

MEDIA RELEASE

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**THE NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD WILL BE GAZETTING ISTANA KAMPONG GELAM
AS SINGAPORE'S 70TH NATIONAL MONUMENT**



Singapore, 31 July – Istana Kampong Gelam will be gazetted by the National Heritage Board (NHB) as Singapore's 70th National Monument on **6 August 2015**. Once the seat of the Johore sultanate, this former royal residence is a reminder of Singapore's historic links to the Malay world.

Historical Significance

2 Prior to the arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles, Singapore was part of various Malay kingdoms in Southeast Asia; in 1819, Singapore was part of the Johor-Lingga-Riau sultanate. Acting as a representative of the British East India Company (EIC), Raffles secured the agreement of Sultan Hussein Shah and Temenggong Abdul Rahman to establish a British trading port in Singapore to counter the Dutch influence in the region. As part of the arrangement, the area of Kampong Gelam was allocated to the Malay community. This and subsequent agreements laid the foundation for the development of Singapore as a key British trading port in the 19th and 20th centuries.

3 With the re-emergence of Singapore as a flourishing port in the 19th century, economic opportunities attracted new immigrants to Singapore. Communities of Bugis, Arab,

Javanese, and Boyanese descent from Malacca, the Riau islands, Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi settled within Kampong Gelam, forming their own *kampungs* (villages) within the area. With the Kallang River basin nearby and facilitated by the British new port and free trade policies, Kampong Gelam thrived as a trading and commercial hub, with merchants specialising in various trades including spices, textiles, gemstones and rattan products congregating in different parts of the district. In the late 19th to 20th century, Kampong Gelam also became a notable printing and publication hub, attracting its share of intellectuals and artists.

4 As the traditional Malay authority, the sultanate established its *istana* (palace) within the district of Kampong Gelam. In line with traditional building practices, the original *istana* was a timber hut. The present two-storey building was commissioned by Sultan Hussein Shah's son and heir, Tengku Mohammed Ali (later Sultan Ali Iskandar Shah) and was completed in 1843. It continued to serve as the residence of Malay royalty after the passing of Sultan Ali Iskandar Shah in 1877 and hosted important community events such as royal weddings. In the 1820s, Sultan Mosque, the royal mosque, was built beside Istana Kampong Gelam (the mosque was rebuilt in 1924–1928).

Architectural Merits

5 Referencing Classical European architecture, Istana Kampong Gelam was symmetrically planned and features classical elements such as the graceful arches of the entrance porch. Additionally, the residence was adapted for a tropical climate, with projecting eaves on the roof for sun-shading and large timber-louvred windows for maximum ventilation.

6 The *istana* also incorporates many features of traditional Malay architectural styles that reflect its setting and historic function. The regional practice of raised floor architecture (houses on stilts) is echoed in a second storey supported by columns over the entrance porch. The *istana's* large, pitched roof resembles a defining characteristic of the Malay Limas (pyramidal) House. In addition, the plan for the building corresponds to the Malay house typology, with the main entrance leading to the main house (*rumah ibu*), which is connected to an annexe (*rumah dapur*) where the kitchen would traditionally be located.



Conservation & Present Use

7 Given its historic association with the Malay community, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) gazetted Istana Kampong Gelam as a conserved building within the Kampong Gelam Historic District in 1989. After the building underwent refurbishment works, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong declared the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) open in June 2005, housed in the Istana Kampong Gelam building. The heritage institution of MHC underwent another round of refurbishment works between 2011 and 2012 to refresh the museum's exhibition content. Today, the present configuration of MHC honours the layout of the traditional Malay house, and is under the care of the Malay Heritage Foundation (MHF), and managed by NHB.

8 Mdm Zuraidah Abdullah, Chairman of MHF's Board of Directors, says, "We are very pleased that the Istana Kampong Gelam will be gazetted as the 70th National Monument. This is indeed timely as it recognises Singapore's historical connection with the wider Malay world as we celebrate our nation's Golden Jubilee. Gazetting Istana Kampong Gelam as a National Monument also recognises the integral role that our Malay communities and culture have played in shaping Singapore's history and development as a progressive and prosperous nation."

9 The gazette of Istana Kampong Gelam will be the second time that NHB is gazetting a conserved building as a National Monument, following the Jurong Town Hall gazette earlier in June this year. When considering a building or structure for gazette, NHB will assess the building or structure independently for its national and historical significance, as well as architectural merit, regardless of its current conservation status. As a National Monument, Istana Kampong Gelam will be protected by the Preservation of Monuments Act, and will have to abide by preservation guidelines in accordance with the Act, and undergo a regular cycle of inspections to ensure its proper upkeep. Beyond the protection of the building itself, the act of gazetting Istana Kampong Gelam will give due recognition to Singapore's historical ties with the Malay world, and reinforce our multi-cultural heritage.

10 Ms Jean Wee, Director of the Preservation of Sites and Monuments division, NHB, says, "On 6 August, we will be gazetting this former *istana* as a National Monument for its national and community significance, and at the same time, invite fresh reflections on our multi-cultural heritage in the spirit of Singapore's Golden Jubilee celebrations. This is part of our ongoing efforts to identify buildings and structures that are lasting representations of the



growth of our country and people amidst a constantly evolving landscape. Collectively, the Istana Kampong Gelam, and our other 69 National Monuments, reflect the architectural and cultural diversity of our society.”

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore’s heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. NHB’s mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is now a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the Preservation of Sites & Monuments Division

The Preservation of Sites and Monuments (PSM) division, under the National Heritage Board (NHB) and with advice from the PSM Advisory Board, guides the preservation of buildings, monuments and sites, which commemorates Singapore’s heritage as defined under the Preservation of Monuments Act. The PSM division also leads NHB’s joint efforts with National Parks Board to list the Singapore Botanic Gardens as Singapore’s first UNESCO world heritage site. It also oversees the 100 heritage sites that have been marked by NHB.

PSM division’s administration of the preservation gazette is complemented by its outreach objectives to promote a renewed appreciation and understanding of national monuments and their history, and to encourage people to relate to them as sites of memory that convey a sense of place, identity and belonging. To date, 69 structures have been gazetted as National Monuments.

For more information on PSM division, please visit www.nhb.gov.sg/psm.

About the Malay Heritage Centre

Officially re-opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in September 2012, the Malay Heritage Centre (MHC) showcases the history, culture and contributions of the Malay community within the context of Singapore’s history and multi-cultural society. MHC’s permanent galleries focus on the history of Kampong Gelam and showcase an interesting collecting of artefacts from the National Collection and the Malay community. Through its exhibitions and programmes, the centre aspires to be a vibrant destination of historical and cultural significance for both Singaporeans and international visitors. MHC is under the management of the National Heritage Board in partnership with the Malay Heritage Foundation.

List of Singapore's National Monuments

	Name of Building	Date of Gazette
1	The Former Thong Chai Medical Institution (1892)	28 June 1973
2	Armenian Church of St Gregory the Illuminator (1835–36)	28 June 1973
3	St Andrew's Cathedral (Rebuilt 1856–64)	28 June 1973
4	Former Telok Ayer Market (now Lau Pa Sat) (1890–94)	28 June 1973
5	Thian Hock Keng (1839–42)	28 June 1973
6	Sri Mariamman Temple (Rebuilt 1843)	28 June 1973
7	Hajjah Fatimah Mosque (1845–46)	28 June 1973
8	Cathedral of the Good Shepherd (1843–47)	28 June 1973
9	Nagore Dargah (now Nagore Dargah Indian Muslim Heritage Centre) (1828–30)	19 November 1974
10	Al-Abrar Mosque (1850–55)	19 November 1974
11	House of Tan Yeok Nee (The Former Salvation Army HQ) (1885)	19 November 1974
12	Tan Si Chong Su (1876–78)	19 November 1974
13	Jamae Mosque (Rebuilt 1830–35)	19 November 1974
14	Sultan Mosque (Rebuilt 1924–28)	8 March 1975
15	St George's Church (1910–13)	10 November 1978
16	Hong San See (1908–12)	10 November 1978
17	Sri Perumal Temple (Rebuilt 1961–66)	10 November 1978
18	Abdul Gafoor Mosque (1907–27)	5 July 1979
19	Siong Lim Temple (now Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery) (1902–08)	14 October 1980
20	Raffles Hotel (1887–1907)	4 March 1987

		(Re-gazetted on 3 June 1995)
21	Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church (1924–25)	23 March 1989
22	Goodwood Park Hotel (Tower Block) (1900)	23 March 1989
23	The Former Convent of Holy Infant Jesus Chapel (now CHIJMES Hall) (1903) and Caldwell House (1840–41)	26 October 1990
24	Istana and Sri Temasek (1867–69)	14 February 1992 (Re-gazetted on 1 October 1993)
25	City Hall (1926–29)	14 February 1992
26	Victoria Theatre (1856–62) and Concert Hall (1902–05)	14 February 1992
27	Former Parliament House and Annex Building (1826–27)	14 February 1992, 26 June 1992
28	Supreme Court (1937–39)	14 February 1992
29	Former Empress Place Building (now Asian Civilisations Museum) (1864–67)	14 February 1992
30	National Museum (now National Museum of Singapore) (1884–87)	14 February 1992
31	Former St Joseph's Institution – Main Building (1855–67), Chapel (1911–12) and Classroom (1906–07) (now Singapore Art Museum)	14 February 1992 26 June 1992
32	Former Attorney-General's Chambers (now Parliament House Block C) (Rebuilt c.a. 1906)	14 February 1992
33	Sun Yat Sen Villa (now Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall) (1900–02)	28 October 1994
34	Yueh Hai Ching Temple (1852–1855)	28 June 1996
35	Maghain Aboth Synagogue (1878)	27 February 1998
36	Former Ministry of Labour Building (now Family Justice Courts) (1928)	27 February 1998
37	Former Tao Nan School (now The Peranakan Museum) (1910–12)	27 February 1998

38	Chesed-El Synagogue (1905)	18 December 1998
39	Former Hill Street Police Station (1934–36)	18 December 1998
40	Ying Fo Fui Kun (1881–82)	18 December 1998
41	Central Fire Station (1908–09)	18 December 1998
42	The Former Nanyang University Library & Administration Building, The Former Nanyang University Memorial and The Former Nanyang University Arch (1954–56)	18 December 1998
43	The Chinese High School Clock Tower Building (1925)	19 March 1999
44	Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church (1930–31)	12 January 2000
45	Former Admiralty House (1939)	2 December 2002
46	Tan Teck Guan Building (1911)	2 December 2002
47	College of Medicine Building (1926)	2 December 2002
48	Cathay Building (1939)	10 February 2003
49	Church of St Peter and St Paul (1869–70)	10 February 2003
50	Macdonald House (1949)	10 February 2003
51	RC Church of St Joseph (1906–12)	14 January 2005
52	Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (1888)	14 January 2005
53	Church of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1901)	14 January 2005
54	Tou Mu Kung Temple (1919–21)	14 January 2005
55	Former Ford Factory (now Memories at Old Ford Factory) (1941)	15 February 2006
56	Former Raffles College (now NUS Campus at Bukit Timah) (1927–53)	11 November 2009
57	Church of St Teresa (1926–28)	11 November 2009
58	Former Keng Teck Whay building (now Singapore Yu Huang Gong) (est 1831)	11 November 2009
59	Command House (1939)	11 November 2009

60	Former St James Power Station (1926)	11 November 2009
61	Bowyer Block (1926)	11 November 2009
62	Former Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House (now Singapore Conference Hall) (1962–65)	28 December 2010
63	Esplanade Park Memorials: Lim Bo Seng Memorial (1953-1954), Tan Kim Seng Fountain (1882) and Cenotaph (1920–22)	28 December 2010
64	Tanjong Pagar Railway Station (1929–31)	8 April 2011
65	Civilian War Memorial (1966–67)	15 August 2013
66	Chung Cheng High School (Main) Administration Building and Entrance Arch (1965–68)	10 July 2014
67	Sri Thendayuthapani Temple (rebuilt 1980–83)	20 October 2014
68	Alkaff Upper Serangoon Mosque (1931–32)	19 December 2014
69	Jurong Town Hall (1971–74)	2 June 2015