

PRESS RELEASE

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TWENTY-THREE BENEFIT FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAMME BY THINK CITY AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Due To Overwhelming Response of The Grants Programme, Think City Has Initiated a Second Cycle Which Will Focus on More Culturally Significant Sites in The Northern Malaysia Region.

LENGGONG, 13 September 2022 – Due to the overwhelming response in applications for the first cycle of the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme, **Think City has opened a call for application for the second cycle of the grants programme** where the application period began on 23 August 2022. The grants programme that was announced as part of the Budget 2022 initiative, will leverage Malaysia's unique tangible and intangible assets 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 Ministry of Finance.

As 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, Think City and MoF with the support of the state governments and local councils hope to encourage an exploration and discovery of unhidden gems along the northern Malaysia cultural corridors. This would also activate local community development resources, stimulate culture-based tourism, community enterprises, and boost public interest in a network of archaeological, cultural, and natural sites and stories.

In a special announcement programme held in Lenggong today, Think City announced the 23 diverse and ambitious applicants who were successfully selected to benefit from the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme. The initial areas of focus for the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme included Lenggong, Kuala Kangsar and Taiping. To continue the momentum, Think City hopes to encourage applications from other significant sites such as Guar Kepah, Sungai Batu, Lembah Bujang, Alor Setar, mangrove reserves such as Sungai Prai, nature reserves such as Royal Belum, and Perlis, to contribute creative and innovative ideas on bolstering the historical and cultural significances of these places and how these projects will benefit the local community.

The first cycle of the grants programme saw 53% approved for Content Creation, 32% for Capacity Building and Advocacy, and 15% for Demonstration. More than 40% female participants received funding from this cycle.

Overall, the funding will support 7 individual applications and 16 organisations. **YB Dato' Nolee Ashilin binti Mohamed Radzi, Perak State Housing, Local Government and Tourism Committee Chairman** who graced the event congratulated all successful grant recipients in what was a highly competitive round.

Dato' Nolee said, "The northern region including Perak is rich in history and culture and we are immensely proud to note that there is history dating back almost two million years ago right here at our doorstep. All culturally significant assets remain important network nodes within the northern region including sites such as Lenggong, Kuala Kangsar and Taiping and their relation to other significant cultural sites in our neighbouring states. We welcome this continued effort under Think City which will certainly provide a boost to cultural-based tourism in the region, giving community-based projects and small players a chance to be more self-sustaining to contribute to local tourism."

Think City's Managing Director, Hamdan Abdul Majeed said, "Throughout history, people have been attracted to cities as centres of culture, learning and economic opportunity. The northern region is exactly that, a two million-year-old story waiting to be explored and discovered. The cultural, natural and archaeologically significant sites are rich in history and have the potential to be an international cultural and natural environment showcase, set to grow into a key curated and sustainable cultural destination. Think City has identified potential nodes in the northern region to enhance culture-based experiences and will continue to support grantees who can deepen and diversify visitors' journeys and broaden the public's understanding of the region's cultural significance via the second cycle of the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Programme."

Grant beneficiary Prof. Stephen Chia Ming Soon, Professor at the Centre for Global Archaeological Research in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Local Community Cultural Heritage Interpreter praised the Think City grants programme for its initiative in propelling and encouraging the growth of the whole Northern Region of Malaysia.

He said, "The funding from the Think City and Ministry of Finance will allow us to channel the knowledge on the archaeological findings we have discovered through our research in Lenggong to the local community. The grant will also facilitate the expansion of our Training & Young Archaeologists' Capacity Building Programme, which aims to build the local capacity within Lenggong by educating content providers such as tourists guides and local communities. The grant will also enable us to help improve the socio-economic situation in Lenggong by involving the local community, creating new jobs within the tourism industry, and teaching the future generations of Lenggong to appreciate and protect its historical heritage and culture."

Grant recipient Abdul Nasir Jalaludin, the owner of family-run heritage stay Rumah Tiang 16, lauds the effort by Think City towards promoting the cultural gems in Lenggong and its surrounding areas.

Abdul Nasir said, "We welcome visitors from all over the world to our heritage stay especially since we offer a truly unique archaeotourism experience based on the cultural sites of Lenggong and its community-based tourism products. Our website is visited by people from all over the world who are looking for information on Lenggong. A website that has professionally-captured images and well-developed narratives and write-ups could enhance the appeal of Lenggong and contribute to generating more interest and attracting visitors to the area. The grant will enable us to achieve this."

Another **grant recipient, writer Liew Suet Fun**, the grant will enable her to publish her two books titled 'Beguiled/on Larut Hills' and 'After Long Rainy Afternoons of Taiping and her people'. Suet Fun said, "Through the grants programme, I'm able to pursue my passion in writing my books and publish them

so people can explore the soul of a town, rather than rely on brochures. Think City guides applicants for its grant through the necessary stages of ideation and implementation. This is how Think City enables the regular citizens to make meaningful differences within their community."

Meanwhile, **grant beneficiary Haji Mohd Suhaimi Ahmad** who founded the Che Teh Fatimah Community Wakaf House three years ago said, "The grant provided by Think City will help to fund improvement works in the community centre as we pursue our mission of building communities that share and inspire. The facility is a popular centre for various activities that bring the local folks together irrespective of race and religion with its mission of community empowerment and cooperation. The support will enable a local folk like me to give back to the community."

The Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants programme promotes cultural-based economic growth by creating opportunities for its grantees and the local community to give reality to creative ideas.

For more information, visit 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.

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.

Distributed by bzBee Consult Sdn Bhd on behalf of Think City.

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Appendix:

List of the Cultural Economy Catalytic Grants Beneficiaries Cycle 1

| No | Applicant | Project title | Grant theme |
|----|--|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Cing-Geo Elida Ong | Rapid assessment of the Lenggong Township and surrounding Kampongs | Content Creation |
| 2 | Prof Stephen Chia Ming Soon | Local Community Cultural Heritage Interpreter Training & Young Archaeologists' Capacity Building Programme | Capacity Building and Advocacy |
| 3 | Dr. Goh Hsiao Mei | Embracing Tambun Rock Art Citizen Science Programme | Capacity Building and Advocacy |
| 4 | Saadon bin Ishak | LENGGONG –A Graphic HISTORY (Early Human Settlement 1.8 million Years ago) | Content Creation |
| 5 | Asnan bin Mohd Yusoff (CM) | Lagu-Lagu Lenggong | Content Creation |
| 6 | Sok Yin | Preserving Caves at Kinta Valley | Content Creation |
| 7 | Roslan Abdul Rahman | Kg Beng Mini Amazon ECO Challenge | Capacity Building and Advocacy |
| 8 | Liew Suet Fun | 1.Beguiled/on Larut Hills (2nd edition); 2. After Long Rainy Afternoons/ of Taiping and her people | Content Creation |
| 9 | Tan Eu Jin/ Muhammad Azim Tan | Maxwell Hill Basecamp | Demonstration |
| 10 | Abdul Nasir bin Jalaludin | Welcome to Lenggong: website rejuvenation (www.rumahtiang16.com) | Content Creation |
| 11 | Asiah binti Mohd Ridzuan | Restoration of Perkampungan Tradisi Sukasuka Lake Retreat | Demonstration |
| 12 | Looi Kok Keong | Lenggong UNESCO World Heritage site – Publication of Lenggong local history | Content Creation |
| 13 | Mohd Suhaimi bin Ahmad | Improvement of Che Teh Fatimah Community Wakaf House | Capacity Building and Advocacy |
| 14 | Ts Azharul Azmir bin Kamarulzaman | Ceritera Menyusur Sungai Perak | Content Creation |
| 15 | Tung Lay Chun | Shun Tak Association History Gallery | Demonstration |
| 16 | Khoo Su Nin @ Khoo Salma Nasution | Cultural Heritage Mapping of Kuala Kangsar | Content Creation |
| 17 | Abdur-Razzaq Lubis @ Abdul Razak Ayoub | Taiping Zoo & Night Safari (TZ & NS) | Content Creation |
| 18 | Keith Tan Kay Hin | Producing digital audio guides for tourism at Lembah Bujang | Content Creation |
| 19 | Chong Pai Chee | Rethink, Reimagine & Rejuvenate: “Look Port Weld” –Kuala Sepetang, Kuala Sangga and Matang | Capacity Building and Advocacy |

| No | Applicant | Project title | Grant theme |
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| 20 | Ts. Mohammad Firdaus bin Ahmad | Cultural Gems: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow | Content Creation |
| 21 | Chin Yoon Khen | Malaysia Heritage Site Virtual Reality Expedition | Content Creation |
| 22 | The Habitat Foundation (Justine Vaz) | A Tale of Two Hills: Telling the Stories of Malaysia's Iconic Hill Stations Through Photography and Ethnography | Content Creation |
| 23 | James Lim Chin Wai | Book Publication & Exhibition: (Un)covering the Remains at Lenggong Valley | Content Creation |