

UNWANTED? Pudu Prison has been reinvented as a low-security facility despite its rich heritage and prime location



What is to become of Pudu Prison?

THE authorities had intended to move on. It had become inappropriate to have a prison in the middle of the city.

It was with that in mind that a prison was built in Sungai Buloh.

Pudu Prison, built in 1895, could no longer exist. But what were the authorities to do with it? It became a museum of sorts in early 2004.

Acceptance was a problem though. While some of the more daring ones ventured in, most people cringed.

It was the city centre. Berjaya Times Square was a stone's throw away, and down the road were some of Kuala Lumpur's finest hotels.

Surely this is prime property. Somebody would definitely want to own it.

But no, the place had happened either. There were too many stories. Some real. Some imagined. Some shrouded in superstition.

The spooky tales were many.

By **ALLAN NETTO**

There were reports of a strange man walking down the long, dark and cold corridors and disappearing into the night.

There were the long drawn, eerie screams that emanated from the execution chambers where the hangings had taken place.

People say it was the screams of the innocent who had been wrongly judged and punished.

Nobody would touch the property, lest any commercial building, be it an office block or shopping mall, would also be tainted with the same hauntings.

It was back to the drawing board. It was decided that Pudu Prison, where infamous Australian drug peddlers Kevin Barlow and Brian Chambers were the first to be hanged there in 1986, would remain a holding facility for minor offences.

The prison also attracted attention because of the mural, done by the more artistic of inmates, on the walls surrounding it.



PRIME PROPERTY: Due to its location, Pudu Prison has substantial real estate value

Last October, property developer UDA Holdings Bhd said it would begin transforming the Pudu Prison area into a commercial hub this year.

"We have plans to turn the area into a commercial development, which will include retail centres,

offices, residences and parks," UDA general manager of urban development division, Nooraini Mohamad Rashidi, had said in an interview.

Today, Pudu Prison has been reinvented as a low-security facility.