

Six heritage buildings in Penang undergo RM3mil facelift

Friday, 5 May 2017
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The ongoing restoration work on one of the heritage shophouses in Kimberley Street, George Town.

SIX century-old shophouses in Kimberley Street, Penang, will receive a fresh look when a RM3mil restoration project is completed in June next year.

Work on the heritage shophouses numbering 94, 96, 98, 100, 102 and 102A, owned by the Penang Island City Council (MBPP), began in mid-February.

Wong Kwun Kwai, 72, a resident in the area, said the project would create space for the traditional heritage activities to continue in Penang.

“The younger generation will know what sort of traditional art, crafts and skills we had in our days,” he said.

Hawker Ng Hooi Gaik, 50, said the initiative would help the locals to promote their age-old trade for both locals and tourists.

Kimberley Street, which runs from Penang Road to Carnarvon Street through the heart of the traditional Chinatown area of George Town, was populated by Teochews from Swatow in the 19th century. They made bihun (rice noodles) and mee suah (vermicelli), drying them in the open at the street.

The street was named after John Wodehouse, the Earl of Kimberley, who was the British colonial secretary in the 1870s.



An artist's impression of the shophouses after the upgrading work.

Today, the Southern Chinese Eclectic Style architecture shophouses are listed as Category 2 heritage buildings in the George Town World Heritage Site's buffer zone.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, who officially launched the restoration project yesterday, said a structural evaluation carried out by the MBPP in 2007 found that the buildings were in a run-down condition with severe damage.

“There were major cracks on the parting walls and wooden floor structures, and the wooden boards of the buildings had decayed.

“After the makeover is completed 14 months from now, we will see new buildings,” he said.

Lim said the six buildings would create a total of eight new compartments.

He said the six units would comprise six compartments with individual toilets and kitchen, while the two buildings numbered 98 and 100 would be restored as shophouses, which would be occupied by two separate occupants.



The younger generation need to know what we had in our days, says Wong.

“Local craftsmen can continue to operate from here. We will make sure that the rentals are sustainable.

“I was informed that the George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) is in the process of planning various programmes and incentives for the new occupants after the physical restoration project is completed.

“The new occupants will be given a suitable space depending on their needs to ensure that their traditional crafts can compete in local and international market,” he said.

Asas Teguh Sejagat Engineering Company has been appointed the main contractor for the project via open tender.

MBPP Heritage Conservation Department director Noorhanis Noordin, who represented MBPP secretary Yew Tung Seang, said the project was planned since 2015.

“The council, GTWHI, Think City Sdn Bhd, Penang Heritage Trust and Penang Apprenticeship Programmes for Artisan (PAPA) are involved in the project.

“Besides the restoration and physical repair work, the project is to generate intangible heritage activities and maintain the traditional lifestyle appropriate for the buildings,” she said when reading out Yew's speech.