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Museums offer RM3.8m to save Buddha statues

MALACCA, Wed. - The Malacca-based Maritime Archaeology Museum and Nusantara Museum today urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Unesco to intervene and save two colossal Buddha statues in Afghanistan from being destroyed by the ruling Taliban government.

On Monday, they had submitted a similar memorandum to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and Unesco director-general Koichiro Matsura.

In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, president of both museums Datuk Chan Teck Chan said the museums had offered their assistance, including a US\$1 million (RM3.8 million) financial aid, to the UN in a bid to save both statues. He said the call to preserve the statues was because both were considered as invaluable world heritage.

"Thousands of years of cultural property and world heritage are being destroyed in Afghanistan.

"As members of the Icom-Unesco which strive to preserve cultural property and world heritage, we are prepared to offer a suitable place to accommodate these cultural heritage. We are willing to sponsor part of the expenditure to rescue and preserve them," he said in a statement issued today.

The colossal Buddha statues, hewn out of sandstone cliffs in the central province of Bamiyan, had been under constant shelling from Taliban fighters in recent days, following the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar's orders.

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