Thiam Lok, a series of photo panels placed in front of Carpenter Street traditional shops, drawing attention to the uncertainty of their future; and another series of [8 enriching FoSM talks](#) in collaboration with the Sarawak Museum and the Netherlands Embassy in Malaysia.

[“Sarawak’s second Rainforest Fringe Festival aims to put indigenous traditions on the map”](#) - South China Morning Post, 17 June

[“Showcasing flavours of Sarawak”](#) – The Star, 23 June 2018

[“Ten-day Rainforest Fringe Fest returns for a second year”](#) – The Star, 28 June 2018



One of the Rainforest Fringe exhibitions

The Sarawak Heritage Society organised two talks and two visits in the period: a talk on the [WW2 Japanese shipwrecks](#) off Santubong by Ernest Teo, professional diver and SHS Vice President (13 February); a talk on [Sarawak's endangered arts](#), by Edric Ong, designer and textile expert (9 March) and a [visit to artist Ramsey Ong's studio and collection](#) (10 June) And Paul Gerarts, SHS member and volunteer guide led a **Kuching Chinese history stroll** for a group of Kuching Girls Guides.

[“Japanese shipwrecks off Borneo coast WW2”](#) - Sarawak Tribune, 8 Feb. 2018

[“SHS to present talk on endangered arts of Sarawak”](#) – Borneo Post, 4 March 2018

Besides its Cultural Snippets at the Rainforest World Music Festival and its talks at the Rainforest Fringe, FoSM (Friends of Sarawak Museum) hosted [“Tuked Rini Cosmic Traveller”](#) a talk on a famous mythical story from the Borneo highlands, by Monica Janowski, Research Fellow, Sarawak Museum Campus Project and Research Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Kuching, 16 Jan. 2018) [“Tuloi Keping, the Great Kejaman Chief of Batang Rejang”](#), a talk by Jayl Langup (Assistant Research Fellow, Institute of Borneo Studies, UNIMAS, and WWF-Malaysia advisor) (Kuching, 23 March).

Books and research articles

The long awaited book **“The History of Architecture in Sarawak Before Malaysia”** by Dr John Ting was launched in July. John Ting introduced it at the Kuala Lumpur Architecture Festival (6 July) and in Penang (Think City, 9 July) and Kuching (PAM, 12 July). Dr Ting, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts & Design at the University of Canberra, Australia, is an architectural historian specialised in South East Asia and in particular in Sarawak architecture. The 220 pages very well researched and documented book is a precious addition to the available works on Sarawak architectural historiography. It is published by PAM (Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia, Malaysia Institute of Architects) Sarawak Chapter with assistance of Think City Sdn Bhd. It can be purchased at the [PAMSC secretariat](#) (price: RM 150). A must purchase for those interested in Sarawak built heritage.

[“PAM Sarawak Chapter to launch ‘History of Architecture in Sarawak’ book”](#) – Borneo Post, 6 July 2018

“**Miri, then and now**” A booklet on Miri landmarks and historical sites produced by the Society of English Writers Northern Zone (Soswe) with support of the Miri City Council (MCC), was launched in May.

“[Book on ‘Miri, Then and Now’ hits major bookstores](#)” – Borneo Post, 26 May 2018

A new **research article** analyses **rare remains of three human mandibles** found more than 60 years ago by the Harrissons in **Niah Caves**. They have been dated 9,000 to 30,000 years old. Curnoe D, Datan I, Zhao J-x, Leh Moi Ung C, Aubert M, Sauffi MS, et al. (2018) [Rare Late Pleistocene-early Holocene human mandibles from the Niah Caves \(Sarawak, Borneo\)](#). PLoS ONE 13(6): e0196633. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196633> (open access)

Also noted:

On 1st of May, the annual “Bung Bratak Day” was revived with the ambitious “**Bung Bratak Heritage Centre**” now due for full completion end 2018. [see our [Nov. 2015](#), [March 2016](#) and [Aug-Sept-Oct 2016 Misc. Heritage News](#) bulletins for previous mentions of this project]. “According to UNESCO, it is the first of its kind in Borneo where an ancient hill-top settlement has been turned into a historical tourism centre” said Dato Peter Minos, chairman of the BBHA. He proposed to emulate the success story of the 1,000-year-old Srivijaya Buddhist temple of Borobudur near Jogjakarta in promoting and developing it as a tourism attraction. The Centre is to be run and managed like a homestay/ retreat. [The 1,000 foot high Bung Bratak¹ is one of the hills with historic significance for Sarawak’s Bidayuh community, who considers it as the original settlement, some 750 years ago, of the Jagoi-Bratak Bidayuh people. In 2008 Bung Bratak was proposed to be gazetted as a historic site under the Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance.]

“[Minos envisions making Bung Bratak Heritage Centre like Borobudur](#)” – Borneo Post (BP), 22 Jan. 2018; “[Minos: Bung Bratak Heritage Centre soft launch on April 1](#)”- BP, 4 March 2018; “[Public invited to Bung Bratak Heritage Centre soft opening on April 1](#)”- BP, 30 Mar. 2018; “[Bung Bratak Day will be back on May 1 after 4-year lapse](#)” – BP, 22 Apr. 2018.

Works have progressed on the construction of Kuching’s new large “**Floating Mosque**” on the Sarawak River along Gambier Street nearby the historic Square Tower and the old India Mosque. “The floating mosque has a unique architectural design and will be different from other mosques that we have built. Some of the design has architecture elements from mosques in Turkey” told Abang Johari, Sarawak Chief Minister to reporters. It will have a capacity of 1000, is slated to be completed in September and expected to be a popular tourist attraction.

“[Floating mosque 60% complete](#)”- The Star, 21 Apr. 2018

At a Chap Goh Mei (15th day of Chinese New Year) event where he cited the projects planned for Kuching, the Sarawak Chief Minister recalled the proposed English tea house and cascading waterfall with music at Fort Margherita, the extensions of the walkways along the Sarawak River, the upgrading of the Reservoir Park and plans for an initiative for the Padungan area. He also announced the construction of a **musical water fountain in front of the DUN** (State Legislative Assembly Complex). A RM 33.8 mil allocation was unanimously [approved](#) by the State Assembly in July for the latter project, to be implemented by DBKU (Kuching North City Commission) with a targeted completion date announced for September 2018.

¹ Bung Bratak is located off 6th mile Bau-Lundu Road, via Kampung Tembawang Sauh.

From “[CM: State capital to have more attractions](#)”- Borneo Post, 5 Mar. 2018:

[...] Abang Johari pointed out that the ‘water sprouting’ facilities planned at the Kuching Waterfront would be something like the Spectra at Marina Bay Sands Singapore. As for Fort Margherita, he said a tea house will be built in front of the fort. He added that a cascading waterfall with music had also been planned to be built near the proposed tea house. “The tea house is for the people and visitors to enjoy, like the westerners. Fort Margherita is the legacy of the Brookes, and so we want to build an English tea house.” He said this would be “something unique” for the area along and across the Waterfront.

Earlier, Abang Johari said a master plan had been put in place to extend the existing Waterfront area all the way up to Brooke Dockyard and connect the entire Waterfront to Kampung Masjid and Kampung Bintangor via a walkway for locals and tourists to stroll around the city centre. While efforts were being made to provide modern facilities to boost tourism in the state capital, he said the state government would also safeguard the heritage of the city. One of the initiatives, Abang Johari said, is to turn the Reservoir Park and the area surrounding the Civic Centre and Sarawak Club into a Unity Park to “summarise all cultural buildings that reflect the unity of the people of Kuching”.

He added that all these would be realised in five years’ time.

“We have all the financial allocations. The only thing is implementation and planning takes time.”

He said the state government also aimed at transforming Padungan into a more vibrant area. “We will preserve the main road (Jalan Padungan) as well as the old buildings but we will develop Padungan area into a modern centre.[...]”

In the Sarawak Heritage Society and in the wider heritage conservation community questions were whispered anew on the quality of the changes introduced to the landscape of Kuching’s heritage core and on the level of importance the Government places on heritage conservation issues and of consideration it gives to recognized best practices in its policies and funding priorities.

A Nikkei Asian Review column entitled “[Kuching's rise offers both inspiration and caution](#)” drew attention from some SHS members. Among some debatable statements, the author points to Kuching’s gentrification over the years and concludes saying “*The Sarawak state government must think carefully about the cultural and conservation problems being created by Kuching's dash for growth*” (Nikkei Asian Review, 6 June 2018)

In the pipeline / forthcoming:

The **2018 International Borneo Research Council (BRC) Conference**, themed “Translating the Past, Envisioning the Future” runs **6-8 August** at University of Malaysia Sarawak. It is organized by the Institute of Borneo Studies, Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development and Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Malaysia Sarawak. [Based on its [website](#), the BRC gathers members/fellows from various countries engaged or interested in research in Borneo. Its secretariat is based in the USA.]

The **[8th ASEMUS \(Asia-Europe Museum Network\) General Conference](#)** “New Curatorial perspective for a Changed World” will take place in Kuching 14-16 Nov. 2018.

UTCS (University College of Technology Sarawak) Sibü announced that it is organising a “**[InHerit 2018](#)**” conference, themed “Sharing the benefits of Our Inheritance towards Sustainability, 3-5 Dec. 2018 in Kuching and **called for papers**.”

AT NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE REGION

Sabah

Up to February 2018, a total of 31 sites have been or were in the process of being added to **Sabah's heritage listings under the new Sabah new Heritage Enactment 2017**. The additions include the old Kota Kinabalu Post Office, the Atkinson clock tower, the Kota Kinabalu community hall, Padang Merdeka, the Mat Salleh monument in Tambunan, Bukit Tengkorak (Skull Hill archaeological site) in Semporna, the Melalap train station, the Tinagat lighthouse in Tawau and the Wisma Radio Sabah. Under consideration were also the Turnbull hall in Maktab and the Kent Teachers Training College.

"Once gazetted, the original owners of the buildings would be eligible for monetary assistance in restoring and developing the sites", it was reported.

"We don't want people to think that the government will take over the building if it is gazetted. (...) No, if the building or landmark is of historical interest then we will help you develop it where needed. If it needs some restoration works or a new signboard, road paved leading to it we can try to help" said the then Sabah Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, adding that the idea is to conserve the heritage in its original structure as much as possible.

The Sabah Heritage Enactment 2017 was passed in November 2017 to replace the previous Cultural Heritage (Conservation) Enactment 1997.

["Sabah begins gazetting historical sites under new heritage enactment"](#) - Malay Mail, 22 Feb. 2018

["24 gazetted heritage sites in Sabah – Masidi"](#) – Borneo Post, 23 Feb. 2018

Too late, the listing of the Melalap train station: on April 22 the building collapsed, announced the North Borneo Historic Society on its Facebook page.

What is a **sigah** (siga)? Answer: a Kadazandusun (Sabah indigenous people) traditional headgear. The Sabah MP Darell Leiking wore it when he was sworn in as (federal) International Trade and Industry Minister in early July. The media were delighted in reporting the event.

["The sigah turning heads"](#) - The Star, 7 July 2018

Johor

Persatuan Dunia Seni Silat Melayu Malaysia (DSMM, Malaysian Melayu Silat Association) said it is working with the National Heritage Department on an **application to list the Melayu form of silat martial art as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage**.

["Silat society wants Malay martial art to be gazetted as cultural heritage"](#) - Malay Mail, 11 March 2018

The new Johor Government is to increase its funding for the **Johor Heritage Foundation** (Yayasan Warisan Johor, Johor's culture and heritage management agency), it was announced.

["Johor arts and culture to get bigger budget next year, says state exco"](#) - Malay Mail, 9 July 2018

Perak

Ipoh's **Gua Tambun neolithic site**, considered to be South-east Asia's largest hematite Neolithic rock art, was temporarily closed in mid-July to allow for a clean-up. The site had suffered from poor maintenance and insufficient protection. The situation made the State Government look at streamlining the responsibilities for the management and protection of

the site and request studies on its future development, indicated State Tourism and Culture Committee chairman Tan Kar Hing. Ipoh City Watch president Dr Richard Ng called for the immediate action to better protect the site and prevent the paintings from being further damaged, reported the media.

“[NGOs support closure of prehistoric Gua Tambun rock painting site](#)”- Malay Mail, 11 July 2018

“[Gua Tambun closed indefinitely, Ipoh City Council tasked with major clean-up](#)”- Malay Mail, 13 July 2018

“[State initiates steps to preserve site on a more sustainable basis](#)”- The Star, 16 July 2018

Kuala Lumpur

The **demolition of the ‘Serani row’ of pre-war buildings** (near Bukit Nanas forest reserve and KL Tower) to make way for a high-rise development, seemingly before formal issuance of a development order, caused reactions of sadness and anger.

“Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) past president Saifuddin Ahmad said it was a pity that Serani Row could not be salvaged, but added that it was private property. ‘*Nothing much can be done about privately-owned heritage buildings unless the government steps in*’” he said, reported the Star newspaper. The buildings, a private property, were in an abandoned state, dilapidated and not listed as heritage.

Extracts from a readers’ letter to the Star newspaper are worth reproducing here:

“It was clear that Kuala Lumpur had lost another eminently restorable landmark. There have been too many demolitions of such buildings for development projects. The houses at Serani Row should not have been demolished as they were pre-war homes with a vibrant account of the Eurasian community.

(...) (the demolition) raises the question why there wasn’t any coordination between the National Heritage Department and Kuala Lumpur City Hall in getting professional input before a heritage structure such as Serani Row was allowed to be torn down. (...) Another heritage area has been destroyed due to the inability of Kuala Lumpur City Hall to coordinate planning with the Tourism and Culture Ministry, National Heritage Department and local preservation societies such as Badan Warisan and even professional societies like PAM, which could contribute ideas.

There are many other lost and forgotten landmarks requiring protection and it is only a matter of time before these will also be lost forever to future generations of Kuala Lumpur residents.

(...) I am afraid that if concrete steps are not taken, KL will lose much of its historical buildings, which will result in a reduction in earnings from tourism since tourists generally do not come to see modern structures.

In this regard, the potential of Serani Row is lost forever. Regulations and other bylaws have to be enacted under the National Heritage Act 2005 as well as City Hall’s laws to list all pre-war buildings. This should prevent their demolition until all applications for development are vetted with the National Heritage Department’s input as well as local preservation societies. KL residents must take an interest and notify the National Heritage Department of beautiful and old buildings before it is too late.

Perhaps a web register can be created for this purpose jointly by City Hall and the National Heritage Department. If this is not done, KL could lose its tourism appeal as a historical city.”

[for a description of the buildings: “[Valuable properties left wasted](#)” – The Star, 21 June 2017]

“[High-rise project planned in place of Serani Row](#)” – The Star, 21 march 2018

“[City in danger of losing its soul](#)” – The Star, 17 Apr. 2018

The above contrasts with pleasant adaptive re-use initiatives taken by owners of pre-war shophouses of Petaling Street and Jalan Sultan area, injecting new, albeit different life into the area. One of them is the Petaling Street Heritage House (196, Jalan Tun HS Lee) project, a restored shophouse functioning like a community mini-museum depicting and documenting the original flavour of the area.

[“Revival in KL’s Chinatown”](#)- The Star, 30 May 2018

[“Heritage centre continues work of documenting Petaling Street’s history”](#)- The Star, 11 June 2018

The Star reported on the Kuala Lumpur city Heritage Trails programme: the implementation of Heritage Trail 5, named “Warriors Trail”, resumed with the appointment of new contractors. The Warrior Trail is one of the 8 Heritage Trails identified in KL’s Heritage Trail Master Plan, reports the article.

[“Heritage trail back on track”](#) – The Star, 21 June 2018

The **mayor of Kuala Lumpur**, Tan Sri Mohd Amin Nordin Abd Aziz **called for the Dataran Merdeka (Merdeka Square) and the next door old Sultan Abdul Samad building (1894) to be nominated for UNESCO heritage listing**. His statement triggered suggestions to include other areas such as Petaling Street, and comments on KL’s achievements in protecting its heritage assets. International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Malaysia chairman and former National Heritage Council chairman Datuk Hajeedar Majid commented as follows to The Star newspaper: *“We have been quite careless with our (buildings) in the past (...) There was loss of opportunities in the past, and the historic core of Kuala Lumpur has been redeveloped in an insensitive way. The old colonial buildings should have been declared heritage sites sooner. But having said that, it is not too late. Historical areas can still be salvaged, but, it must be done with other pockets (of historical sites) such as Jalan Raja, Medan Pasar and Petaling Street area. The sites must be physically and visually linked with one another. But more importantly there must be political will for this to happen. We must push for this without fear or favour”*. He added that in the past efforts aimed at preserving historical sites had given in to political pressure.

[“Time for KL sites to get Unesco listing: mayor”](#)- The Star, 27 July 2018

On similar lines, we understand that **Badan Warisan Malaysia** is pushing for the **building** it uses on Jalan Stonor to be officially listed as heritage building to anchor its protection, together with the relocated Malay heritage houses sited next to it.

Selangor

The Klang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCCI), Dewan Perniagaan Melayu Malaysia Selangor and Klang Indian Chamber of Commerce have joined hands to initiate a **Klang City Rejuvenation** plan to counteract the perceived decline of Klang City in the last decade. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed for the provision of technical expertise by Think City and inputs from Taylor University Subang Jaya.

[“Breathing new life into Klang”](#) – The Star, 13 July 2018

Penang

A host of events marks this year the 10th anniversary of George Town's listing as World Heritage by UNESCO including an exhibition entitled 'George Town, Beautiful and Irregular', which featured the city's past and changes, and a week-long [George Town Heritage Celebrations 2018](#) in the second week of July. [Penang Hill also had its festival](#) (21-29 July), a prelude to the annual [George Town Festival \(4 Aug-2 Sept\)](#)
 “[A look at George Town, heritage city, a decade later](#)” – Malay Mail, 14 June 2018
 “[Giving new life to buildings](#)”- The Star, 19 June 2018

Also related to the celebrations is “*The Artisans and Practitioners of George Town*”, a project which documented a palette of George Town's traditional artisans, traders or service providers: watchmakers, electroplaters, optometrists, canvas and leather goods makers, rattan craftsmen, trishaw makers, joss stick makers, tailor, mahjong tile makers, shoemakers, songkok maker, goldsmiths, laundry service providers, a Chinese physicians, a Quran publisher... The ensuing five hour set of videos was screened at the occasion of GTWHI's 10th anniversary celebration. “[Tribute to George Town's artisans](#)” – The Star, 21 Apr. 2018

At a workshop on disaster risk management, a UNESCO staff member praised George Town for the quality of its heritage management. “*If there's any good examples or good practices regarding world heritage management, this often happens in George Town*” said Ms Moe Chiba, Head of cultural unit, Unesco Jakarta regional Office. George Town was selected as a pilot site for a regional “*Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) of Heritage Cities*” project run by UNESCO in cooperation with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.
 “[George Town good example of heritage city management, says Unesco Jakarta](#)” – Malay Mail, 1 March 2018

Heritage management and sustainable urban development: in April, ahead of the general elections, the Penang Forum produced an impressive “[Penang Forum Agenda 2018](#)”, a list of demands to the future Government to make Penang's development more sustainable. It touches upon various interlinked areas such as transport, transit-oriented development, walkable downtowns, mixed-income housing, public green open spaces and social inclusion and aims at addressing over-dependence on growth driven by the property sector and tourism. The document includes a chapter on heritage management with several recommendations such as the improvement of monitoring and enforcement and the extension of heritage protection to heritage sites outside the World Heritage zone.

[In the document, the Penang Forum describes itself as “*a coalition of civil society organizations and affiliates (...) made up of committed activists who have dedicated up to four decades of their lives for a better society (a few of whom have served time for their beliefs) as well as talented young activists. Penang Forum's views are informed by a panel of scientists, ecologists, economists, lawyers, educators, cultural specialists, human rights activists and other public intellectuals of international standing.*]

“[Planning for Penang's future](#)”- The Star, 14 Apr. 2018

“The **Penang government** will continue to be “the best custodian” for George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site through sharing management experience with peers around the world. [At the launching of the George Town Heritage Celebrations 2018] Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said their bid to preserve the city's multicultural heritage had become more complex and challenging due to natural disasters and climate change. ‘*We will work proactively with UNESCO, international advisory bodies and professional agencies to make*

George Town an exemplary site. In addition, through George Town World Heritage Incorporated, Penang Island City Council and other state agencies, we will work with educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and the local communities to protect our shared heritage. (...) Such collaborations have yielded positive results’”, he said, reported The Star.

[“Vigilant guardian of city”](#)- The Star, 7 July 2018

On more specific topics:

The row of **Kimberley Street Council shophouses** restored in collaboration with Think City, the Penang Heritage Trust and Penang Apprenticeship Programmes For Artisans, to accommodate traditional trades or artisans at affordable rates, will also be used to **incentivise a revival of the original mix of commercial and residential space that embodied the traditional shophouse**: plans are to rent out the first floors to tenants, also at affordable rates. *“We want to repopulate George Town, so we want to have co-living spaces on the first floor of these shophouses, while the ground floor is used for commercial activities, preferably traditional trades and artisans”*, said Yew Tung Seang, Penang Mayor.

It was also announced that Penang’s RM 3 mil. **Heritage Habitat Seed Fund** initiated in 2017 would be open for applications in July. *“We will consider increasing the fund should the response be positive. The fund will be able to provide relief in restoration cost, thereby preventing an increase in rent charges and maintaining long-term tenancy at the site”* said Penang’s new Chief Minister.

[“Penang council plans to repopulate George Town using co-living spaces”](#)- Malay Mail, 18 Apr. 2018

[“Shophouses being restored as co-living and commercial spaces”](#) – The Star, 22 May 2018

The George Town market for heritage properties appears to have stabilized after the boom that followed the UNESCO listing.

A Star newspaper article reported a real estate manager saying: *“From 2002 to 2012, heritage properties in George Town were in dilapidated conditions but some passionate locals and overseas investors entered the scene, refurbished and restored some of them. After spending substantially on them, it was normal for them to expect some kind of return on investments (ROI). However, the annual rental yield, hovering now between 2.5% and 3.8% per annum, is not attractive enough to draw further attention from overseas investors (...) Heritage properties are usually renovated to be used as a food and beverage (F&B) outlets or as hotels in George Town. Thus all over George Town, you can see many F&B outlets and budget hotels competing for business. This leads to pricing pressure and eventually margin erosion. Whether the tourist arrivals and size of the local population can in the long run sustain the F&B and hotel businesses remain to be seen.”*

The interviews reported in the article also point to the fact that beyond the restoration and conversion costs, the rules applying to conservation and the limits of the rental market, traffic congestion and parking bay issues may contribute to the slow down:

“Restoration cost is high due to the stringent requirements by the local authorities to use authentic construction materials with cost of restoration ranging between RM150,000 and RM500,000 per unit, states the article, quoting Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) Northern Chapter past chairman Datuk Lawrence Lim saying: “Conversion fees to change residential usage to commercial is also high, at RM100 per square metre which works out to about RM19,000 for a pre-war property of about 2,000 sq ft in built-up. You would also need to pay RM25,000 for a car park bay to the local authorities if there is no plan to provide car parking bays. (...) The cost to restore the roof alone is about RM80,000, while the cost to replace floor tiles is between RM70,000 and RM80,000. A 2,000 sq ft built-up area can cost

about RM150,000". The foreign buyers-fuelled market boom of the recent years may therefore have shown some form of exuberance.

[“Penang’s heritage property conundrum”](#) – The Star, 28 Apr. 2018

The economics of George Town’s heritage properties is indeed a conundrum for Penang. In June, Penang’s new Chief Minister stated that foreign ownership made up (only) 3-4% of the 4,000 heritage buildings in the heritage zone. *“The restored buildings give the inner city a new breath of life. While foreign ownership may be an issue, we must look at the interest in restoring these heritage buildings, because previously, the buildings deteriorated, as the owners were either unable to restore them or could not afford to do so”* he said, reported the Star.

[“Penang CM: Restore heritage buildings, then consider their use”](#) – FMT News, 14 June 2018

[“Penang govt to focus on restoring heritage buildings first, says chief minister”](#)- Malay Mail, 14 June 2018

The **conservation future of the Sia Boey (old Prangin market) and the Prangin Canal site** (see our Misc. Heritage news bulletin of) seemed **again called into question**. Whereas a rejuvenation project anchoring the protection of the area was underway, in June, the new Penang Chief Minister reintroduced the proposal to insert a transport hub into the site in relation to Penang’s proposed LRT programme.

The Malay Mail reported as follows on an interview with him: “He is especially firm about pushing through the state’s plans for a Light Rail Transit (LRT) line between Komtar and Bayan Lepas. (...) He is (...) adamant that the LRT line starts with a station sited at a car park space in Sia Boey, just next to Komtar in George Town. *‘I want the LRT station to be there, we can’t site it at Gat Leboh Macallum, or Leboh Cecil, I fought very hard for it to be there and I finally managed to convince them that the LRT station is more important, the location is perfect for connectivity’* (...) The controversy surrounding the location of the LRT station in Sia Boey included heritage concerns and at one point, former CM Lim Guan Eng proposed that an art district be built there while the LRT station be shifted to a plot in Gat Leboh Macallum. Chow said the state government still recognised the heritage concerns of having a LRT station so near the Unesco world heritage site. *‘We will design the LRT station like a heritage shophouse, we can model it like a row of heritage shophouse, much like the Loke Thye Kee building, so the station will be one that blends in with its surroundings’* “ said the new CM.

[“Prangin canal to be rehabilitated, Sia Boey renewed”](#) – The Star, 29 March 2018

[“Penang CM plans to tackle past concerns on transport, Sia Boey and environment”](#)- Malay Mail, 16 June 2018

Also noted:

A MoU was signed between the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG) and **Penang Botanic Gardens (PBG)** and **suggestions were made for it to also apply for UNESCO world heritage listing**. The SBG was listed by UNESCO in 2015.

[“Unesco heritage status possible for Penang’s gardens, says expert”](#) – FMT News, 22 Jan. 2018

It was later reported that Penang Hill Corporation was for its part also preparing an **application for Penang Hill and its surrounding areas to be declared a UNESCO biosphere reserve** [“Penang Hill and surrounding areas inch towards Unesco reserve status”](#)- The Star, 22 July 2018

The question of the conservation of **Jerejak island** was raised further to reports that major tourism infrastructure projects were being planned on the island and given the go ahead. The 362 ha island is located South East of Penang island between the two road bridges connecting Penang to the mainland. It was a former leper centre and penal colony. The new Deputy Minister of Tourism Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chikand, who is also Balik Pulau, Penang MP, said that the National Heritage Department was in the process of applying to UNESCO for World heritage Status for the Sungai Buloh national leprosy control centre in Selangor together with the Jerejak Island.

[“Jerejak in a state of disrepair, says heritage activist”](#) - FMT News, 10 March 2018

[“Nod for world-class resort on isle”](#) - The Star, 25 May 2018

[“Resort plans put Jerejak heritage status in doubt”](#) - FMT News, 22 July 2018

From Singapore and Hong Kong, in short

Singapore

The **National Heritage Board** has a **new website**, entitled [“Together, We Shape Our Singapore Heritage”](#). It outlines the **Singapore Heritage Plan 2018-2022... Some S\$ 2 mil** were **allocated to co-fund the restoration of monuments** through the National Monuments Fund. One of the major beneficiary will be Catholic Church of St Theresa... The NHB has produced an initial **inventory of 50 items of intangible cultural heritage...** It has updated its **technical guides** on the responsibilities of owners or occupiers of monuments and on painting and announced updated guides on stained glass and two new guides, one on signs, the other on the care and treatment of ‘Shanghai plaster’ for 2018... In May, the annual NHB **“Patron of Heritage Awards 2017” ceremony** distinguished individuals and organisations who have contributed to heritage causes... The future of **Lee Kuan Yew’s home** is still under discussion.

[“50 items identified in NHB inventory”](#) - Straits Times, 8 Apr. 2018

[“67 patrons honoured for supporting heritage causes”](#) - Straits Times, 12 May 2018

[“More help on upkeep of Singapore's heritage buildings”](#) - Straits Times, 25 Jan. 2018

[“\\$2.1m in public funds to be spent in 2018 on maintenance and restoration works for 12 national monuments”](#) - Straits Times, 26 July 2018

[“Church of St Teresa to get \\$1.35m in funding”](#) - Straits Times, 27 July 2018

[“Singapore: Lee Kuan Yew’s home has heritage and historical significance”](#) – Malay Mail, 3 Apr. 2018

Hong Kong

In May, the **restored Tai Kwun** (“big station” in Cantonese) complex of the **Central Police Station and Victoria Prison compound partially re-opened as a public heritage and cultural centre** after 11 years of conservation and adaptive re-use work. The South China Morning post dubbed it “the city’s most ambitious heritage project”. The whole project covers 16 buildings. The restoration was financed by the Hong Kong Jockey Club charities trust and the restored building will operate an art gallery and museum commercially to sustain its operating costs.

[“Central Police Station shows how heritage conservation is best paired with business sense”](#) - South China Morning post, 12 May 2018

[“Thousands of visitors flock to historic Hong Kong police station site for opening of Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts”](#) - South China Morning Post, 30 May 2018

[“Hong Kong Central Police Station restoration: how city’s most ambitious heritage project overcame the odds”](#) - South China Morning Post, 15 June 2018

Global

Find out **East and South Asia's newly listed UNESCO World Heritage Sites**: Mount Fanjingshan (China), Victorian Gothic and art deco buildings in Mumbai, India; hidden Christian sites around Nagasaki in Japan; and 7 monasteries in South Korea

[“New Unesco World Heritage Sites in East and South Asia: how and when to visit, and what you can expect”](#) – South China Morning Post, 4 July 2018

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“The White Raneë – Margaret of Sarawak” exhibition at the Rainforest Fringe, Kuching, July 2018