

SHS PRESS RELEASE
SARAWAKIANA TALK SERIES
23 FEB – 22 MARCH 2008

The Sarawakiana Talk with SHS series was a joint venture project between Pustaka Negeri Sarawak (PNS) and Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS). PNS had been primarily involved in the publicity, logistic, registration and refreshment for this talk series, while SHS coordinated the speakers and prepared the lecture materials.

The objectives of this series are to create public awareness and education for the cultural heritage conservation in Sarawak. This series is intended to be a module that can be used for similar program to suit different target groups in future. Not only is this series informative, it was also targeted as capacity building to recruit young volunteers to assist in similar program in future. Since this is an educational program about conservation, it was also design to incorporate flexibility for educating young people, including school children.

Each session of the Sarawakiana Series Talk was well attended by approximately 30-40 participants from relevant government bodies, school teachers, college students, professionals and the general public. The complete series consist of a series of four lectures, a heritage walk, and a heritage conservation case study and site visit.

The Series started off with "Understanding Heritage" which was an introductory talk on the subject of Heritage. The speaker Ar. Mike Boon, Vice-president of Sarawak Heritage Society, elaborated on the 'what, why, who and how's of Heritage and Conservation, through informative and illustrative powerpoint presentation.

A guest speaker from National University Singapore, Dr Lai Chee Kien, gave a talk on "Building Merdeka" as the second Talk in the Series. This lecture focused mainly on "Independence Architecture in Kuala Lumpur during the period of 1957-1966". Dr Lai described the historical contexts, considerations, and process leading to the design and realization of ten national architectural projects that were commissioned and constructed in and around Kuala Lumpur, within the first decade after Malaya attained its Independence.

"Unique Cultural Heritage of Sarawak", the third Talk, focused on the unique Tangible Cultural Heritage of Sarawak, where participants time traveled through the history of Sarawak, since the pre-historic times and indigenous forms, to the Brooke's era, the colonial period and until post-formation of Malaysia.

Elaborating further from the previous talk, the fourth Talk which was titled "Kuching Past" started out with a video presentation by SHS and Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia Sarawak Chapter (PAMSC). Ar. Mike Boon described the development within the Old Kuching Precinct documented a Historical Timeline for our past in built form. The presentation affectionately brought back a lot of fond memories of the by-gone era.

With all the background knowledge the participants had been equipped with from the past four Talks, it was time for a field trip, where participant will get to walk-the-talk, literally experience the subject matter spiced with sight, sound, smell and taste. For this session of "Kuching Heritage Trail", two groups of participants were each guided through the eastern part of old Kuching town and the west end of the old town, guided by committee members of SHS, namely Ar. Mike Boon, Joseph Ingai, Bong Siak Khiun, Leonard Chang and Peggy Wong.

For the final session of the Series, participants went onto a site visit to the award-winning Conservation project of the Old Kuching Courthouse Complex. At the same time, participants were guided through the pre-conservation work Square Tower, for an example of field work on dilapidation assessment. This site visit aimed to expose the participants to real examples of Conservation projects and experiencing the principles, process and procedures of conservation.

The success of this Series was evident when participants expressed interest in enrolling as volunteers for this program, to enhance the awareness and understanding on the subject of Heritage and Conservation. At the end of the Series, participants are all presented with Certificate of Attendance which was a wonderful reminder of their involvement in this Sarawakiana Talk Series with SHS, organized by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak.