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Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam is hoping Malacca will get back old Malay manuscripts

Historical papers may be returned

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MALACCA: Around 100,000 Malay manuscripts believed to be more than 400 years old may soon be returned to their land of origin from Holland and placed at the International Centre of Excellence for Malay Manuscripts here.

The manuscripts date back to the beginning of Dutch colonisation in the Malay Archipelago in 1611.

They consist of Malacca Sultanate history, stories of Hang Tuah and topics relating to medicine, astronomy, religion, language and culture, which are currently being kept at Leiden University.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam said the state, in collaboration with Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), was set to meet with representatives from the university next week to discuss the proposal.

He said that a memorandum of understanding would be signed should the university agree with the proposal.

"If this initiative is successful, in about a year the centre will be filled with historical Malay manuscripts, thereby allowing researchers from around the world to come to Malacca to carry out their research on how things were like 400 years ago.

"I am confident that DBP will carry out this project capably," he said after attending the opening of the centre at Bangunan Yayasan Melaka at the Malacca International Trade Centre near here on Thursday.

Currently, Malacca is the only state in Malaysia that has a centre for historical Malay documents. It was founded under a joint effort between the state government through Yayasan Melaka and DBP.

Ali said the state had appointed Norliah Kudus, who is a senior lecturer at Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka's Language and Human Development Centre, as director of the Bahasa Melayu Unit under the Chief Minister's Office.