

**SARAWAK**

**Restoration project for the old Sibu mosque** - The Borneo Post reported that a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Sibu Islamic Welfare Trust Board (Lakis) and University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS) on a conservation project of the old Masjid Al-Qadim mosque. The article mentions a cost of RM 1.8 million for the project, of which RM 750,000 would be financed by the Sarawak Government. UCTS School of Build Environment would assist in carrying out a preliminary study and in the design and commissioning of the works. The mosque's minaret, which was demolished 80 years ago, would be reconstructed. In 2008 the mosque was proposed to be gazetted as a cultural heritage site, with 1830 mentioned as its construction date. [["Intensive restoration of historical mosque to cost RM1.8 mln"](#), Borneo Post online, 3 March 2016].



*Old Sibu Mosque*

minaret, which was demolished 80 years ago, would be reconstructed. In 2008 the mosque was proposed to be gazetted as a cultural heritage site, with 1830 mentioned as its construction date. [["Intensive restoration of historical mosque to cost RM1.8 mln"](#), Borneo Post online, 3 March 2016].

**Bung Bratak Heritage centre construction started** - At the occasion of the erection of the first belian pole, the Chairman of Bung Bratak Heritage Association recalled the content of this large project: construction of two traditional longhouses – one for accommodation and the another for a big conference hall, function rooms, an office and a mini museum, a big traditional roundhouse (Baruk), a kitchen and dining hall. *"The RM 8 million project is funded by Ministry of Tourism and culture and construction has been awarded to a Public Works Department-selected contractor. It will be a historical centre as well as a cultural and a mountain-top eco-tourism retreat"*, he said, reported the Borneo Post. [["Bung Bratak Heritage Centre set for completion next year"](#), Borneo Post online, 5 March 2016; ["Rm8 Million Bung Bratak Heritage Centre Gets Off Ground"](#), Bernama, 22 Oct. 2015; [Our end of Nov. 2015 heritage news digest](#) reported earlier on this project].

**Belaga: request for the tomb of a former Sekapang/Kajang/Kejeman leader to be made a heritage site** - The second generation descendants of Layo Abun @ Puso, former leader of the Sekapang/Kajang/Kejeman minority group, from the Belaga area, have asked Liwan Lagang, Sarawak Assistant Minister of Culture and Heritage and also Belaga assemblyman, to make the tomb of their grand father a heritage site. The minister recalled the criteria for listing a place as a heritage site. [["Liwan mulls making Tomb of Layo Abun @ Puso a heritage site"](#), Borneo Post online, 10 March 2016].

**WW2 shipwrecks off Santubong now plundered by scrap metal salvagers?** [["Is historical Japanese WWII shipwreck being targeted by metal salvagers?"](#), Borneo Post online, 10 March 2016]. Watch a forthcoming specific article on this website on this piece of news.

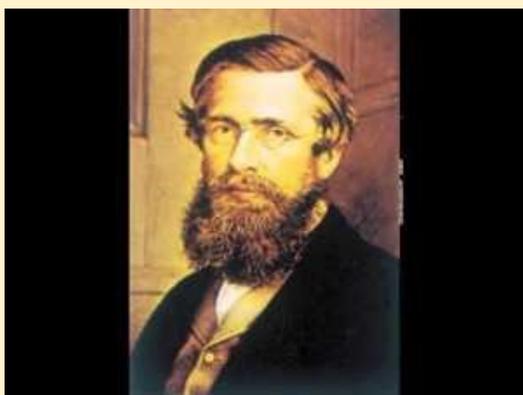
**Sarawak Minister of Tourism restates plans for Wallace point, Santubong** - At a media conference, where the Sarawak Minister of Tourism announced an initiative to revisit the State's s

tourism master plan, he recalled the project to establish a "**Wallace Centre**" in **Santubong**, based on a rehabilitation of **Santubong's ex-Government rest house**. The centre would be "*another avenue for Sarawak to attract researchers and scientists*", he said, reported the Borneo Post. The late colonial-era building is currently dilapidated. It is known to sit on the plot of the original bungalow built for James Brooke, where the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace stayed in 1854/55. It is there that he wrote the paper that became known as the "Sarawak law" in which he figured the theory of evolution slightly ahead of Darwin's writings on the subject (\*).



*Ex-Government rest house, 'Wallace point', Santubong, (SHS photo, 2013). The beautifully located site has an indisputable heritage value as a result of its historical association to Wallace.*

\* In his memoirs, A.R. WALLACE writes: "*(...) I must refer to an article I wrote while in Sarawak, which formed my first contribution to the great question of the origin of species. It was written during the wet season, while I was staying in a little house at the mouth of the Sarawak river, at the foot of the Santubong mountain. I was quite alone, with one Malay boy as cook, and during the evenings and wet days I had nothing to do but to look over my books and ponder over the problem which was rarely absent from my thoughts (...) the way in which species had come into existence.. (I) put my facts and ideas on paper, and the result seeming to me to be of some importance, I sent it to The Annals and Magazine of Natural History, in which it appeared in the following*



*September (1855). Its title was "On the Law which has regulated the Introduction of New Species," which was briefly stated (at the end) as follows: "Every species has come into existence coincident both in space and time with a pre-existing closely-allied species." (Pp. 354-355) [Wallace, A. R., 1905. My life: A record of events and opinions. London: Chapman & Hall. Volume 1.]*

**Kuching riverfront Government projects restated** - At the same event, touching on heritage sites, the Minister restated the S-shaped, pedestrian, Golden Bridge across the Kuching waterfront, under construction, and the associated walkway programme on the North bank of the river. He said that the latter will connect Pengkalan Sapi with the S-bridge at Pengkalan Batu and link with **Fort**

**Margherita.** He also mentioned the cascading waterfall with lighting system project on the Fort's grounds. [["Conviction Cave to receive visitors in a year's time"](#), Borneo Post online, 24 March 2016].

**Sarawak Cultural Village "Best Tourist Attraction"** - At the 19th Malaysia Tourism Awards 2014/2015 announced in late February 2016, the Sarawak Cultural village was awarded "Best Tourist Attraction" in the category "Man-made attraction/Arts and Culture". At the same event, Plaza Merdeka was the winning "Innovative Shopping Centre" in the category "Stand alone shopping mall". Plaza Merdeka Holdings Sdn Bhd's chairman, who is also State Secretary, said *"With the recent addition of The Waterfront Hotel, the completion of the covering India Street Pedestrian Mall, the Golden S-shaped bridge, history museum and other significant projects in the planning stages, this neighbourhood and the old city centre will become a tourism mecca"*, reported the Borneo Post. [[MTA Awards 2014/2015](#) ; ["Shopping malls a boon to local tourism"](#), Borneo Post online, 19 March 2016].

## **MALAYSIA-WIDE AND BEYOND**



Gua Tambun cave painting, Perak (commons.wikimedia.org photo)

**Conservation plan for Tambun Cave, Perak** - Gua Tambun, located near Ipoh, has over 600 forms of rock art, estimated to be 2000 to 5000 years old. The State Government has recently finalized a conservation plan for the site, and facilities to protect the site and to improve visitors access will be built under a collaboration between the State and National Heritage Department, reported The Star online. *Gua Tambun is the largest rock art site in peninsular Malaysia. The paintings were gazetted by Ipoh City Council in 1986 and declared a national heritage by the Department of National Heritage in 2010. They have been exposed to the elements and prone to vandalism. The Centre for Global Archaeological Research of USM (University Sains Malaysia) has contributed to research the site and to community-based heritage awareness projects.* [["Working to save Tambun Cave"](#) The Star online, 8 March 2016; [tambunrockart.com](http://tambunrockart.com)].

**New life for Carcosa, Kuala Lumpur?** - The historic, listed, Carcosa buildings, which housed a hotel, reverted to the Government upon expiry of their lease end of 2015. The place had been reported to be run-down. *"We are currently looking at some companies with reputable background in hotel management to carry out the day-to-day operations of the place"* said Kuala Lumpur City

Hall (DBKL)'s Executive Director for planning. [["Management takeover"](#), The Star online, 11 March 2016; Carcosa was also previously mentioned in [our January heritage news digest](#)].

**Balancing heritage and tourism in George Town and Melacca.** A workshop took place in George Town, based on a UNESCO case study on how stakeholder involvement can facilitate sustainable tourism. One of the proposals that came up is to promote mechanisms by which the tourism industry "give back" to the community, such as local council fees on hotel rooms per night. Meanwhile, March saw more press reports on escalating rents, evictions and disappearance of traditional trades and on the surge of the hospitality industry in George Town- A very challenging issue faced by the heritage town, which has committed itself to UNESCO to retain the authenticity of its social fabric. "GTWHI [George Town World Heritage Inc.] general manager Dr Ang Ming Chee said the residents, trades, their cultures and way of living are one of the city's Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) that should be safeguarded but in order to do so, meticulous documentation needed to be done first. She said they have been conducting video and oral documentation of the history of local residents and traditional trades in the heritage zone but it is not an easy task. *"It took my officers three months to gain the trust of some residents before they are willing to open up to talk to us"* she said, reported the Malay Mail. [["Project seeks to balance tourism, heritage in George Town and Malacca"](#), Malay Mail online, 17 March 2016; ["As rentals surge, more residents quit Penang's heritage capital"](#), The Malay Mail, 4 March 2016].

**Penang : call for wider inventory of traditional settlements and cultural landscapes -** Disappointed by the decision of the authorities to demolish the 200-year-old Kampung Siam, to make way for a real estate development (five-storey hotel and shops), Penang Heritage Trust said that a thorough inventory of all traditional settlements and cultural landscapes in Penang should be conducted and subsequently gazetted", reported the media. Having recently lost an appeal at the High Court, the villagers have been served notices, by the landowner, to move out [["Heritage watchdog calls for an inventory of traditional villages"](#), Malay Mail online, 10 March 2016; ["PHT wants inventory of Penang's traditional settlements"](#), FMT News online, 11 March 2016].

**Penang Free School buildings to be listed as a Heritage site -** The School Board chairman "said the heritage status will allow the school to receive conservation grants from heritage authorities, as well as avoid development and conserve heritage buildings", reported the Malay Mail. [["Aged 200, Penang Free School gets nod for heritage status, awaiting state gazette"](#), The Malay Mail online, 11 March 2016].

**"The Heritage of Ancient and Urban Sites: Giving Voice to Local Priorities" regional workshop, Singapore -** This stimulating workshop organized by the Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre, Institute of South East Asia Studies, National University of Singapore, addressed timely the issue of taking into account the demands of the communities in heritage management. Projects from Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, Myanmar and Malaysia, giving voice to or emerging from grassroots or community organisations were presented. Projects relating to the Lenggong Valley World Heritage (Perak), the Tambun caves (Perak) and on George Town were presented by Malaysian speakers. The workshop was attended by three Sarawak Heritage Society members. [["Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre International Workshop and Launch of the Archaeology Unit Gallery"](#), Institute of South East Asia Studies (ISEAS), Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore website, 14 March 2016].