

# Unhappy with heritage list, Asia's own wanted

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MALACCA: Obstacles faced by Asian countries to get World Cultural and Natural Heritage status have prompted Malaysia to propose an Asian version of the list.

Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said creating an Asian chapter of the Unesco World Cultural and Natural Heritage centre would ensure more Asian sites could be bestowed the status.

"Unesco is giving too much emphasis to countries in Europe and the United States. This has resulted in not enough heritage and historic sites being given such status in Asia.

"The ministry, through international channels, will propose this to Unesco and hopes it will be considered" he said after a ground-breaking ceremony for the

Malacca Tower in Bandar Hilir yesterday.

The 11m building with a rotating cabin that can accommodate 80 people, costs RM21 million and is expected to be ready in December next year.

The tower is designed in the shape of the *Keris Taming Sari*, the traditional Malay weapon used by Hang Tuah, the legendary warrior of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century.

The tower would provide a panoramic view for visitors to savour the beauty of Malacca and the development in surrounding areas from 80m above the ground.

Rais said if the concept of an Asian chapter is shot down, countries like China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, India and Malaysia could create their own organisations to determine historic and heritage sites in the region.

"This is not impossible as we have historians and experts in this field and also in

the areas of culture. However, we hope that Unesco will be fair to us and there would not be a need for us to take this drastic measure," he said.

He said that Malacca's and Penang's applications to Unesco for recognition as world heritage sites would be known soon.

"The applications of the two states were submitted to Unesco in 2004 and we sent a reminder twice, the latest being last year. We hope the committee is close making a decision soon," he said.

He also announced that Malaysia was recently awarded cultural heritage recognition from Unesco for *mak yong*, a dance and for Orang Asli wood carvings.

Rais also announced that the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur would undergo a RM22 million facelift.

"Right now, it is simply boring. Steps will be taken to make tours of museums an exciting adventure," he said.