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British light armoured car for new Army Museum

Sager Ahmad

THE Army Museum project team received a vintage Morris light reconnaissance car (LRC) from a sawmill owner in Semenyih, Hulu Langat, last Thursday.

Team leader Mej Ahmad Sham Bahrin said the museum, still under construction in Port Dickson, Negri Sembilan, was very grateful for the donation.

The vehicle, which was used by the British army for escort duties during the Emergency (1948-1960), was lying at the Kim Guan Huat sawmill's junkyard all these years.

The sawmill's partner, Tan Ee Sin, said his father bought the car, a British army surplus for RM5,000, but it was used by the British platoon stationed at the sawmill for patrolling.

Also present at the handing-over were the museum curator Mej Khamis Salim and his assistant Kpt Muhammad Zuraiman Abdul Ghani.

Tan, 63, said Semenyih was a hotbed of communist activities and civilians were constantly harassed by the bandits but the LRC scared them away.

He said the sawmill even had an army barrack and an observation tower while the LRC was driven by two British lieutenants.

He said whenever his father wanted to go to Semenyih town to get supplies, the LRC would escort his lorry to the town and back.

Tan and sawmill manager, Tan Boon Hing, said they were very proud to donate the vehicle to the Army Museum.

Ahmad Sham urged the public to come forward and donate whatever artefact they have on war history.

He said the prime mover for the setting up of the museum was the 18th army chief Jen Tan Sri Md Hashim Hussein who is now High Commissioner to Pakistan.

"Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said during the International Museum Day last year that Malaysia should have a museum similar to the Imperial War Museum in London.

"The concept for our museum was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in December 2001 and our small team has been working hard ever since.

"With strong support from the current army chief Jen Datuk Wira Mohd Shahrom Nordin and our team director Brig-Jen Datuk Ramli Harun, we are confident of success.

"We are happy that more items are being donated to the museum while the latest was a two-pounder field gun by a member of the Kedah royalty on Tuesday."

He said the museum was expected to be ready before 2005 and his team could be contacted at 03-20713599 or 06-6342652 or 019-3528172 (Mej Sham) or e-mail at mindaya@hotmail.com.

Local war history researcher Shahrom Ahmad said a total of 2,200 of the Morris LRC were made in England in the late 1940s.

He said the 8,000-pound, three-man LRC was protected by 14mm armour plate and armed with an anti-tank rifle and Bren gun.

It was powered by a 72hp four-cylinder engine and with a top speed of 80kph, it had a maximum range 400km.