

(15 March 2022) The Star p.13

Five interesting buildings in KL

LOCATED in the central region of Malaysia with an area of 243sq-km, Kuala Lumpur is a city that is rich with British colonial buildings, magnificent skyscrapers and a mix of modern and postmodern architecture.

Here are five interesting facts you probably didn't know about Kuala Lumpur:

● Home to one of the tallest buildings in the world.

The Merdeka 118 tower, also known as PNB 118 is set to become the second tallest building in the world after Burj Khalifa upon completion in late 2022. The tower, standing at 118 floors and 678.9m is classified as a mega tall skyscraper by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

The cladding for the structure is made up of 18,144 panels, 114,000sq m of glass and 1,600,000kg of window frame extrusions. According to ARUP, the design of Merdeka 118 was inspired and modelled after Tunku Abdul Rahman's gesture when he chanted "Merdeka!" as he proclaimed Malaysia's independence on Aug 31, 1957.

● The Petronas Twin Towers are inspired by Islamic architecture and culture.

The Petronas Twin Towers are undoubtedly the most iconic landmark across Malaysia. The building is 88 storeys high and once held the record for the tallest building in the world.

The architect, César Pelli, based his designs off the Rub El Hizb, the eight-pointed star in the Islamic religion. The structure of the Rub El Hizb can also be seen from the bird's-eye view. The twin towers have the world's largest foundation with 120m of solid foundation beneath its concrete footings to withstand the height and weight of the towers.

● Malaysia's very own opera house

Istana Budaya was established in 1999 and it is the country's main venue for numerous local and international performances.

The design of Istana Budaya is said to be based on several aspects of Malay culture. The sloping roof is a resemblance of the 'sirih junjung', which is a betel leaf arrangement used at Malay weddings and ceremonial functions to welcome guests. Besides that, the building features the design elements of a Malay house with three main parts.

The 'serambi' or foyer inspired the design of the lobby, 'rumah ibu' or main house for the auditorium and 'rumah dapur' or kitchen for the rehearsal hall.

As the first theatre in Asia to have state-of-the-art equipment and home to talents such as the National Symphony Orchestra, Istana Budaya is rated as one of the most sophisticated theatres in the world, on par with London's Royal Albert Hall.

● The magnificent Sultan Abdul Samad Building

Inspired by Moorish and Neo-Mughal architecture, this building is one of Malaysia's most iconic landmarks. According to the *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, the construction of this building used approximately 4 million bricks, 2,500 barrels of cement, 108,862kg of lime, 2,268kg of copper and 45,359kg of steel and iron, and about 850 cubic metres of lumber, making it the biggest construction at the time. The engineer incorporated several types of arches that helped with ventilation throughout the building. As one of the first government offices in Malaysia, this structure was the city's first to be lit by electricity and exterior gas lights.

● The futuristically designed Saloma Link

Saloma Link (Pintasan Saloma) is a pedestrian and cyclist bridge constructed to connect Kampung Baru and Kuala Lumpur City Centre. Similar to Istana Budaya, the architecture of the bridge was inspired by the 'Sirih Junjung' concept of Malay culture. The bridge is a single span steel construction with over 4,000 diamond facade panels that are lighted up with LED lighting that changes pattern from time to time.

These buildings highlight stunning architecture with a nod to contemporary

designs and local culture. But in addition to this, one also has to admire the engineering and construction that went into making such buildings possible.

It is perhaps the expectation for new structures to incorporate both dazzling design and practicality. As such, there is always a demand for high-calibre engineers and architects, a possibility only with advanced tertiary education.



Islamic architecture is incorporated in the design of the Petronas Twin Towers.