

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

In-depth Archaeological Survey Begins on Pulau Ubin at World War II Site
NParks and ISEAS to embark on 18-month survey to uncover history of island

Singapore, 22 December 2017 – The National Parks Board and ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS) today marked the start of the first in-depth archaeological surveys on Pulau Ubin beginning with World War II historical artefacts. Spanning a period of 18 months from December 2017, the surveys will document and study in detail the archaeological and historical remains at selected sites on Pulau Ubin. As an initiative of The Ubin Project, these surveys will complement ongoing cultural heritage and biodiversity research on the island. The findings of ISEAS will add to information about Ubin’s cultural heritage, serving as a guide for NParks to develop management strategies for these areas to conserve the island’s heritage. The start of the surveys was witnessed by Second Minister for National Development and Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Desmond Lee who visited the World War II gun emplacement of the Ubin Anti-Motor Torpedo Boat (AMTB) battery which is located within Camp Resilience (National Police Cadet Corps Campsite) today.

Part of Pulau Ubin’s rustic charm lies in the island’s rich cultural heritage. However, much is still unknown about the island’s history despite there being a number of abandoned historical sites dating to the 1800s. The findings from these archaeological surveys led by Lim Chen Sian, Associate Fellow of ISEAS, will shed light on Singapore’s trade, economic and military history, which will in turn contribute to archaeological and historic research of Singapore and the region. In addition, the information will also be incorporated into educational posters and presentations as part of efforts to strengthen awareness about Pulau Ubin’s cultural and natural heritage.

The surveys will be split into three phases, with the initial phase to be carried out at the No 2. gun emplacement site. The fieldwork for this research will entail transect surveys to identify, map and record heritage features as well as basic sampling such as surface collections. Subsurface probes may also be utilised to conduct analysis in areas where there is a high probability of buried archaeological remains. Depending on the findings from the first phase,

subsequent archaeological surveys by ISEAS may be conducted at the same areas or at the western part of Pulau Ubin.

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About The Ubin Project

The Ubin Project seeks ideas from members of the public on how the island's rustic charm, natural environment, biodiversity and heritage can continue to be enjoyed by Singaporeans for generations to come.

The Friends of Ubin Network (FUN) was formed in 2014, and comprises youths, residents, volunteers, researchers and members from the heritage and nature communities. FUN members have developed a code of conduct for environmentally and socially responsible behaviour on Pulau Ubin known as the "Ubin Way". The code of conduct was inspired by the kampung spirit that Pulau Ubin residents embody and is centred on the innate motivation to care for the environment.

More than 2,000 ideas have been received. These ideas are varied, ranging from conservation of biodiversity and heritage, to support for education and opportunities for nature-based recreation and trials of sustainable technologies.

About National Parks Board (NParks)

National Parks Board (NParks) is responsible for providing and enhancing the greenery of our City in a Garden. Beyond building green infrastructure, NParks is actively engaging the community to enhance the quality of our living environment.

NParks manages 350 parks and 300 km of park connectors, 3,347 hectares of nature reserves and the Singapore Botanic Gardens. We also manage Pulau Ubin and the Sisters' Islands Marine Park. Adding to this is the extensive streetscape, or roadside greenery, that forms the backbone of our City in a Garden. The island-wide Park Connector Network is also being developed to link major parks, nature areas and residential estates.



As the lead agency on biodiversity conservation, NParks has developed an urban biodiversity conservation model, which aims to conserve representative eco-systems in land-scarce Singapore. NParks also monitors and coordinates measures to enhance the presence of biodiversity in our urban landscape.

NParks is working closely with partners in the landscape and horticulture industry to increase productivity, and provide training for all levels of the workforce. Enhancing competencies of the industry will support Singapore's vision of being a City in a Garden.

For more information, visit www.nparks.gov.sg and www.facebook.com/nparksbuzz

About ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS)

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute (formerly Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security, and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute's research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS). The Institute is also home to the ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC), the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (NSC) and the Singapore APEC Centre.

The NSC Archaeology Unit currently conducting the survey project on Pulau Ubin, was formed in 2010 and inaugurated by the late President S R Nathan to promote archaeology in Singapore and Southeast Asia.

Annex

Gun emplacements of the Ubin Anti-Motor Torpedo Boat (AMTB) battery

The gun emplacements are estimated to have been constructed between 1936 and 1939, prior to World War II. These guns were positioned on Pulau Ubin to defend the Johor Straits from enemy ships and were part of an entire fortification system along Singapore's Northeastern coast, spanning from Changi to Pulau Tekong.

The gun emplacements are rare surviving examples of World War II relics in Singapore that have been preserved intact.



Exterior of gun No.1 emplacement of the Ubin AMTB battery (Photo credit Young Wei Ping)



Interior of gun No.2 emplacement of the Ubin AMTB battery (Photo credit Young Wei Ping)