

## MISC. HERITAGE NEWS – August 2017 to January 2018

### What we spotted on the Sarawak and regional heritage scene in the last 6 months

#### SARAWAK

**SHS in the news:** The media reported on the meetings the SHS committee had with the Sarawak Chief Minister and the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Sports in late 2017. **SHS suggested**, in particular, a **review and modernization of Sarawak's current policy, strategy and regulatory frameworks** and the launch of a **technical baseline study on the conservation of Kuching's heritage core**.

[Sarawak needs special unit to oversee heritage conservation](#) – The Star, 25 Aug. 2017

[Multi-pronged effort to adapt and promote cultural assets](#) – The Star, 16 Sept. 2017

[SHS: Govt committed to heritage conservation](#) – Borneo Post, 15 Nov. 2017

[Study to help assess Kuching's conservation efforts](#) – The Star, 16 Nov. 2017

['Need to review state's policy, framework on heritage assets'](#) - Borneo Post, 18 Dec. 2017

A SHS hosted talk by an international architect drew attention to the potential for **repurposing heritage buildings** that have lost their original use.

[Sarawak Heritage Society holds public lecture by international architect](#) – Borneo Post, 04 Dec. 2017

[Renowned Spanish architect giving a talk tomorrow](#) – The Star, 4 Dec. 2017

[Call for heritage buildings to be re-purposed](#) - Borneo Post, 07 Dec. 2017



The **historic old Sarawak Museum building closed for 30 months** on 23 October for **conservation works** as part of the new museum campus project. The Government mentioned a budget of RM 38 million and the fact that building structure of the historic, gazetted building would be preserved and that the project is part of the Government's 'heritage trail' project. It was also announced that Sarawak secured the **return of 400 Borneo artefacts from the Prinsenhof Delft Museum in Netherlands** to enhance the new museum's collections.

[Sarawak Museum to close for two and a half years for conservation works](#) – Borneo Post, 21 Sept. 2017

[Sarawak Museum to close until 2020 for restoration](#) – Malay Mail, 21 Sept. 2017

[More artefacts to boost collection at Sarawak Museum](#) – The Star, 16 Nov. 2017



Design of the New Museum Campus, Kuching [source: Asia Europe Museum Network web post, 25/10/2016]

Kuching's imposing "**Darul Hana**" new **pedestrian bridge** across the Sarawak River built opposite the Old Court House and Square Tower was **opened** in September. The RM 33 million bridge, formerly named the "Golden Bridge", is the brainchild of Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sarawak Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud.

[Abang Johari hopeful iconic Darul Hana Bridge will draw more tourists to the state](#) – Borneo Post, 12 Nov. 2017

[Opening of RM35m Darul Hana Bridge over Sungai Sarawak](#) - New Straits Times, 14 Nov. 2017

In December, a 2-day workshop convened by the 1Malaysia Foundation in collaboration with Kuching North City Hall revived a proposal to **apply to UNESCO for Kuching to be listed, as a 'City of Unity'**.

[Improving Kuching's chances of receiving Unesco recognition](#) - The Star, 30 Nov. 2017

In an interview with the Borneo Post, **Kuching North City Commission (DBKU) member Dato Wee Hong Seng**, also president of India Street Merchants' Association and Honorary Deputy Secretary of the Kuching Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stressed on the **need to balance heritage conservation and business considerations**, and for the **business community of Kuching's heritage core to adapt**, through participatory approaches. "*There is no point in obtaining heritage status for Kuching when the business community does not benefit from it. So there must be a vantage point where everyone could agree and with that decision, the whole community will prosper in the long run [...] We must move forward as a community and we cannot afford to isolate ourselves from others because it's not going to work that way*", he said. He mentioned a plan by DBKU to set up a '**tourism section**', and a project to **put up the history of each street name in the area to provide information on their rich historical heritage** to enhance the tourism potential. He also called for continued enhancement of the value of old properties.

[No other way but to adapt](#) – Borneo Post, 07 Dec. 2017

Addressing the change that the old Kuching heritage core is undergoing was also touched upon in another Borneo Post article. Assistant Secretary of Kuching Old Market Community Association Sim Kiang Chiok mentioned that coming to terms with reality is a harsh decision the shopkeepers in Carpenter Street have to face head-on and that **shopkeepers in Carpenter Street must now focus on tourism-related businesses**. The same article reported Dato Wee Hong Seng calling for a **more integrated planning to enhance the business potential of the whole area**. "*To compete with the many shopping complexes and the new ones coming up in Kuching, we have to change the concept for the whole area by operating as one business*



*community using modern means, including online and social media. Of course, we will try to retain the spirit of the old district and the essence of the social and business life of the residents. If we can do this as a community, then we can move forward as an entity. And hopefully with that kind of spirit, we will prosper together”,* he said, adding that a proposal is under preparation, and that the stakeholders will be invited for feedback.

[Revitalising and digitalising District 93000](#) – Borneo Post, 24 Dec. 2017



India Street, Kuching, December 2017. Quite cluttered.

Kuching North City Commission DBKU signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) to **evaluate DBKU’s ‘Clean Beautiful and Safe (CBS) City 2012-2014’ plan** (which included a heritage conservation component), with results expected early 2018. The Borneo Post’s article announcing the MoU also touched on **enforcement**: it reported Kuching South City mayor Datuk James Chant explaining that “MBKS or other government agencies never intended to ‘be tough’ on the public unnecessarily. *“Instead, we strive to educate them and create more awareness of matters related to health and hygiene, especially at eateries. Indeed, the feeling of togetherness in resolving issues holistically is better than using tougher measures”* he said.”

[MBKS engages other authorities to address manpower problem](#) – Borneo Post, 27 Dec. 2017

In early February, the Borneo Post reported as follows on a speech by the Chief Minister on Government projects for old Kuching: “Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg said the state government had come up with a master plan to upgrade all the facilities within the heart of the City. He said the **focus** would be in **old Kuching**, where the basic infrastructure and attraction, ranging from the **restoration of Satok Bridge** (which is now under tender and to be constructed soon) to the **conversion of Fort Margherita**, would be developed **within three years**. He revealed that the master plan for the development of old Kuching would cover all the Malay villages along the Sarawak River, stretching from Satok Bridge to Gambier Road, Main Bazaar until Padungan. *“We will upgrade all the facilities along the river including the Malay villages across the river until areas around the cat statue in Padungan,”* [...] Abang Johari revealed that **Fort Margherita** would also be upgraded, saying a **cascading waterfall, to be decorated with coloured lightings**, would be built there. He said in the compound of Fort Margherita, a Western eatery had been proposed. *‘We will convert the*

*compound of Fort Margherita into a western style tea house. We have tendered the work out under the Ministry of Tourism. This tea house is to cater for our European tourists and locals who want to be like the Europeans.’ he said.”(underlined by us). Our understanding is that this relates to the Halaman Heritage Kuching Plan, approved by State Planning Authority in January 2016.*

[New face for old Kuching in the pipeline](#) – Abang Johari – Borneo Post, 3 Feb. 2018

### **Also noted**

A **Fire safety campaign** was launched in **India Street**, Kuching, by the Fire and Rescue Department in cooperation with DBKU. Dato Wee Hong Seng, representing DBKU, recalled that it is the duty of shophouse owners and tenants to prevent fire, not only to protect their property but to preserve the city’s heritage and that he would also propose to DBKU to make it compulsory for hawkers to attend fire safety courses. He recalled the December 2009 fire at Gambier Street that destroyed several shophouses. Fire is indeed a major risk hanging on urban heritage buildings, in particular in dense shophouse areas. In George Town, Penang, six shophouses and one heritage hotel were affected by fires in the span of a few days in September. And more recently, in Jakarta, fire destroyed most of a Dutch colonial heritage site dating back to the 17th century, including a museum.

[Taking steps to avoid a fire disaster](#) – The Star, 28 Nov. 2017

[\[Three fire outbreaks in one day](#) – The Star, 14 Sept. 2017]



[\[Fire destroys Dutch colonial heritage site in Jakarta](#) – Straits Times (Reuters), 17 Jan. 2018]

The third edition of the **Kuching Heritage Race** took place on 27 January 2018, with “Culture meets Nature” as its theme. “*The race aims to continue introducing residents and visitors alike to our vibrant heritage, giving them better understanding on the need to manage it for future generations*”, said Philip Yong, chairman of the Kuching Heritage Awareness Society, organizer of the event. Proceeds went to charities and a social enterprise working to preserve and promote local handicrafts production.

[Treasure hunt themed heritage race returns](#) – The Star, 1 Nov. 2017

[Organiser hopes for better turnout in next Heritage Race](#) – Borneo post, 27 Dec. 2017

Further to the submission by the newly set-up **Heritage Society of Rajah Charles Brooke Memorial (RCBM) Hospital**, the historic **leprosarium**, located some 20km from Kuching, has been **listed by Sarawak Museum Department to be gazetted as a heritage site**. Plans are to transform the site into an **open-air museum**, with sponsorships seemingly in reach. *“The day we have all been waiting for. Today, we were presented with our Notification of Preservation for Historical Buildings under the Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance 1993”* posted the Heritage society of the RCBMH on their Facebook page.

A subsequent, moving post deserves to be reproduced here: *“You will be surprised to know that there are people who oppose to the preservation and conservation of our heritage site. It is indeed disheartening to know that heritage means nothing to them. Instead, they'd prefer to have the grounds bulldozed and a state-of-the-art modern buildings to be erected in its place. History is what has made us who we are today. We learn from past histories to make a better tomorrow, not just for ourselves but also for our children and their children's children... We can always have modernisation anywhere we want, but we could never buy our heritage and the histories that come with it. We will not be here forever, but we can all keep this legacy for those that will come after us”*. Congratulations to HSRCBMH president Angelina Jong and her team for their tireless efforts to get recognition of the site.

[https://www.facebook.com/HSoRCBMH/?hc\\_ref=ARS74qkSEAtctaSfKVweVjUrvlXwKLLv\\_kLkOgHkRtm9HOJPT-SETrp8avGfkKlcsB4c](https://www.facebook.com/HSoRCBMH/?hc_ref=ARS74qkSEAtctaSfKVweVjUrvlXwKLLv_kLkOgHkRtm9HOJPT-SETrp8avGfkKlcsB4c)

[Sarawak fully supports move to gazette leprosarium as museum](#) The Star, 2 Oct. 2017

Miri: **Hillslopes around Canada Hill leading to the Grand Old Lady rig will be reinforced and stabilised to stop erosion**. The monument is threatened by further erosion and conventional methods to prevent erosion have so far not worked, reported The Star.

[Hillslopes around historic monument to be reinforced](#) – The Star, 20 Jan. 2018

## **AT NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE REGION** (as food for thought' for Sarawak)

### **Nationwide**

**Malaysia** has so far **497 national heritage listed items**, of which 69 building, archaeological and natural sites, 96 tangible objects and 21 living persons, stated the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz in August. *“I believe with aid and cooperation from all quarters, especially the owners, state government and local authorities, will enhance efforts towards gazetting of the country’s heritage treasures,”* he said.

[Minister: Historical buildings, objects to be gazette under National Heritage Act](#) – Malay Mail, 26 Aug. 2017

**CENDANA, Malaysia’s new Cultural Economy Development Agency was launched in September**. The organisation has an Industry Advisory Panel, on which Badan Warisan Malaysia vice-president Ms Elizabeth Cardoso sits on heritage matters

[PM declares 'cultural economy' as a new asset for Malaysia](#) – New Straits Times, 6 Sept. 2017

A recently set-up national public trust named **Amanah Warisan Negara (AWAN) / National Heritage Trust** will hold and manage the **66 acre Taman Tugu Park, Kuala Lumpur** as an **urban forest conservation project**, endowed with a RM 650 million first phase budget. The current project area is to be extended. Speaking of the project, the Prime Minister said *“This will make Taman Tugu comparable to Hyde Park in London and other green lungs in major*



*first-world cities such as New York City,"* AWAN was set up as a CSR initiative of Khazanah Nasional (Malaysia public investment fund). *"Whilst the current focus (...) will be the Taman Tugu park, the longer term objective is for this public trust to potentially undertake more projects that involve the rejuvenation, rehabilitation and/or operations of selected public spaces together with heritage assets of national significance"*, states the [Taman Tugu website](#). [KL's iconic Taman Tugu to be held under national public trust](#) – New Straits Times, 4 Sept. 2017

[More heritage sites to be listed under AWAN, says Wan Junaidi](#) – New Straits Times, 12 Sept. 2017

**The 1990's ban by the Kelantan state Government, of the traditional "Mak Yong" dance was brought** to the spotlight by visiting United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune. The Kelantan government had reportedly justified the ban by the "Hindu-Buddhist origins, and the presence of aspects of polytheism, aspects of divination, and aspects of nature worship". Ms Bennoune urged the Kelantan government to lift its ban on public performances of the "Mak Yong" dance and other traditional artistic Malay art forms. Former foreign affairs and culture, arts and heritage minister Rais Yatim supported the call and commented that **culture content in many states now are diminishing fast and that there are no efforts to revamp or preserve these cultural art forms**. He added: *"The 2005 National Heritage Act is being tossed around like a punctured softball"*, hinting that more could be done to conserve Malaysia's heritage.

[Unesco wants Kelantan to lift ban on Mak Yong](#) – Malay Mail, 21 Sept. 2017

[Nation without cultural heritage lacks identity](#)– FMT News, 25 Sept. 2017

**"The Federal Government is considering enacting a new law that will empower the Natural Resources and Environment Minister to gazette certain forests, jungles and open land for protection on account of their heritage and historical value"**, reported the New Straits Times. It would complement the National Heritage Act and would be inspired by provisions existing in countries such as UK, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

[Putrajaya looking to introduce new law to protect heritage, historical lands](#) – Malay Mail, 26 Sept. 2017

['Heritage law' for land being considered](#) – New Straits Times, 26 Sept. 2017

More emphasis will be put on put on the **protection of underwater heritage**, announced the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Heritage Department. Reference was made to a **shipwreck believed to date as far back as the 14th century discovered off Terengganu in 2012**. "National treasures belong to the Federal government and should not be taken illegally by individuals. This is why we are now working with the relevant agencies to retrieve them". *"We have signed a memorandum of understanding with Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) to grant them permission to recover these artefacts from the waters off Terengganu as part of the underwater heritage excavation,"* said Tourism and Culture Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ab Ghaffar A. Tambi.

[Tourism Ministry to lay more emphasis on saving, protecting shipwrecks, artefacts](#) – New Straits Times, 17 Oct. 2017

## Sabah

Sabah State Assembly has approved a **new State Heritage enactment** to replace the current one, considered as not comprehensive enough. Media reports said that it clarifies the gazetting and enforcement powers; extends the scope to include intangible heritage; allows for the setting up of a State Heritage Fund; gives the State Government authority to approve financial assistance to owners, custodians or trustees for the conservation and preservation of State heritage; and provides for hefty fines of up to RM500,000 and imprisonment of up to five years for offences. The **State Heritage Fund** will be dedicated to the maintenance, conservation and preservation and restoration of heritage, “whether owned by the government or otherwise”, funding campaigns, research, studies or publication, and for the purchase of heritage assets. It will receive Government funds and grants, donations or contributions, and monies derived from levies imposed under the enactment.

When the bill was debated, a call was made to include protection of underwater heritage. Attention was drawn to the issue of the protection of underwater heritage after three Japanese WW2 wrecks were ‘salvaged’ earlier in 2017 in unclear circumstances, to the despair of the heritage conservation and divers communities.

Alarm was also raised over the fact that the new enactment removes the requirement for consent of the head of state or the legislative assembly to revoke heritage status, a provision seen as a strong deterrent against abuses. *“This is because the process of obtaining a resolution of the assembly will necessarily bring the proposed degazettement of the heritage conservation area into the public arena. This will force the Ministers and officials to explain and defend their decision to revoke a heritage area to the public. It is to be expected that media and environmental groups will come to know about the proposed revocation of a heritage site and make their views known. Public opinion or outrage will act as a deterrent against abuses by the government”* said Datuk Yong Teck Lee, a former Sabah Chief Minister, who stressed that in the past, this had ensured the protection of the Kota Kinabalu Wetlands, as well as the Atkinson Clock Tower, the Chong Tain Vun Park and Padang Merdeka.

[Sabah assembly passes new heritage enactment](#) – FMT News, 23 Nov. 2017

[Sabah passes 5 bills including on heritage conservation](#) – New Straits Times, 23 Nov. 2017

[No check against abuse in Sabah’s new heritage law, says Yong](#) – FMT News, 29 Nov. 2017

[Sabah Opposition claims new heritage law removes oversight shields](#) – Malay Mail, 29 Nov. 2017

[Enforcement of State Heritage Enactment timely](#) – Director – Borneo Post, 11 Jan. 2018

**More Sabah state heritage listings proposed:** Kota Kinabalu’s old Wisma Radio Sabah building at KM2.4 of Jalan Tuaran: Turnbull Hall at Sabah College, and Kent College in Tuaran (the oldest teacher training college in the State) have been proposed for listing.

[“State government gazettes WRS building”](#) - The Star, 27 Nov. 2017

[“Five Sabah buildings identified as historic monuments”](#)- The Star, 28 Nov. 2017

Emulating Sarawak? Sabah State Culture, Tourism and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Masidi Manj called for the setting up a new, bigger multicultural museum for Sabah.

[Call to set up multi-ethnic museum](#) – New Straits Times, 9 Jan. 2018

## Kedah

Reacting to the announcement by the Minister of Tourism and Culture Minister Mohamed Nazri Aziz, of moves to secure Unesco World Heritage Site status for the **Royal Belum State Park** in Gerik, Perak, the **Quartz Ridge of Gombak**, Selangor, and the **Forest Research Institute of Malaysia**, a green lung, V. Nadarajan, author of the book “Bujang Valley: The Wonder That Was Ancient Kedah”, regretted that **Bujang Valley** is not included in the package, and given lower priority. He advocated that in addition to the **Sungai Batu** archaeological site, already vying for listing as a Unesco World Heritage listing, two other important and significant sites in the area should be included: **Merbok** and **Pengkalan Bujang**. The Bujang Valley civilisation dates back to over 2,000 years.

[Author slams tourism ministry for ignoring Bujang Valley](#) – FMT News, 2 Aug. 2017

[Sg Batu: Kedah pledges support for Unesco listing plan](#) - New Straits Times, 22 Oct. 2017

['Sg Batu can be Unesco World Heritage Site like Angkor'](#) – New Straits Times, 22 Oct. 2017

See also:

[Old-new history of ancient Kedah](#) New Straits Times, 11 Nov. 2017

## Melaka

The setting up of an **additional regulated buffer zone for the UNESCO listed cites of Melaka and George Town is under study, to control visual and skyline pollution** around the core heritage zones. The regulation would be inserted in Melaka’s Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and George Town’s Special Area Plan (SAP).

[Keeping a 'clear view' of heritage sites](#) – New Straits Times, 12 Nov. 2017

Commenting on the above proposal, “*Melaka* heritage proponent Josephine Chua, 61, called for stricter enforcement of guidelines. “*It is good to have a tertiary zone, but it is also important that the people managing and planning it are aware of what it means to live in a heritage zone. There is no point having new regulations when you can’t keep up with the old ones at the core and buffer zones. It is not just about protecting existing buildings, but also the feel of the place. Even now in the core zone, heritage buildings have been painted with garish colours, such as red, green, blue and yellow, which should not be allowed when the original colour of these buildings were white,*” she said, adding that the buildings were now painted that way, perhaps, to attract business. [...] Chua also **suggested incentives for heritage building owners to preserve their buildings as per the original.** “*For example, if you follow the guidelines, the government can approve your plans fast or help you get lime plaster paints at discounted prices.* “*You can also give certificates of appreciation to recognise their efforts in restoration work and helping traditional businesses to survive,*” the *New Straits Times* reported her saying.

['Reward those involved in restoration, helping old businesses to survive'](#) – New Straits Times, 12 Nov. 2017

## Negri Sembilan

The Star reported on **caves** where recent excavations by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) some 2 years revealed **human presence** (Old Stone Age) believed to be of **14,000 years ago**, i.e. paleolithic times, making it the first prehistoric site to be discovered in the southern part of the



peninsula. The cave, named Gua Pelangi is now under the care of the National Heritage Department.

[Adding value to Negri's history](#) – The Star, 28 Oct. 2017

## **Kuala Lumpur**

The Singapore Straits Times published a critical article on the **redevelopment of the historic Dataran Merdeka area**, where modern new structures have been erected, such as such as water feature structure with a bright LED lighting and a glass and concrete bridge across the Gombak River, with reportedly little or nothing spent on the conservation or maintenance of the heritage buildings. “The changes wrought by the river project are destroying the historical value and spirit of KL's landmarks, say architects and conservationists”, reported the article, Respected conservation architect Laurence Lo said "*The sense of place, history, memories. All of that is lost*", adding that the **absence of a gazetted conservation plan in KL** would lead to the destruction of heritage sites threatened by development and poor urban planning, reported the article. “**Conservation experts say there is plenty of local talent in the form of non-governmental organisations and specialist groups. But they have not been sufficiently consulted. ‘The engagement has been superficial and it's not thorough’**” said Ms Elizabeth Cardosa from Badan Warisan, a non-profit heritage organisation”, the article further reported.

[Kuala Lumpur's heritage buildings under threat](#) - Strait Times, 8 Aug. 2017

[KL heritage buildings facing destruction, say conservationists](#) – Malay Mail, 8 Aug. 2017

**Carcosa and Seri Negara** featured an exhibition “Jalan Merdeka: Taversing the Routes to Merdeka” in September 2017. **Asian Heritage Museum (AHM)**, which is now the tenant of the heritage place, plans further **activities such as arts and cultural performances and the setting up of a permanent museum and a resource centre**, reported the media.

”[Carcosa Seri Negara transforms for special Merdeka exhibition](#) – The Star, 23 Aug. 2017

[Discover the untold stories of Merdeka at Carcosa Seri Negara](#) – New Straits Times, 23 Aug. 2017

['Jalan Merdeka' exhibition to showcase never-before-seen artefacts related to independence](#) – 31 Aug. 2017

[Discover Malaysia's journey to Merdeka at Carcosa Seri Negara](#) – New Straits Times, 4 Sept. 2017

[Breathing new life into Carcosa](#) – The Star, 6 Sept. 2017

## **Penang**

For the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its listing as a UNESCO heritage site**, George Town will run a **series of programmes throughout 2018**, which will culminate with an **international conference on Managing Urban Cultural Heritage, in October**

[A decade as a world heritage site](#) – The Star, 25 Jan. 2018

NGOs raised **questions on the plan to restore a row of shophouses in the Sia Boey redevelopment area**. The area has been subject to changing plans. The owner, the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) and the State heritage agency GTWHI, stated that the conservation plan is on track but the public seems to have remained in the dark on its content. “*As the site has a lot of social significance and relevance to George Town's World Heritage*

*Site status, we hope the latest plans for the site will be made known and public views sought*” said City councillor and Penang Heritage Trust vice-president Khoo Salma Nasution.

[One year on, Sia Boey’s historic shophouses remain in shambles](#) – FMT News, 8 Sept. 2017

The **demolition of a run-down colonial building for a hospital expansion project, on Peel Avenue** (see our previous Newsletter), became politicized. The two stories bungalow was considered by civil society groups as a valuable heritage asset to be conserved and claims were made that a proper Heritage Impact Assessment was not undertaken.

[Penang questioned as to why it was rushing to approve demolition of heritage building](#) – New Straits Times, 13 Sept. 2017

[Penang MCA urges state government to implement policies to protect heritage buildings and ensure public safety](#) – New Straits Times, 4 Oct. 2017

[Penang government not transparent, failed to answer people's questions over Lebuhraya Peel development](#) – New Straits Times, 6 Oct. 2017

[One Penang heritage building down, when's the next one?](#) New Straits Times, 14 Dec. 2017

A heritage “activist” **questioned the political will to enforce the Penang’s gazetted Special Area Plan (SAP)**, which guides heritage conservation in George Towns UNESCO listed zones.

[Penang gov't not committed to enforcing George Town Special Area Plan, says heritage activist](#) – New Straits Times, 9 Oct. 2017

[Nod for 'controversial' hotel projects based on guidelines: Penang council](#)- The Star, 25 Oct. 2017

In reaction to rumours of redevelopment and the current **SK and SMK Convent Light Street (CLS) and SMK Convent Pulau Tikus (CPT) schools** facing closure, the Sisters of the Infant Jesus Malaysia (IJS), landowners of three convent girls' schools in Penang, stated that they have no intention to sell the land for redevelopment. George Town World Heritage Inc. (GTWHI) later confirmed that the CLS buildings were listed as Cat. I heritage (to be conserved as original) and CPT as category II heritage assets, and the Penang Chief Minister said that he would not approve any building plans on the lands of three convent girls’ schools. “Some sources here said there are plans to convert the schools into “affordable” private international schools”, mentioned The Star.

[No plans for redevelopment, says landowner of Penang convent schools](#) – The Star, 3 Nov. 2017

[Two convent schools are heritage sites](#) – The Star, 4 Nov. 2017

[Question marks over iconic convent schools in Penang](#) – The Star, 4 Nov. 2017

George Town-based **Think City**, an organization which assists George Town in community-led regeneration initiatives, published its “**Vol. 3**” report in July. It richly documents Think City’s contributions to urban regeneration projects in several Malaysian cities. Of interest, is the recall, in the report, of the Penang Government, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and Think City partnership which led to the setting-up of the **George Town Conservation and Development Corporation**, a new **project implementation vehicle**. GTCDC, in which CMI (Chief Minister Inc) has majority shareholding, has a board representing the three organisations and a dedicated management team.

[Think city magazine Volume 3](#) – Think City website

This publication was complemented, in November, by the launch of a book entitled “Rejuvenating the City Together: The **George Town Grants Programme (GTGP)**”. The publication documents the pilot RM 16m grant programme which contributed, inter alia, to the restoration of some 80 heritage buildings up to 2016.

[Grants add vibrancy to George Town](#) – The Star, 24 Nov. 2017

Reacting to management **weaknesses** pointed out in the Auditor General's report 2016, **GTWHI** General Manager Dr Ang Ming Chee said the body was **strengthening procedures and procurement management**. She stressed that **smooth restoration of dilapidated buildings necessitates shared effort from owners**.

[Restoration works possible with shared effort from owners, says George Town World Heritage Inc](#) – New Straits Times, 28 Nov. 2017

From 2018, **permits** from the Penang Island City Council will be required to **paint murals** in the heritage enclave of George Town. The designs will first need to be approved by GTWHI.

[Get licence to paint](#) – The Star, 16 Dec. 2017

The Penang Government has set-up a pilot **RM 3 million Heritage Habitat Seed Fund to support heritage shophouse owners in restoring their pre-war buildings**. *“This incentive programme is to support owners who provide affordable rent to long-term tenants”* said the Penang Chief Minister. “He added that George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) has also been tasked to develop incentive programmes to support owners who rent out their properties at affordable rates to long-term tenants” (Malay Mail)

[Penang introduces RM3m fund for heritage conservation](#) – Malay Mail, 15 Jan. 2018

The emergence of hoardings along several closed blocks of heritage shophouses revived local **sensitiveness over bulk shophouse purchases in recent years**. According to the Star newspaper, Aspial Corporation, a listed company in Singapore, is said to have reported the purchase 236 George Town pre-war houses in George Town, via subsidiaries, between 2013 and 2016. Such purchases may have fed the strong rise in George Town's property prices in recent years.

[Seeing red over purple hoardings](#) – The Star, 23 Jan. 2018

The **Penang Free School**, known as the 202 years old oldest school in South East Asia, has been **declared a Malaysia heritage site by the National Heritage Department**. Subsequently, “Any renovation or additional alterations will now have to follow the heritage guidelines”.

[Penang Free School now a Malaysian heritage site](#) – Malay Mail, 3 Feb. 2018

[Penang Free School declared national heritage site](#) – New Straits Times, 3 Feb. 2018

## Perlis

**Alwi Mosque**, the oldest mosque in Perlis (1933) has been **listed as a National Heritage Site**.

[Masjid Alwi congregation grateful for National Heritage Site listing](#) – New Straits Times, 3 Feb. 2018

## Terengganu

The Terengganu State Government has **proposed to offer special incentives to parties interested in preserving Terengganu's art and historical heritage**. *“For example, for those with expertise to build traditional Terengganu houses, we will reduce the assessment rate”*, said State education, science, technology and transformation committee chairman A. Latiff Awang.



[Plan to reward those who help preserve state's heritage](#) – The Star, 15 Nov. 2017

## **SINGAPORE**

Singapore is **not yet a party to the UNESCO cultural heritage convention**. But it **announced an intention to ratify the convention**.

[Singapore looking to ratify UNESCO cultural heritage convention: Grace Fu](#) – Straits Times, 2 Nov. 2017

**Incentives to quality adaptive re-use of built heritage:** The **2017 Architectural Heritage Awards** distinguished a **church** -the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Singapore's oldest Catholic church , a **hotel** – The Warehouse Hotel-, and a building at the site of an iconic former bakery (“Red House”, East Coast Road). The awards were introduced by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in 1995 to recognise high standards of restoration of heritage buildings. 130 projects have so far been awarded.

[Cathedral of the Good Shepherd and The Warehouse Hotel are built heritage restoration winners](#) – Straits Times, 31 Oct. 2017

[Winners of this year's Architectural Heritage Awards kept history alive](#) – Straits Times, 4 Nov. 2017

**Useful reminder of the rule of law:** *[There] “are instances of a clash between what an institution decides as heritage that should not be destroyed and personal values of societies who feel that they should decide on monuments that are within their communities. In other words, the decision to gazette a monument is the purview of government and is not a personal decision of individuals. This means, an owner of a property may not resist the gazetting of the site if NHB, guided by the minister of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, deems the site to be part of Singapore's heritage.”* The above is quoted from a Straits Times column by Margaret Chan, Associate Professor at the Singapore Management University: [Govt makes call on what to gazette as heritage](#) – Straits Times, 16 June 2017

Singapore plans to launch its first **five-year (2018-2022) blueprint for the heritage and museum sector** in April 2018, reported the Straits Times. It will cover four categories: Places, Culture, Treasures and Community. In the pipeline are, in particular, (i) a 2018 nationwide **survey of archaeological potential**, with a view, in particular, to allow archaeologists to step in early on development sites; (ii) a strengthening of the relationship between the National Heritage Board and planning agencies “to **incorporate heritage considerations into development plans from the outset**”. Also, “NHB will be ramping up support for ground-up projects through its heritage participation and **project grants**. It will conduct **clinics to equip its partners "with the necessary knowledge and skill sets"** to execute heritage projects successfully”. The blueprint will constitute a “*masterplan that actually brings together all the different agencies and all the stakeholders to co-develop these strategies and initiatives to effectively address these issues*”, said Alvin Tan, National Heritage Board assistant chief executive of policy and community.

[Survey to identify sites with archaeological value in Singapore](#) – Straits Times, 10 Jan. 2018

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