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Out to unravel mystery of lost city beneath Tasik Chini

KUANTAN, Tues. - The State Government is to undertake the enormous task of unravelling the mystery of a legendary lost city said to be hidden in the depths of Tasik Chini.

State Culture, Arts and Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Shahiruddin Abdul Moin said today the State Museum Board director would co-ordinate efforts to locate the city.

"We will get all the help needed. The State Government will give its full support," he said after chairing a meeting to discuss the progress of work to restore the lake to its natural state.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Agriculture and culture, Arts and Tourism Ministries and non-governmental organisations like Wetland International and the World Wide Fund for Nature as well as chalet operators.

"Who knows, one day we may have an underwater museum similar to the one being planned in Egypt and this will greatly boost our efforts to promote Pahang as a leading tourist destination," said Shahiruddin.

Although certain quarters have for years made claims about the presence of a sunken city, few efforts have been made to unravel the mystery.

The city could date back to the 12th century, when the Khmer empire was at the height of its power.

The Khmer Empire was ruled between 802 and 1432 by a succession of god-kings and had its capital in Siem Reap, where the famed Angkor Wat temple complex stands.

Archaeologist Datuk Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, in an interview with the New Straits Times in April, said he believed that ruins of a Khmer period kingdom existed beneath the lake.

Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, who is deputy director of the Malay World and Civilisation department, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, said he would be applying for a grant to carry out research next year.

Back in the 1950s, a few British archaeologists inspected the area and found some ceramic shards which indicated that there was something in the lake. About two years ago, visitors also found some pieces of Vietnamese porcelain which dated back to the Khmer period.

Shahiruddin said today's meeting was to get a consensus from the respective parties on a proposal to build a RM3 million water lock-gate along Sungai Chini which led to the lake.

Shahiruddin said the construction of the lock-gate was recommended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had supplied the Agriculture Ministry with photographs of lock-gates in England and Denmark.

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