

PRESS STATEMENT

8 August 2020

RESCUING GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE INCORPORATED OFFICE TO EXTEND LIFESPAN OF BUILDING AND UPGRADE AS HERITAGE EDUCATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL CENTRE

GEORGE TOWN: The iconic Late Straits Eclectic style heritage building of the George Town World Heritage Incorporated office at the junction of Lebuah Carnarvon and Lebuah Aceh has begun undergoing a rescue, restoration, and rejuvenation project. Upon completion, it shall be maintained as the George Town World Heritage Incorporated office, and will be upgraded as a heritage educational and experiential centre.

The building was designed by one of the earliest known Straits Chinese architects, Mr Chew Eng Eam as the Universal Pharmacy in 1921. Chew was among the renowned Straits Chinese architects in his time. He designed the Loke Thye Kee building, Majestic Theatre and the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce, of which similarities could be observed for elements that are still surviving and being restored.

This building then served as the Penang Heritage Centre (*Pusat Warisan Pulau Pinang*) since 2005, before it was used as the George Town World Heritage Incorporated office from 2010 onwards.

In delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Chief Minister of Penang at the Building Restoration Ceremony on 8 August 2020, YB Teh Lai Heng (Political Secretary for the Chief Minister of Penang, State Assemblyman for KOMTAR and Director of George Town World Heritage Incorporated) said that upon completion, the building would continue to serve as the George Town World Heritage Incorporated office, and also as a heritage educational and experiential centre to enlighten visitors on sustainable and holistic heritage conservation and management.

Emphasising on the necessity of the project to rescue and prolong the life of the building, YB Teh said the project would rectify misaligned roof trusses, repair cracks on the walls, and relieve the load stress on the walls. It would also experiment on aeration modules to combat damp, a common problem faced by heritage buildings in George Town.

“The airwell in the building will be reinstated to allow for natural lighting throughout the building. Floodgates and active firefighting facilities (such as fire resistant doors and a sprinkler system) will be installed. Energy efficient air-conditioning and lighting systems will also be introduced to explore cost efficient methods for heritage building maintenance,” he said.

George Town World Heritage Incorporated General Manager Dr Ang Ming Chee said the organisation’s past years’ experience as the Site Manager for George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site has prompted them to find sustainable and workable conservation methods for the maintenance of heritage buildings.

“We will be brave and yet mindful in exploring and experimenting new methodologies to address common building defects faced by heritage buildings in George Town. This includes

roof leaks, structural cracks, high levels of damp on walls, dilapidated wall plaster, rotten timber members, and more. The whole restoration process will be documented on video, and will be shared as lessons learnt with the local community and heritage conservation professionals upon completion of the project,” she said.

During the ceremony, Dr Ang thanked the sponsors for the project (namely Terracota Tiles Sdn Bhd, CaO, Trilink, Terreal Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Kansai Paint, Niro Granite, Springfields, USG Boral, and Roca Malaysia Penang Branch). She also invited potential sponsors to contact George Town World Heritage Incorporated and join this new chapter of heritage building restoration.

Led by Ar. Tan Bee Eu from BETA Architects, lead of the project’s consultant team, a site visit was conducted during the ceremony for the attendees which also included YB Daniel Gooi Zi Sen (State Assemblyman for Pengkalan Kota and Director of George Town World Heritage Incorporated), Puan Ambika Devi A/P Daran (Senior Assistant Secretary of Penang State Government, General Administration and Security), Ms Fazreen Dharleila bt Abdul Jalil (Heritage Conservation Department, City Council of Penang Island), Sr Saw Soon Kooi (Managing Director of Kuantibina Sdn Bhd), and Mr Yeap Kean Choon (Director of Kean Choon Construction Sdn Bhd).

The project, which costs an estimated RM1.6 million, is expected to be completed by mid-2021.

/ends

For media enquiries, please contact:

Josephine Jalleh
Manager, Department of Communications and Collaborations,
George Town World Heritage Incorporated
017-446 5366, josephine@gtwhi.com.my