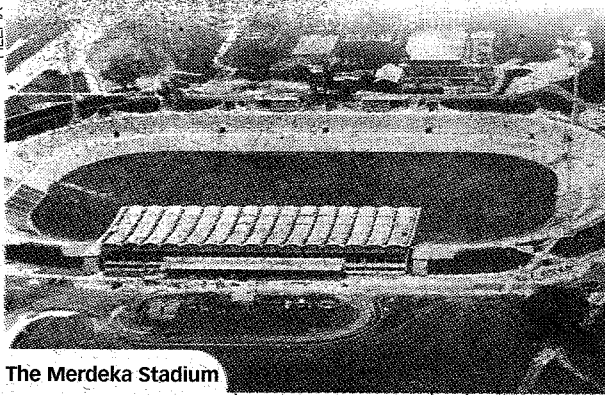


Merdeka Stadium to be restored

FILEPIX



The Merdeka Stadium

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Merdeka Stadium will be restored to its original architectural state by July, in time for the government to hold a major event there, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said.

"We have awarded a tender to a local contractor to restore the Merdeka Stadium to its original state (as it was) in 1957 when Tunku Abdul Rahman declared independence for (then) Malaya," the Merdeka Heritage Trust (MHT) chairman said in an interview.

He said this was probably the first time in Malaysia that a stadium was being dismantled so that it could be restored to its original state, adding that MHT had consulted with conservation experts such as architect Laurence Loh who restored the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Penang.

Last week, the Prime Minister's Department announced that both the Merdeka Stadium and Stadium Negara would be placed under the MHT's management, in an effort to conserve the two stadiums as national heritage sites.

The MHT was set up by Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB), which owns both stadiums and the land around them.

Ahmad Sarji, who is also the PNB chairman and

Badan Warisan Malaysia president, said a "Road to Nationhood" museum would subsequently be set up at the Merdeka Stadium.

"And at Stadium Negara, we are going to have a small museum on 'Glorious Moments of Sports' (to depict) events held at the Merdeka Stadium and at Stadium Negara. These are the plans," he said, adding that the total cost was being worked out.

He said PNB's contribution had been towards restoring and preserving both stadiums but the MHT hoped to eventually raise tax-exempted donations from individuals, corporations and institutions.

He said both stadiums were located on 16.1ha (40 acres) of prime land that PNB would develop according to conservation norms and guidelines.

"This is our corporate social responsibility to the nation," he said, noting that companies which contribute towards heritage conservation were as yet not eligible for tax breaks.

Badan Warisan Malaysia has, before this, proposed the need for the government to offer financial incentives to property owners and corporate citizens to encourage heritage conservation.