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## KEDAH TUA FESTIVAL 2016: REVEALING SOUTH-EAST ASIA'S UNIQUE EARLY CIVILISATION SITE

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PENANG, 17 May 2016 - Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) through its Centre for Global Archaeological Research (PPAG) and the National Heritage Department (JWN), together with the Kedah State Government, Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA), Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association (MITA) and the Malaysian Institute of Architects (MIA) would be organising the Kedah Tua Festival (FKT) to promote the unique attractions of Sungai Batu as the oldest civilisation site in South-East Asia.

Research conducted since 2007 has been successfully completed in compiling the data on the Kedah Tua civilisation. Evidences at Sungai Batu have revealed that the civilisation at Sungai Batu has existed since 535 BC until 17<sup>th</sup> century AD.

"Evidences discovered were in the form of iron-smelting sites and monuments sites for rituals, a jetty or seaport site and a port administration site, and all these indicated the existence of a complex civilisation with a highly-organised social structure, making Sungai Batu the oldest civilisation in South-East Asia," said the Director of PPAG, Professor Dato' Dr. Mohd Mokhtar Saidin.

"Therefore, FKT is organised with the aim of not only to promote the uniqueness of the Sungai Batu site, but also in preparing to produce a Dossier on nominating Sungai Batu as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and to turn it into a global centre for knowledge and training on early civilisation," added Mohd Mokhtar.

FKT would comprise of two main programmes, namely the Kedah Tua International Conference (KTIC'16) and the Festival itself at the Sungai Batu site in Kedah.

KTIC'16 would be held at Park Avenue Hotel, Sungai Petani beginning 21-22 May and 29 international presenters have been invited, which include experts on the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus, China, Greco-Rom and Mesoamerica, along with civilisations experts from every country in South-East Asia. Registration for the Seminar KTIC'16 could be done through the website: [ktic-my.blogspot.com](http://ktic-my.blogspot.com).

"The participants would be discussing their own civilisations within the context of the Sungai Batu civilisation period (535 BC – 17<sup>th</sup> century AD) to provide a clearer understanding of the uniqueness and contribution of Sungai Batu to world civilisation," said Mohd Mokhtar.

"Meanwhile, the Festival at the Sungai Batu site beginning 20-23 May 2016 would offer guided tours to the archaeological site, exhibitions on archaeology and civilisation, sale of local crafts, participation in excavations, iron-smelting and brick-making experiments, competitions, cultural presentations, and a community feast among others.

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