

## **THINK CITY ANNOUNCES RM10 MILLION GRANT PROGRAMME TOWARDS CULTURE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN REGION**

*Archaeological exploration and historical discovery dating back 1.83 million years given new lease of life to encourage public engagement with the past and boost local economy*

**KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 11 2022:** Think City Sdn Bhd (Think City) announced a RM10 million allocation to boost culture-based economic development in the northern Malaysian region in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) as part of the Budget 2022 initiative. The Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme would leverage Malaysia's archaeological heritage as enablers for re-generative socio-economic growth and development of community's cultural, economic and social capital as it would create employment and investment opportunities. This is in line with the objectives of the Northern Region Archaeotourism Network & Local Economic Development programme, a Think City initiative, under the auspices of the MoF .

Malaysia sits at the confluence of history and geography, as evidenced by the oldest prehistoric settlement in the world after Africa, signifying two million years of human evolution. In addition, the Bujang Valley and Sungai Batu archaeological sites exhibit proof of the earliest human settlements in Southeast Asia. This promises huge potential for Malaysia to be amplified as an international archaeological heritage destination with possibilities of further discovery, and the opportunity to showcase the area's historic and cultural sites, with an initial focus on Lenggong, Kuala Kangsar and Taiping.

Recognising the significance of the region, the efforts by Think City and MoF with the support of the state governments and local councils will encourage an exploration and discovery of archaeological sites along the northern Malaysia cultural corridors. This would also activate local community development resources, stimulate culture-based tourism, community enterprises, public interest and boost archaeotourism for Malaysia.

**Think City's Managing Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed** explained that the northern region of Malaysia is rich in history and has the potential to be a cultural and natural environment showcase, set to grow into a key curated and sustainable cultural destination.

"Culture-based Economic Development is one of the key areas that Think City is focused on. We strongly believe that investments in archaeological heritage will attract the public and stakeholders into a multi-activity programme of participation, comprising not just one but many linked along the northern Malaysia cultural corridor. Think City has identified potential nodes in the northern region to enhance culture-based experiences and will look to support grantees who can deepen and diversify the visitor's journey and broaden the public's understanding of the region's cultural significance via the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme. Our aim is to empower communities to take ownership of their shared history and translate that into social, ecological and financial capital that can sustain generations to come."

**Perak State Housing, Local Government and Tourism Committee Chairman, YB Dato' Nolee Ashilin Mohammed Radzi** stated that the northern region's unique cultural assets can be leveraged upon to create a multiplier effect on the socio-economy. This includes landmark heritage monuments, historical architecture, traditional trades, archaeological sites, and rich biodiversity as well as cultural diversity to benefit the local community.

"The effort will provide a boost to tourism in the region, giving community-based projects and small players a chance to be more self-sustaining to contribute to local tourism," YB Dato' Nolee added.

The programme, open for submissions from April 11, 2022, offers grants that may be used for individuals, collectives and organisations in various sectors. Some sectors included are heritage-based organisations, local artisanal businesses, homestays, food culture, publications, restoration of traditional and historic buildings as well as research work, and various programmes to enhance the cultural or natural heritage of the sites and places, in addition to benefit the local communities.

The Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme aims to achieve its aspirations through three areas:

- Capacity Building & Advocacy – upskilling the community to capitalise on social and economic opportunities, and outreach campaigns to enhance awareness and increase the value of heritage assets;
- Demonstration – projects to introduce best practices to enhance the prominence and allure of assets in the region; and
- Content Creation – initiatives and projects to enhance visitor experience and create awareness and appeal on the northern region.

"The northern region is a two million year old story waiting to be explored and discovered," Hamdan added.

The grant programme closes on 22 May 2022. For more information on the grants, kindly visit: <https://www.thinkcity.com.my/budaya>.

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#### **About Think City**

Think City is an impact organisation established in 2009 to create more sustainable and equitable places for the benefit of all. Our knowledge, skills and strategies focus on urban solutions, the environment, social communities, and the cultural economy. Think City is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad (the sovereign wealth fund of the Government of Malaysia). For more information, log on to [www.thinkcity.com.my](http://www.thinkcity.com.my).

#### **About the Northern Region Archaeotourism Network & Local Economic Development**

A Think City programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance to re-optimize and connect heritage assets into a well-curated network of archaeotourism, heritage, and natural sites as enablers for economic resiliency and socio-economic growth (such as the creation of new jobs and investments), while highlighting the nation's rich heritage and history. This includes strengthening the ecosystem surrounding the sites.

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