

Coliseum to be arts centre

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Rais: National interest takes priority

KUALA LUMPUR: The Coliseum cinema on Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman here will be gazetted as a National Heritage Centre to rejuvenate arts and culture in the city.

Arts, Culture and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the Government needed to create a hub for artistic and cultural activities around the road popularly known as Jalan TAR.

"This is done in the best interest of the country; and the premises, when it becomes the hub for artistic and cultural activities, could be the pride of Kuala Lumpur residents," he said after launching the Culture and Heritage Workshop at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

On Tuesday, the cinema's owner Dr Chua Seong Siew said he was upset that the almost-century-old building he inherited from his mother would be

acquired by the Government and turned into a National Heritage Centre.

Dr Chua wanted to know why the Government had chosen the cinema when there were so many empty government buildings that could be used as a heritage centre.

However, Dr Rais said there should be no question about any monument or building that was required by the Government in the interest of the nation.

"National interest surpasses any other interest. If the Government feels that certain monuments and premises are suitable for further rejuvenation for arts and culture, or any public purpose, for the matter, land acquisition, specifically (under) Sections 4 and 5 (of the Land Acquisition Act), could be invoked by the Government," he said.

"The ministry is now charged

with the duty of preserving what is national interest in terms of heritage prolongation and the dissemination of the arts, which are very important to us."

Dr Rais said the Government had given many historical buildings to the private sector.

"In Kuala Lumpur, a large portion of the public monuments and buildings has been given to the private sector over the years, like the Majestic Hotel and the Sentul Golden Triangle," he said.

In February last year, Dr Rais had announced that he would turn Kuala Lumpur into a City of Theatres, and the Coliseum was one of the buildings that had been identified as a venue to complement the existing theatres.

He said the project was part of the Government's plan to make Kuala Lumpur an arts hub.