

National Heritage list to be expanded

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PUTRAJAYA: Every state in the country will be represented on the National Heritage list, which will be expanded to include more items.

The list of 50 items released last week is not final and the Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry, which is in charge of compiling the list, will announce new additions later, its minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said yesterday.

"The list released last Friday is just the first edition. Compiling the list is an on-going effort, it is not something we stop and cast in stone," he said when asked about the dissatisfaction of the Penang and Malacca governments over the exclusion of many places in those states.

The list comprises 18 buildings (mostly in the city), 20 objects and 12 intangible heritage.

The first instalment of the heritage list only had 50 in conjunction with the nation's 50th year of independence.

"All the states will have at least one representative item or site in the list," he said.

Rais spoke after presenting cheques from the ministry to state governments for their 50th Merdeka festivities.

The only building in Penang on the list is the St George Church.

Penang Tourism Development Committee chairman Teng Chang Yeow had questioned why other historical places of worship were left out, as were buildings which won merit awards from the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam had also questioned why buildings in the city, which were on Unesco's heritage list, did not make it to the national list.

Meanwhile, Badan Warisan Malaysia (BWM) wants

greater clarity on the criteria, standards and guidelines for listing of items on the National Heritage Register.

Its executive director, Elizabeth Cardoso, also urged the government to expedite the listing of the country's heritage assets and to accord protection to the many buildings and areas which remain under threat, not just in Kuala Lumpur, but throughout the country.

"It was a great surprise that only 70 items had been recommended for listing on the National Heritage Register and, of these, only 50 were selected, presumably because the number relates directly to the commemoration of 50 years of Malaysia's independence," she said in an email.

Cardosa said the ministry should consider a holistic approach to listing, especially of items which were part of an ensemble.

"The 10 items listed which make up the royal regalia could have been gazetted as a single National Heritage asset.

"Similarly, the four buildings and one site marking the raising of the Malayan flag for the first time, could have been classified as a conservation area and had this been the case, several other civic buildings like the former High Court, the old printing press and the former survey building around the padang which were built in the same period could have received equal status and protection."

BWM also wants to know what other items were recommended for listing on the register.

Asked why not many cultural heritage and buildings in Sabah and Sarawak were on the list, Cardoso said the Antiquities Act 1976 and the Treasure Trove Act 1957, under which the National Heritage Act 2005 (NHA) was enacted, applied only to Peninsular Malaysia.

Cardosa said: "Sabah and Sarawak have their own state enactments relating to heritage."