



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 2 February 2017, 10.00am

BATTLE FOR SINGAPORE – YEARS UNDER THE SUN EMPIRE: TALES OF RESILIENCE

National Heritage Board commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore

“World War II has brought out one class of people, a generation that has resilience and has been able to overcome all odds. That was actually the good part of the war.”

– Ms Mary Magdeline Pereira, 75, War Survivor

Singapore, 2 February 2017 – 75 years ago, on 15 February 1942, Singapore fell to the Japanese, and with it descended a period in our history known as the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. Much has been documented about the hardships and atrocities of World War II. But to a generation of young Singaporeans today, these are but tales told through their history books. Hence, the stories of war survivors and veterans such as Ms Mary Magdeline Pereira, are that much more necessary and powerful. Amidst the gloom and darkness of the war, these stories of hope and resilience shine through, providing insights into the tenacity and unity of our forefathers during the tumultuous war years.

2 The National Heritage Board (NHB) commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore with various initiatives across the year, starting with the annual *Battle for Singapore* commemorative event. From 16 February to 12 March 2017, members of the public can join in a series of guided tours, a public talk, and offerings at the various Museum Roundtable (MR) museums to learn more about the events leading up to the Fall of Singapore, and stories of the Japanese Occupation. These programmes and activities have been organised together with community partners, MR museums, and heritage experts.

3 Ms Angelita Teo, Director of the Museum Roundtable division at NHB, said, “The commemoration of the Fall of Singapore every February sees people of all nationalities, and walks of life, gather to remember those who gave their lives during the war. It is a time of sadness and reflection, but more than that, it echoes the strength and unity of human kind, just as it was 75 years ago. The various tours and programmes of *Battle for Singapore 2017*, done in partnership with war veterans, heritage experts, and everyday Singaporeans,

celebrates this very spirit of togetherness, and the poignant stories of survival and courage. These shared memories are an invaluable part of our intangible heritage, and must be passed down through the generations.”

Battle for Singapore 2017 Series of Programmes

4 For the *Battle for Singapore 2017*, which runs from 16 February to 12 March 2017, NHB will be offering 49 tour runs to 11 World War II-related sites and structures in Singapore. These include tours to the old Command House; key military installations constructed by the British such as Labrador battery, Gillman Barracks and Alexandra Barracks; and a night tour of Pasir Panjang. The public can also enjoy four new tours this year, allowing them to discover more aspects and stories of World War II. They are:

- *Singapore Occupied*: This offers a visit to the buildings and sites that held the Japanese Broadcasting Department and the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) Headquarters, to name a few.
- *Botanic Gardens to Bukit Brown – a WWII Trail*: Walk through the heritage corridor from the Botanic Gardens to Bukit Brown cemetery, and hear the brownies share stories of WWII heroes and prominent personalities at heritage landmarks, including the Jacob Ballas Garden, old Raffles College as well as Former Command House. Explore the remnants and stories of the ‘kampong’ life that was once at Bukit Brown cemetery.
- *Fort Serapong @ Fort Siloso*: Discover the fascinating structure of the former Fort Serapong, which was one of the three forts that were built at Pulau Blakang Mati to defend Singapore’s waterways.
- *The Last Days of Empire: Japanese Advance Along Bukit Timah Road, 1942*: This walk attempts to tell the harrowing story of the battle based on the grim testimonies of the soldiers who fought in the last days of the British Empire.

A full list of the guided tours may be found in **Annex A**.

5 MR museums have also come on board with special programmes for the *Battle for Singapore* commemorative event. One highlight is the re-opening of the Former Ford Factory, a National Monument, which has been closed for a year-long revamp. Set to reopen to the public on 16 February 2017, the new exhibition gallery will feature never-been-seen-before archival materials, as well as interactives that will tell a more compelling and immersive account of a significant period in Singapore’s history, including the legacies of war.

6 In addition, the Army Museum will be organising a special exhibition – *Celebrating 50 Years of National Service*, while the Eurasian Heritage Centre will provide greater insights on what the Eurasian community went through during these tumultuous years through guided tours of the centre by members of the Eurasian Association, and a talk by war survivors. Please refer to **Annex B** for details on these special programmes.

7 Members of the public may visit www.museums.com.sg for more information, and to sign-up for the *Battle for Singapore 2017* programmes. Sign-up begins 6 February 2017, at 10.00am, and slots on the tours will be allocated on a first-come first-serve basis.

Upcoming War World II Exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore

8 Also in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, the National Museum of Singapore will launch a major, blockbuster international exhibition, titled *1942: The Fall of More than Singapore* (working title), from September 2017 to February 2018. The exhibition will be centred on the Fall of Singapore in 1942, exploring the fall – and its impact on people’s lives – in a regional context and through the lens of lesser-known, personal stories about people’s wartime experiences. The National Museum will be collaborating with other international museums and partners to present this exhibition, which will see a range of artefacts from both overseas museums as well as the National Collection being displayed. More information on the exhibition will be provided closer to date.

Digital Offerings

9 In addition, NHB will also be releasing on its heritage portal, Roots.sg, and social media platforms, articles, photo essays and videos in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. These include a collaboration with photographer Nicky Loh on a photo essay of war survivors, including amongst them Ms Mary Magdeline Pereira. World War II stories depicting the lesser known aspects of the Japanese Occupation will also be available for reading and use by educators and parents looking to share more with their young ones on this milestone chapter in Singapore’s history.

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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.

For media enquiries, kindly contact:

Cherell Soon

Tate Anzur

DID: 6221 5651

Mobile: 8102 9131

Email: cherell.soon@tateanzur.com