

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

**PILOT CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PROJECT MAPS AND DOCUMENTS STORIES OF
DIVERSE HERITAGE BUSINESSES IN KAMPONG GELAM**



Volunteers paid visits to heritage businesses such as Aik Bee Textile Co. (left) and Haji V Syed Abu Thahir Trading (right) for interviews during the citizen engagement project.

Singapore, 26 November 2022 – The National Heritage Board (NHB) has concluded the ***Kampong Gelam Citizen Engagement Project***, conducted in partnership with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), to map and document 45¹ heritage businesses in Kampong Gelam. The pilot project brought together 47 volunteers who responded to an open call to document the unique stories behind Kampong Gelam’s heritage businesses and how they have contributed to the precinct’s unique cultural identity. The efforts of the volunteers have culminated in a digital map of the locations of these heritage businesses on NHB’s resource portal *Roots.gov.sg*, which visitors can click on to find out more about these heritage businesses that make Kampong Gelam the rich cultural centre it is today.

2 The project is part of NHB’s ongoing efforts to involve communities in documenting and celebrating Singapore’s heritage, as well as to develop a viable way for members of the public to explore precinct-specific heritage and uncover insights about the significance of heritage businesses to precincts and the local community. Findings from the project will guide future initiatives and partnerships with the Kampong Gelam community and partner agencies to better

¹ *The 45 featured businesses are those that agreed to participate in the documentation project. It is not an exhaustive list of all the heritage businesses in Kampong Gelam.*

preserve the precinct's identity and character. They will also inform the formulation and implementation of ongoing plans, such as the Kampong Gelam Alliance's (KGA) Place Plan² for the Kampong Gelam Historic Area by offering insights on ways to support heritage businesses while attracting new ones to the precinct.

3 Minister of State for National Development and Advisor to KGA, Assoc. Prof. Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim said: "Kampong Gelam is a unique precinct steeped in heritage, culture and multi-generational legacies. The findings from the citizen engagement project will be useful for NHB, URA, other agencies and local stakeholders to better understand the situation on the ground and support efforts to raise awareness of the precinct, and its unique cultural identity. The project demonstrates the collective efforts by private stakeholders, public agencies and the people to enrich a beloved community precinct. We hope that more Singaporeans will be inspired by the stories that are documented and have a newfound appreciation of the heritage businesses in Kampong Gelam."

A Treasure Trove of Stories in Kampong Gelam



Mr Hazmi Zin (left), owner of Rumah Makan Minang, and Mr Mohamed Anis Osmanbhoy (right), owner of Osman Silk House, are among the heritage business owners involved in the Kampong Gelam Citizen Engagement project.

² The Kampong Gelam draft Place Plan is conceived as a blueprint to guide the strategic development of the Kampong Gelam Historic Area, and maps out strategies to strengthen key aspects of the precinct, such as celebrating history, improving connectivity, as well as protecting and developing traditional trades. KGA has launched a survey at www.listeningtoKG.org for the public to share their views on the draft Place Plan, as well as their aspirations for and any changes they hope to see in Kampong Gelam.

4 Kampong Gelam's diverse range of heritage trades and businesses is a form of living heritage which has served a wide range of local ethnic communities across many decades and continues to do so. These commercial entities also serve as social spaces, are nodes for social and community networks and contribute to Kampong Gelam's distinct and vibrant place identity. The types of heritage businesses documented in the citizen engagement project range from textile, food and beverage, haberdashery, plasticware, perfumery and aromatics, antiques and collectibles, as well as pilgrimage products, to even a bookstore, a medical clinic and those selling fishing equipment. The full list of participating heritage businesses can be found in **Annex A**.

5 Mr Fuad Johari was one of the 47 volunteers deployed to conduct interviews with the business owners after receiving training for research fieldwork. He said of his experience: "I was very inspired by the resilience and tenacity that can be felt from all the different stories and experiences shared with me. These businesses have gone through many challenges over the years, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they bounced back even stronger. They fostered ties with the people who lived here, and tried to make this place better as well, which cultivated a sense of togetherness and happiness within the community. My hope for them is that they continue to innovate and change with the times because the story of Kampong Gelam is essentially the story of Singapore."

6 Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community), NHB said: "The success of the *Kampong Gelam Citizen Engagement Project* has shown that Singaporeans, especially our youths, are willing and ready to give back through heritage volunteerism. Through meaningful projects such as this, NHB hopes to continue to grow our network of citizen volunteers, foster greater community ownership of Singapore's heritage, and in doing so, contribute to a more vibrant and sustainable heritage ecosystem."

7 The map and stories of Kampong Gelam's heritage businesses are now a digital resource accessible on NHB's *Roots* portal via go.gov.sg/kampong-gelam-citizen-engagement-project. Physical booklets containing a condensed version of the stories have been distributed to the Kampong Gelam community and will be made available at selected shops. In addition, visitors can also discover more about the experiences and learnings of two of the volunteers in a short video on *Roots.gov.sg*.

8 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Full list of participating heritage businesses

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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 for more information.

About the Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is Singapore's land use planning and conservation agency. Our mission is 'to make Singapore a great city to live, work and play'. We strive to create an endearing home and a vibrant city through long-term planning and innovation, in partnership with the community.

URA's multi-faceted role includes being the main government land sales agent. We attract and channel private capital investments to develop sites that support planning, economic and social objectives. We also partner the community to enliven our public spaces to create a car-lite, people-friendly and liveable city for all to enjoy. In shaping a distinctive city, URA also promotes architecture and urban design excellence. Visit www.ura.gov.sg for more information.

ANNEX A

Kampong Gelam Citizen Engagement Project – Full List of Participating Heritage Businesses

Categories	Heritage Businesses Documented in Project
Textile	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aik Bee Textile 2. Bamadhaj Brothers 3. Basharahil Bros Batik 4. Batik Emporium 5. Bobby Fabrics 6. Kebaya by Ratianah 7. Kiah's Gallery 8. Mahaco Impex 9. Osman Silk House 10. Paramount Trader (S) Pte Ltd 11. Teng Joo Textiles 12. Toko Aljunied
Food and Beverage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Bhai Sarbat 14. Blanco Court Prawn Mee 15. Hjh Maimunah Restaurant and Catering 16. Kampong Glam Cafe 17. Luk Lu Eating House 18. Nan Hwa Chong Fish Head Steamboat 19. Prince Coffee House 20. Rumah Makan Minang 21. Sabar Menanti 22. Victory Restaurant 23. Warong Nasi Pariaman
Haberdashery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Digvijay Sequins 25. Kin Soon Pte Ltd 26. Sin Hin Chuan Kee
Perfumery and Aromatics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 27. Jamal Kazura Aromatics 28. Sifr Aromatics 29. Thahirah Kazura
Pilgrimage products	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 30. Haji V Syed Abu Thahir Trading 31. V. S. S Varusai Mohamed Varusai Mohamed and & Sons

Fishing equipment (Nets, ropes, and marine accessories)	32. Honly Company 33. Joe Fishing Tackle
Basketry and leather products	34. Habib Handicrafts
Bookstore	35. Wardah Books
Wellness	36. Frangipani Wellness Spa
Travel Agency	37. Halijah Travels
Plasticware	38. KH Plastics
Artificial Flowers and Decorations	39. Ming Sing Flowers
Luxury Watch Wholesaler and Retailer	40. Leong Poh Kee
Antiques and collectibles	41. The Heritage Shop
Medical Clinic	42. Town Clinic
Ceased Operations	
Muslim Prayer Mats, Shawls, and Souvenirs	43. C. P. Ghariwala
Gemstones and Jewellery	44. Mesra Enterprises
Rattanware and baskets	45. Rishi Handicrafts