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### Students 'reconstruct' the past

**IPOH: TEN Malaysian and 10 Singaporean architecture students teamed up recently to discover the "town that tin built".**



Universiti Malaya and National University of Singapore students work under the Joint Studio Programme at a pre-war shoplot in Jalan Biji Timah. Picture by Muhaizan Yahya.

Under the seventh Universiti Malaya (UM)-National University of Singapore (NUS) Joint Studio Programme, the students from the universities had the chance to visit and explore Ipoh's heritage buildings.

For two weeks, they climbed up walls and crawled over rooftops to take measurements and trace the contours of four pre-war shop lots, including a trade shop off Jalan Bandar Timah, Sinhalese Bar in Jalan Biji Timah as well as a stationery shop and charcoal house near Jalan Dato Onn Jaafar.

For second-year UM student, Huda Nejm, 21, being part of the programme opened her eyes to Ipoh's rich culture and history.

"Despite being Malaysian and having been here on several occasions, I never realised Ipoh had so much to offer in terms of heritage," said the student from Petaling Jaya.

She said Ipoh was lesser known as a heritage city compared with George Town and Malacca.

"But I found that many residents here still live and carry out their businesses in houses and shop lots that were handed down to them from generations decades back," she said.

Singaporean Wilson Wong, 22, a first-time visitor, was also impressed by the city's old-world charm.

"It reminds me of home and I imagine it resembles Singapore in the 1960s.

"The people here are also very friendly and warm," he said.

At the end of the project, the students were expected to reproduce architecture models for display at Tan Cheng Lock Centre for Asian Architectural and Urban Heritage in Malacca.

NUS visiting senior fellow, Roland Sharpe Flores, said the models would also be exhibited at the NUS museum next month.

"After that, we hope to bring the exhibition back to Ipoh if possible," he said.

He said the programme funded by the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation began in 2005 and had been held in Kuala Lumpur, George Town, Malacca, Kuala Terengganu, Muar and Taiping.

"Previous students also carried out an urban study of their respective host towns.

"Their research was then compiled for a publication that featured a summary of the host city's history, and pictures and sketches of the buildings.

"The current batch of students have conducted a similar study and expect to publish their findings also," he said.

Perak Heritage Society vice-president Law Siak Hong, who helped to facilitate the programme, said it was a chance for the first and second-year architecture students to learn about architecture as well as heritage.

"As they explore the city and its buildings, they are bound to discover interesting stories which would give them insight into the identity and character of the local community.

"It helps to raise awareness of the importance of preserving old, unique buildings as well as increase their appreciation for the town's precious legacies," he said.

Law hopes to organise an exhibition of the students' work for the local public and is looking for sponsors.

Those interested to help in funding can call Law at 017-506 1875.