

PM Launched Guar Kepah Archeological Gallery

Kepala Batas, Penang, 24 January 2026 – YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim today officiated the Guar Kepah Archaeological Gallery, a state-of-the-art institution built on the site of a historic shell midden excavation that transforms a pivotal archaeological discovery into a dynamic public heritage asset. This gallery was developed through a strategic partnership led by the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER), in collaboration with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Chief Minister Incorporated (CMI) Penang.

The gallery will house the iconic “Penang Woman” – the first complete Neolithic skeleton found in Malaysia. In addition, the gallery will also display bones that were previously held in the Netherlands, following their successful repatriation through the dedicated collaboration of the National Heritage Department, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working in concert with Dutch authorities.

This homecoming crowns decades of meticulous work by USM’s archaeological team, which since 2010 has led groundbreaking excavations and research at Guar Kepah, employing modern techniques like 3D scanning and isotopic analysis to decode the lives of the ancient coastal community.

The launch of the Guar Kepah Archaeological Gallery was an event of profound national significance - not merely the opening of a gallery, but a reconnection with the nation's deepest roots. It stands as a testament to Malaysia's ancient civilization and its enduring place in the broader narrative of human history in the region.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow highlighted the gallery’s dual role as a cultural and economic catalyst. “This gallery is a crucial investment in our national identity and our local economy. By anchoring this gallery here, we are creating a new hub for knowledge, tourism, and community development. It will provide a tangible link to our past while fostering sustainable growth for the future of the Guar Kepah community and Penang as a whole.”

“Beyond its historical role, the gallery is a catalyst for local socioeconomic growth. It will drive cultural tourism, stimulate local businesses and create jobs. It also builds a sustainable heritage economy by developing local skills, ensuring the community retains the benefits and remains the primary stakeholder,” Chow said.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Economy, YB Tuan Haji Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir, stated that the project goes beyond constructing a gallery. It is a comprehensive local

development initiative designed to mobilize economic activity, create jobs, and open new income opportunities for the surrounding community.

“The Guar Kepah Archaeological Heritage Gallery project was approved in 2022 under the Second Rolling Plan of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, with an allocation of RM10 million. This funding signifies the MADANI Government’s support, through the Ministry of Economy, for the Penang State Government in developing prehistoric-based tourism. It also represents an effort to diversify the tourism economy, particularly in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER),” he said.

Detailing the gallery’s offerings, Chief Executive of Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA), Dato’ Mohamad Haris Kader Sultan said, “Visitors will now journey through interactive exhibits that tell the story of our Neolithic ancestors, see the actual excavation site, and witness the remarkable ‘Penang Woman.’ This is where history comes alive, and where our community’s future takes shape.”

“The gallery features immersive exhibits, a preserved section of the shell midden, and a research centre. Its establishment aligns with the national agenda to protect, research, and promote Malaysia’s heritage as a pillar of a progressive, culturally grounded nation,” he said.

For more information about NCER, please visit the NCER homepage at www.ncer.com.my.

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About NCIA

The Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) is a regional development authority responsible for establishing directions, devising policies and strategies related to the socioeconomic development of the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER). Incorporated in June 2008 under the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority Act 2008 (Act 687), NCER encompasses the four northern states of Kedah, Penang, Perak and Perlis in Peninsular Malaysia. NCIA's Chief Executive is Mohamad Haris Kader Sultan.

NCIA drives the growth of NCER towards becoming an excellent economic region while catalysing and implementing high value-added development programmes in six (6) economic clusters: Manufacturing, Agribusiness, Petrochemical, Mining, Green Economy and Services (Inc. Tourism; Logistics and Connectivity; and Digital Economy)

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