

Headline	Officer Heritage conservation works help boost tourism industry		
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Officer: Heritage conservation works help boost tourism industry

KUCHING: Preservation and conservation works on heritage buildings will bring about positive socio-economic impacts to the country.

National Heritage Department's senior heritage officer Sangam @ Musa Antok said many people often questioned the rationale behind the millions of ringgit spent to restore, reconstruct, preserve and conserve heritage buildings.

"Our efforts are indirectly contributing toward creating more tourism products for the country and this will bring in more visitors.

"After Malacca and Georgetown acquired the Unesco Heritage status, these towns see tremendous increase in tourists influx and tourist spending," he told a symposium here yesterday.

Sangam was one of the speakers at the four-day National Conservation Symposium held by the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) here.

The symposium was held in collaboration with the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry, Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation, Sarawak Economic Development Corporation, Tourism Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak Forestry Corporation, Kuching North City Commission, Sarawak Tourism Board, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and 14 other state and federal agencies.

Sangam said Malaysia was rich in intangible and tangible heritage but due to the lack of appreciation and awareness, these were not well documented, researched and conserved.

Citing examples of tangible heritage, he said the country had many buildings which were constructed during the early days of its formation being left to rot and eventually extinct instead of being sustained for posterity.

"We need to keep and promote our heritage for the future generation's reference, educa-

tion and memory, and a proof of our past existence or an important and historical event," he said.

"Heritage will be an important asset to the country," he pointed out.

Sangam said buildings gazetted as national heritage and monument must obtained permission from the department before any restoration and maintenance work could be done.

"Failing to do so is an offence under the National Heritage Act 2005. This is because the department must review the building or monument concerned and access if the proposed restoration and maintenance works comply with our's and Unesco's guidelines," he said.

He said any restoration and conservation works carried out would have either negative or positive outcome, thus all proposals must be looked through thoroughly to minimise intervention on the original structure.

He said the building owner was also prohibited from adding new features to beautify a national heritage building.

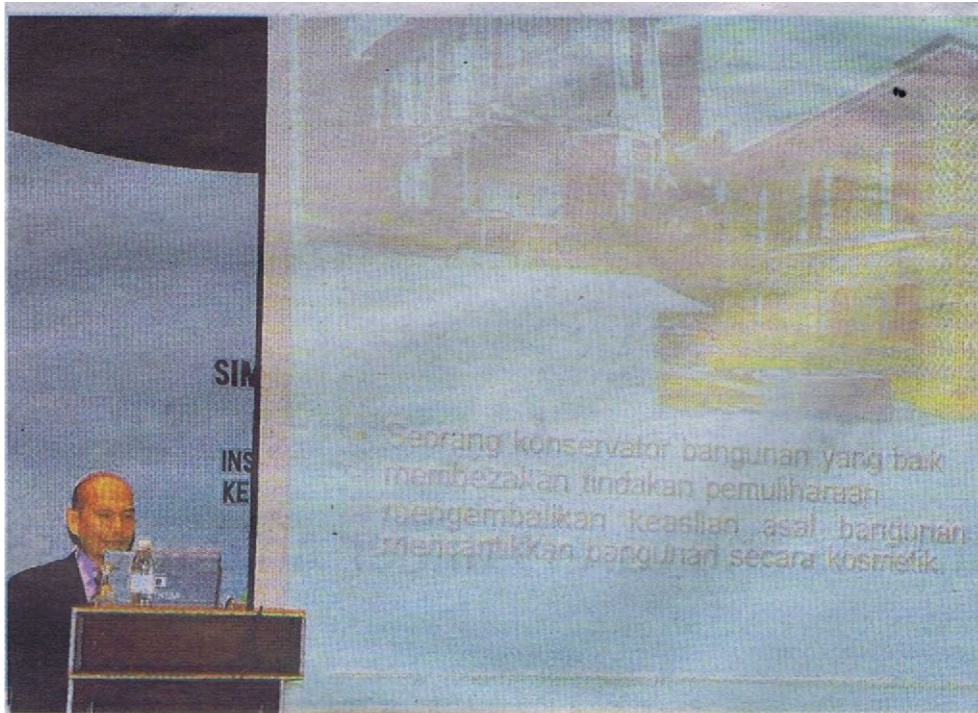
"This include changing even the simplest thing such as a broken lamp or lighting. We must make sure that the replacement will be suitable as some may cause deterioration to the building.

"We also need to make sure that the composition of lime and cement used is right. We cannot simply apply cement on a lime-built structures," he said.

He further explained that before any work could be carried out, documentation of the building was compulsory.

"The documentation covers while works being carried out and after the job is done. A final report in hard and soft copies must be compiled and sent to us and the National Archive Department for future reference," he added.

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Positive impact: Sangam giving his presentation at the National Conservation Symposium yesterday.