

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

***LELONG! LELONG! DISCOVER THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF PASAR MALAM IN SINGAPORE!***

*New travelling exhibition by the National Heritage Board (NHB) traces the transformation of pasar malam in Singapore through the years.*



*L-R: A night market at Trengganu Street in 1965 (image to be credited to Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore) stands in contrast to a modern-day pasar malam at Woodlands, 2022 (image courtesy of NHB).*

**Singapore, 22 July 2022** – Pasar malam (or "night market" in Malay) are well-known and loved by locals for their mouth-watering selection of snacks, eclectic variety of affordable wares, and trademark vibrant atmosphere. Beyond the bustling crowds and colourful stalls though, you will find that pasar malam in Singapore have a long and multifaceted history which stretches as far back as the 1920s, and have undergone numerous changes over different periods to become the night markets we look forward to visiting today.

2 NHB's latest travelling exhibition, ***Lelong! Lelong! Pasar malam in Singapore***, delves into the origins of pasar malam, traces how they have evolved over time, and showcases the diverse variety of goods commonly found at these night markets over the last century. It also features displays of objects and the memories of patrons, vendors and operators over the years, and concludes by asking visitors what they would like to see in pasar malam of the future. For a list of exhibition highlights, please refer to **Annex A**.

3 *Lelong! Lelong! Pasar malam in Singapore* is the 14th and latest addition to NHB's ongoing *Heritage on the Move* series of travelling exhibitions, which aims to make heritage more accessible by bringing exhibitions closer to Singaporeans.

4 Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community), NHB, said, "Through this exhibition, we hope to showcase the lesser-known aspects of pasar malam, share the stories and memories Singaporeans have of pasar malam, celebrate what makes pasar malam unique, and in doing so, deepen our appreciation of pasar malam as they make a comeback in our heartlands."

5 *Lelong! Lelong! Pasar malam in Singapore* will be on display at the Sembawang Public Library from today till 30 July 2022, before it travels to different locations across the island as listed below:

- August 2022: Toa Payoh Public Library
- September 2022: Ang Mo Kio Public Library
- October 2022: Sengkang Public Library
- December 2022: Jurong West Public Library

- END -

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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 a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit [www.nhb.gov.sg](http://www.nhb.gov.sg) for more information.

**EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS**

Item	Details
<p data-bbox="203 415 600 447"><b>Title: Market of Many Names</b></p>  <p data-bbox="203 1071 657 1102">A night market in Chinatown, 1965</p> <p data-bbox="203 1134 820 1207"><i>Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</i></p>	<p data-bbox="841 451 1421 814">Pasar malam existed in many forms throughout the years. The term “pasar malam” gained widespread use from the 1960s. Typically transient in nature, these roving night markets could typically be found in housing estates, bringing many conveniences to residents. However, the noise pollution and traffic congestion they caused eventually led to a ban on pasar malam in the 1970s. They were revived in the form of trade fairs later that decade.</p>
<p data-bbox="203 1239 641 1270"><b>Title: Pasar for Everyday Needs</b></p>  <p data-bbox="203 1627 820 1722">Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Mrs Lee with officials at a stall during their visit to the relocated Woodlands pasar malam, 1963.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1753 820 1827"><i>Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</i></p>	<p data-bbox="841 1270 1421 1507">Pasar malam were a common sight in the 1960s, and in 1966, there were an estimated 40 pasar malam operating in different parts of Singapore every week. They provided convenient access to household goods and services as more people moved out of the city centre to live in the suburbs.</p>

**Title: Neighbourhood Fun & Games**



“We looked forward to [the pasar malam] because there was a small ferris wheel and crazy cups.” – Marsheda Omar, who visited pasar malam in the 1980s and 1990s

*Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

A new breed of night markets emerged in the late 1970s following the ban on pasar malam. As such, some pasar malam hawkers turned to operating at trade fairs organised by community centres and grassroots organisations.

This led to the rise of hybrid markets, which combined stalls selling bargain goods and locally-made products with carnival rides and games of chance.

**Title: Rise of Festive Bazaars**



Festive bazaar next to Sultan Mosque at Kampong Gelam, 1988

*Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

Traditionally, Singapore’s historic districts hosted night markets that sold goods related to the festivals of the respective ethnic communities. For example, during Ramadan, street hawkers selling sarongs and songkoks congregated at Geylang Serai, and in the weeks leading up to the Lunar New Year, crowds would throng the Chinatown night market to pick up festive goods such as melon seeds and mandarin oranges.



A simple game of mix and match is incorporated into the display case of the content structure,

In the 1980s, street pasar malam were revived by the government and grassroots organisations to mark major festivals and boost tourism in Singapore. These pasar malam offered a jubilant festive atmosphere and instead of everyday goods, hawked festive wear, snacks, souvenirs and handicrafts.

where invites visitors to match the items to their respective festival bazaars.

*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*

**Title: Pasar Today, Digital Tomorrow?**



Pasar Malam at Woodlands, 2022

*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*

Despite the proliferation of shopping malls in the heartlands and the growth of e-commerce, pasar malam continue to attract customers with innovative offerings.

After a two-year hiatus, pasar malam are reappearing in neighbourhoods and attracting crowds who missed the variety of food and affordable household wares, and most importantly, the experience and atmosphere of these night markets.