

SHS to display conservation report

By Ng Kiang Chiew

KUCHING: Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) will exhibit its conservation report/proposal at Permata Carpark here from March 26 to 29 in conjunction with the Building Trade Show (BTS 2009).

This will help to increase the public's knowledge and awareness of the issues, said SHS president, Mike Boon Chee Khian at the society's third Annual General Meeting (AGM) cum Annual Dinner held at Jambu Restaurant here on Friday.

Boon added SHS planned to reach out to the secondary school students and local community this year.

The society would also cooperate with like-minded individuals and organisations to identify critical issues. It would focus on capacity building, more public awareness and education activities to enhance heritage conservation.

It would continue to advise local communities and associations on conservation issues.

A few potential projects had been identified subject to availability of funds and committed personnel to see them through, said Boon.

On the conservation of the old Markets and the historical buildings along Jalan Gambier, he said SHS was concerned over the future of 'the place', which consisted of vacated historical buildings, namely, the Vegetable Market, Fish Market, Poultry Market, Old Government Store, the Banka Building, and the concrete retaining wall in front of the Old Markets built by the Second Rajah.

SHS's project team conducted an independent assessment of the conditions, with research on the history of the buildings also.

"A Conservation Report has been compiled that contains the history of the historical buildings and retain-



Boon (left) presenting his talk on heritage and conservation. PHOTO: JOHN CHAN.

ing wall, site assessment records, statement of structure integrity, measured drawings, reconstruction of the proposed conservation in computer 3-D models, and a proposal for the co-existence of historical buildings with landscape to create a "Green Promenade" to the Kuching Water Front Extension," Boon disclosed.

Report submitted

He added the Conservation Report had been officially submitted to the relevant government authorities.

A few meetings were conducted for dialogue and presentation of the proposal to various government authorities but SHS had yet to receive any response to the proposal from any government authorities, he said.

Boon also said the society's recommendations included removing the "unsympathetic" additions and temporary structures, sealing

up historical buildings for detailed study and documentation, conservation of the historical buildings for adaptive reuse, landscaping the open spaces between the buildings and the river, and incorporating the historical buildings into the proposed Kuching Water Front Extension, which stretches from the existing water front along Jalan Gambier to the Brooke Dockyard, to achieve the co-existence of historical buildings with landscape to create a Green Promenade.

And the benefits of conservation for adaptive reuse were the upgrade of historical structures with modern facilities for traditional activities, preservation of the character of the historical precinct, definition for the uniqueness of the place, consolidating the 'living history' of the local community, promoting cultural heritage tourism, the new trend in the industry, and showing the government's commitment in heritage conservation for future

generations.

"The place's history started since 1860's. It was a 'magnet' that attracted life and economical activities to the 'heart' of Old Kuching.

"It has strong association with Kuching's social and cultural processes. It tells a story about our way of life.

It expressed the aspirations of various government administrations to develop Kuching during their eras.

"The place possesses buildings that have research value on the technical and architectural accomplishment in Sarawak. The place with the old shophouses contributes to the uniqueness of Old Kuching. Therefore, it warrants conservation for adaptive re-use," he added.

SHS, which was formed on February 14, 2006, has 25 registered members.

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