Sabahans encouraged to preserve artifacts from archaeological sites

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabahans are encouraged to preserve artifacts found from archaeological sites throughout the state.

State Tourism, Culture & Environment Minister, Datuk Masidi Manjun, said this when launching the Temporary Exhibition of Malaysian Archaeology at Sabah Museum on Monday.

"I hope district officers throughout the state where there exists archaeology sites to inform the State Museum accordingly for further research," said Masidi.

The event entitled "Malaysian Archaeology To Trace Ancient Community" was aimed to identify the existence of the first native people in Sabah dating back to 255,000 years ago.

Masidi said it is vital to protect the local artifacts after a team from Centre Global Archaeological Research (CGAR), University Sains Malaysia (USM), Pulau Pinang that was established five years ago, in collaboration with Sabah Museum Department discovered the Mansuli Archaeology Site located some 30 km from Lahad Datu in 2003.

Several stone tools were among artifacts found in Mansuli Valley.

"Sabah which is endowed with rainforest and varieties of culture has attracted hordes of foreign tourists, however, many were still unaware that Sabah offers many archaeology heritages," said the minister.

Masidi revealed that a majority of the discovered archaeology sites had been destroyed because the locals did not understand the significance of these sites.

"I hope this function will create awareness and educate members of the public to preserve prehistoric heritage and archaeology sites," he said.

He said research on archaeology sites in Sabah must be stepped up because so far only a few archaeology sites had been discovered.

"The CGAR discovery of the Mansuli Valley in Lahad Datu exposed a long culture dating back to between 235,000 to 300,000 years ago," he said.

Masidi said CGAR had also discovered the biggest pottery production site at Bukit Tekengrang in Semporna.

"It is believed the maritime trade existed some 3,000 years ago," said Masidi.

Masidi said CGAR would conduct research on identified archaeology sites throughout Sabah including those in west coast and interior.

"I am elated at the capability of local researchers like CGAR which is on par with foreign researcher in exposing cultural development in Sabah," he added.

Masidi said the "Malaysian Archaeology" exhibition tracing ancient people would help educate the general public on prehistoric existence of Malaysia 183 thousand years ago.

Those present in the function were Sabah Museum director, Ms Joanna Datuk Kitigan, Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Environment Permanent Secretary, Michael Emban, director of CGAR, USM Prof. Dr. Mokhtar Saidin and others.

Masidi pulls down a spider web to officially launch the function at the State Museum yesterday.