

MEDIA RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

GEORGE TOWN EMBRACES CHANGE IN MARKING 13TH ANNIVERSARY AS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

GEORGE TOWN: Residents, business operators and cultural heritage practitioners in Penang are continuously determined in their efforts in embracing change despite the prolonged Movement Control Order since the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis which broke out almost 18 months ago.

Chief Minister of Penang, YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow said Penang as the cultural hub of Malaysia has demonstrated that people are capable of adapting to and embracing change. “This is an extraordinary time with extraordinary challenges. Yet we see people of different ethnicities and cultural and religious backgrounds adapting to their traditional practices and daily life. Cultural activities and religious ceremonies have turned home-based, with digital platforms being brought in to maintain a sense of community togetherness.”

“Local businesses, including long-term trades such as Hameediyah Restaurant (established since 1907) and Kwongtuck Sundries (established since 1836), are branding their products on digital platforms, and fully utilising e-wallet and delivery services to promote their businesses. These businesses may have been established more than 100 years ago but they remain competitive today because they are able to embrace change for tomorrow,” YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow said on 6 July 2021, the eve of George Town Heritage City as a UNESCO World Heritage Site’s 13th anniversary on 7 July 2021, a day which has been declared a public holiday in Penang since 2008.

According to the Chief Minister of Penang, George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) has been planning celebratory activities to be carried out on 7 July 2021 but was not able to execute the plan due to the Movement Control Order.

“Therefore, the Directors of GTWHI have decided to utilise the remaining allocation as one-time award money for 22 recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award category. Each of them will be receiving RM5,000. This is a special initiative to thank the artisans, masters, and advocates for their lifelong commitments, persistence in mastering the skills, continuous dedication on knowledge transmission to the next generations, and for their outstanding efforts and initiatives to promote cultural heritage activities in Penang. This is also coherent with the Penang2030 theme and strategic initiatives, in particular to increase liveability, enhance quality of life, and diversify the arts and cultural sectors,” he said.

In April 2021, GTWHI announced the recipients of the GTWHI Heritage Recognition and Awards 2020 for their contributions to the Outstanding Universal Value of George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Dr Ang Ming Chee, General Manager of GTWHI said, “We thank the Directors for their generosity and unconditional support throughout this initiative. We will be contacting the 22 Lifetime Achievement Award recipients and transfer the award money to them via online banking.”

On the activities to be conducted for the 7th of July celebrations in 2021, Dr Ang added that GTWHI through George Town Festival 2021 will showcase online programmes including audio-immersive theatre, digital theatre, a concert, short film and docudrama screenings, sharing sessions, and workshops from 10 to 18 July 2021. Adaptations were also made for the George Town Heritage Celebrations 2021 through the 7/7 Heritage Day Sales Campaign initiative to promote products from George Town and Penang to a wider market. The #GeorgeTownHeritage Photo Contest was also launched to raise awareness on the diversity of George Town's cultural heritage through photographs and stories from the public.

Dr Ang will also be representing George Town Heritage City in the upcoming World Heritage Site Managers' Forum scheduled to be held online from 7 to 13 July 2021. As a resource person and speaker in the Forum, Dr Ang will be highlighting George Town's experience on COVID-19 responses.

"The world will move on despite the pandemic, and GTWHI is committed to championing a community-based risk reduction approach to brace ourselves for the challenges and embrace change. Cultural heritage has been and will continue to be our asset to regain normality. We need to work collectively to overcome the challenges during this extraordinary time," Dr Ang remarked.

According to **Eugene Jo, Programme Coordinator for the joint International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)-International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Heritage Leadership Programme**, there are more than 1,121 World Heritage properties in the world, and the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum offers powerful collective actions with support from international partners.

"GTWHI has been extremely active and visible throughout the difficult times of COVID-19, sharing the stories of how the World Heritage site management office has faced daily challenges of the pandemic. GTWHI has set an exemplary model on how heritage management can also play a central yet pragmatic role in providing services and benefits to the communities associated with it. ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership Programme have asked Dr Ang to share the experience with other World Heritage site managers across the globe at the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum," she said.

Since July 2020, the Penang State Government through GTWHI has implemented the George Town in the New Normal Project to support the custodians of heritage in Penang. A total of 253 heritage buildings were repaired, 159 heritage videos have been produced, and 142 local businesses received support to advance to the new media and e-business platform.

Moe Chiba, Programme Specialist and Head of Culture Unit at UNESCO Office in Jakarta, said the George Town in the New Normal project received additional support from UNESCO Office Jakarta through the Japan Funds-In-Trust funding.

"World Heritage site management is no more about just preserving old stones. Commitment to Sustainable Development Goals urges us to increasingly embrace the well-being of the local communities as part of the site management strategy. George Town sets the example by

actively supporting local businesses during the pandemic. It is exciting to observe what George Town is up to tackle next,” she added.

Penang has set up more COVID-19 vaccination centres to conduct mass vaccination with the aim to achieve herd immunity by the end of 2021. This arrangement is necessary to outlive the challenges and eventually overcome the pandemic.

List of Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients to Receive Award Money of RM5,000

Lifetime Achievement Award (Mastery of Skills)

1. Chor Teik Heng
2. Chua Saw Tin
3. Jimah binti Chin
4. Khoo Tiang Shing
5. Lee Teik Chye
6. Teoh Huah Guan

Lifetime Achievement Award (Dedication on Knowledge Transmission)

7. Anthony Chan Guan Fook
8. Cheah Cheng Seang
9. Chong Yit Leong
10. May Lim Seiw Seng @ Lim Ah Mui
11. Noo Wan @ Wandee Aroonratana
12. Omar bin Md. Hashim
13. Ooi See Han
14. Tang Ah Wa @ Tang Chin Yong
15. Toh Ai Hwa
16. Yeap Chin Boon

Lifetime Achievement Award (Merit on Cultural Heritage Advocacy)

17. Cheah Swee Huat
18. Eustace Anthony Nonis
19. Tong Poh Kheng

Lifetime Achievement Award (Merit on Outstanding Efforts and Dedication)

20. Kuan Cheng Phoey
21. Lam Pin Lik
22. Law Boon Wah @ Don Law

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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
www.gtwhi.com.my