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PROMOTING THE HEART OF KL: PENTAS SENI MERDEKA REVIVES PUBLIC SPACES AND FOSTERS SOCIAL EQUITY THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

This initiative is a component among various coordinated efforts to position Kuala Lumpur as a global creative city in line with the aspirations of Malaysia MADANI.

KUALA LUMPUR, 20 August 2023 – Think City, an impact organisation dedicated in making cities more liveable is pleased to bring back Pentas Seni Merdeka for a second season which began on 22 July 2023 and will run until November 2023. This monthly public arts initiative is jointly organised by Think City and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), is aimed at promoting social equity through public space activation and improving the overall liveability and vibrancy of Downtown Kuala Lumpur, as envisioned in the Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District (KLCCD) Strategic Master Plan jointly developed collaboratively by Think City, DBKL, Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture, the National Heritage Department (JWN) and Yayasan Hasanah in 2019.

This season, Pentas Seni Merdeka returns as a key platform of excellence in Kuala Lumpur spotlighting master performers of traditional arts, culture, and heritage from Malaysia and the wider region. Curated performances, workshops and activities will be featured, emphasising the preservation and appreciation of Malaysia and the surrounding region's rich cultural legacy. The programme this year is part of the KLCCD rejuvenation effort, a Budget 2023 initiative under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance.

The second season was launched by the Deputy Minister of Economy, YB Dato' Hajjah Hanifah Hajar Taib and was accompanied by the Managing Director of Think City, Hamdan Abdul Majeed and Senior Deputy Director of DBKL Culture, Arts, Tourism & Sports Department, Izwan Razif Salehapad.

YB Dato Hajjah Hanifah Hajar Taib said, "I am pleased to see the continuation of Pentas Seni Merdeka in revitalising the city and uplifting our communities through culture and heritage. It is with hope that this inclusive public programme would serve to foster economic growth and create job opportunities within the dynamic creative sector."

"In line with the aspirations of the recently launched Malaysia MADANI economic framework, the creative and cultural economic sectors are fundamental in fuelling a vibrant Kuala Lumpur. By harnessing our historical heritage and local talents, we amplify Kuala Lumpur's attractiveness and competitiveness, positioning it as a global creative destination and economic powerhouse. The Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District, amongst other efforts announced by YAB Prime Minister of Malaysia is poised to champion this cause, much like the success demonstrated by numerous other creative districts globally. Together, let us cultivate a thriving city that fuels innovation and drives the city's growth and prosperity for all."

Pentas Seni Merdeka is one of the initiatives spearheaded by Think City to rejuvenate Downtown Kuala Lumpur to become more liveable and create a space for cultural and creative

economies to thrive whilst leveraging on existing heritage assets. Activating public spaces is vital in ensuring equal and accessible recreational and economic opportunities for all citizens. Furthermore, the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings within the city serve to breathe new life into these structures, fostering a newfound appreciation for their significance.

Managing Director of Think City, Hamdan Abdul Majeed said, "Together with DBKL, we are rejuvenating Downtown KL as part of the activities and activations agreed upon both parties when our third MOU was signed earlier this year. Public spaces within the city have great potential to become socially equitable platforms to promote arts and culture and help generate social and economic dividends within the ecosystem."

"As we accelerate our efforts to develop Downtown KL into a dynamic creative and cultural district, Pentas Seni Merdeka has emerged as a marquee event for traditional master performers in Malaysia and the surrounding region. Rooted in Downtown Kuala Lumpur, this event has created a positive ripple effect throughout the area and the community. The Budget 2023 allocation for KLCCD has significantly bolstered our mission to enhance liveability, green spaces, public spaces and promoting community capacity building. Collaborations with esteemed partners like Khazanah Nasional Berhad, Yayasan Hasanah, Yayasan Sime Darby, Permodalan Nasional Berhad, Railway Assets Corporation and others remain integral to the collective vision of building a liveable and vibrant city."

Pentas Seni Merdeka, which began on 22 July 2023, featured Mak Yong Kelantan by Kumpulan Mak Yong Cahaya Matahari and today, features Barongan Seni Reong by Kumpulan Sri Wahyuni, Johor – both of which was brought to you in collaboration with PUSAKA. The next edition will be on the 9 September 2023 featuring music and dance from Borneo featuring Malaysia's Living National Heritage, Mathew Ngau Jau and Alena Murang. Subsequent editions will be held every second Saturday until November 2023 and will feature other traditional performances such as Teochew Opera and Indian cultural art forms. Pentas Seni Merdeka takes place at Jalan Raja, Dataran Merdeka from 6:00PM to 10:30PM. To learn more about Pentas Seni Merdeka, and KLCCD please visit thinkcity.com.my.

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About Think City

Think City is an impact organisation established in 2009 to create more sustainable and equitable places for the benefit of all. Our knowledge, skills and strategies focus on urban solutions, the environment, social communities, and the cultural economy. Think City is a wholly owned subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad (the sovereign wealth fund of the Government of Malaysia). For more information, log on to www.thinkcity.com.my.

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