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## Preserving rich heritage of Kedah

Shukor Rahman

A KEDAH Heritage Trust is in the works. Puan Seri Nila Inangda, wife of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, recently visited the Penang Heritage Trust for discussions on the matter.

She met PHT secretary Khoo Salma Nasution. Also present was Zuraimi Harun, an Alor Star-based architect who is also a PHT member.

"We suggested that a seminar be organised to attract interest from all quarters," said Salma, who expressed the hope that the PHT, Sumatra Heritage Trust and the proposed Kedah Heritage Trust would foster a close working relationship.

Kedah historian Ismail Salleh, who has been calling for such a body since 1995, welcomed the move.

"It is high time Kedah set up a heritage trust to ensure its historical buildings are preserved for posterity. Several such buildings have been demolished to make way for development over the last few years," he said.

He mentioned Istana Pumpong, demolished in the 1980s to make way for shophouses and food stalls.

Ismail said several historic buildings are in need of urgent attention, including the old magistrate's court, the Istana Lama and the Balai Seni.

The old courthouse and the palace, both built in 1912, have long been neglected. Dadah addicts have made the courthouse their haunt.

The Balai Seni, explained Ismail, was built in 1892, and used to be the courthouse before becoming a general office for the Public Works Department, the Drainage and Irrigation Department, and the Land Office. The late Sultan Badlishah also used to have his office there.

The present town square bounded by the Balai Seni, Masjid Zahir, Balai Besar and Balai Nobat used to be a field known as Padang Court; here, massive anti-Malayan Union demonstrations were held.

"Unfortunately, due to neglect, several historic cannons at Balai Besar and Padang Court were stolen in the 1970s," he said.

Ismail said that among the buildings which should be listed as heritage buildings are Masjid Zahir, Balai Besar, Istana Pelamin, Balai Seni, Balai Nobat, the General Post Office, the police headquarters, the old magistrate's court, the homes of Tunku Abdul Rahman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Istana Kuning, the Menteri Besar's residence at Mentaloon, and Kota Kuala Bahang at Kuala Kedah.

He said Gua Kerbau, a cave at Bukit Keplu within the padi-growing area of Kampung Kodiang Lama, should also be maintained as part of Kedah's heritage, as it played a vital role in hastening the departure of Siamese forces from Ligor; these forces had occupied Kedah for 20 years, beginning in 1821.

Ismail said certain places along the Kedah River, such as Suka Menanti and Teluk Siam Binasa, were the scene of numerous battles against the Siamese and should be preserved.

Other important places along the river, he said, include Gerbang, Tanjung Bendahara, Kampung Tok Temenggong, Limbong, Tajar, Tanah Merah and Pendang, which all played a vital role in Kedah's river trade in the 19th century.

In Sungai Petani, he said, the clock tower donated by Lim Lean Teng and the old police station should be regarded as part of Kedah's heritage.

He feels the authorities should make greater efforts to compile and record the history of the State, especially from some of the more

knowledgeable older folk.

Without such historical records and accounts, he said, the younger as well as future generations will be ignorant of Kedah's rich and colourful past.

\* Those interested in joining the proposed trust, please contact Zuraimi Harun at 04-7303479.

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