

**OPENING SPEECH FOR
GEORGE TOWN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE 10TH ANNIVERSARY
EXHIBITION
“GEORGE TOWN: BEAUTIFUL AND IRREGULAR EXHIBITION” OPENING
CEREMONY
BY
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CHIEF MINISTER OF PENANG
CHAIRMAN OF GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE INCORPORATED
THURSDAY, 14 JUNE 2018 | 10.00AM
BANGUNAN UAB, GAT LEBUH CHINA, 10300 GEORGE TOWN, PENANG**

(VIP SALUTATIONS)

Members of the Communities

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you, Salam Ramadan and Salam Harapan. Welcome to the Opening Ceremony of the George Town World Heritage Site 10th Anniversary Exhibition.

Titled ‘George Town: Beautiful and Irregular’, this exhibition is special and important for George Town, as it merges all the pieces that make us the George Town that we are today.

After 10 years of being a World Heritage Site, we have achieved a number of accomplishments, but we know the road is long. The State Government of Penang, through George Town World Heritage Incorporated, the Penang Island City Council, the Penang State Museum, and many other agencies, has engaged on sustainable strategies on the management of this living heritage site.

One of the more important strategies is through education for locals, visitors, as well as adults and young adults alike. All of us need to increase our knowledge, understanding and appreciation of our cities and our history. It is through such understanding that we can appreciate things better and safeguard it for the next generation.

Therefore, through this exhibition, we will be sharing with you the beauty and irregularity of George Town as one of the ways to know George Town better. One of the most important exhibits is the certificate issued by UNESCO in 2008, inscribing George Town on the World Heritage List. It is the first time that Penangites will get to see the certificate, which is the only one in Penang. More importantly, we hope that through the illustration of the content, all visitors will be enlightened on the history, significance and spirit of this recognition given to George Town. It is important for us to see, understand and remind ourselves on how this city was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and reflect on our understanding, contributions and commitment to the city that we are sharing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transformation trajectory of George Town has been dynamic, organic and breathtaking. I was being informed by Dr Ang that the curators were able to find, and have on display today at the exhibition, the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* - the first newspaper in Southeast Asia that was established in George Town back in 1806. The English weekly was known as *Government Gazette* until it was renamed in 1807, and it was published until 7 July 1827. Also exhibited are samples of *Penang Sin Poe*, which was established by a Straits Chinese man, Lim Seng Hooi in 1894. *Penang Sin Poe* was later incorporated into Kwong Wah Yit Poh. These evidences showed that we have been taking the lead on freedom of information since almost 200 years ago, and we continue to do so with very active print and online media based in Penang today.

The exhibition also looks into our grandparents' generation, in particular on the women of that time, some 100 years ago, on fashion and lifestyle. The section on the "Modern Girl" phenomenon that emerged in the 1920s, in a time when women were not afraid to fight for their own choices of education, career, clothes, as well as husbands. Such bravery on pushing boundaries and experimenting with ways to express their identity enabled the gender equality of women in Penang today, in particular.

We are also exhibiting the George Town Heritage Celebrations, an annual occasion in which local communities are empowered through cultural programming, content development, and implementation of events. For the past 10 years, the Heritage Celebrations has evolved from just an anniversary celebration to one of the most inspiring and engaging cultural activities in George Town. The spirit of muhibbah and camaraderie are felt throughout the years among our local communities who share and teach both local and international visitors on their cultural heritage. Such rewarding experiences were praised by UNESCO and international agencies, as we are able to show the world that with a UNESCO listing, we can and will help communities to safeguard their culture in a sustainable way.

This year, the Heritage Celebrations is back with the theme of 'POTENTIAL - Of the Past, In the Present, For the Future' on the 7th of July. We will also be installing the 10th Anniversary Commemorative Plaque at Armenian Park to mark the 10th anniversary of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site. It will be a great celebration for every one of us and I would like to invite all of you to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the past, we see evidences of people in this town who have been brave, adventurous, independent, and intelligent. We continue to see such good qualities in our generation, where Penang was among the leading states in the reform of our country's political system, by giving an opportunity to the Pakatan Harapan government since 2008.

Therefore, I urge parents to bring their young children and visit the exhibition during the forthcoming school holidays and join us in the line-up of cultural activities. These platforms are a constructive opportunity for communication among the families and sharing of stories from the past, so that the younger generation can better appreciate our city's stories and values.

The George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site belongs to all of us, including the public and the people, the old and the young. We need to work collectively in ensuring a sustainable management through shared responsibilities and commitment, and with a constructive

approach. I am honoured to witness the growth of George Town, and I strongly believe that community empowerment through education will ensure that our heritage is appreciated, acknowledged and safeguarded for the future generations.

The State Government of Penang will continue to prepare programmes and activities in the management, conservation and safeguarding of George Town's cultural heritage but we need the people's support, in particular the people who live in George Town, people who work in George Town and people who use George Town for all sorts of daily activities, in joining the safekeeping efforts of the city. Together, we will be able to grow and prove to be one of the best UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the world.

I would like to close my opening speech by congratulating George Town World Heritage Incorporated and their working partners for putting in the time and effort in successfully organising this exhibition. I am confident that by working collectively, we will progress into many more 10 years together.

I hereby announce the exhibition open.