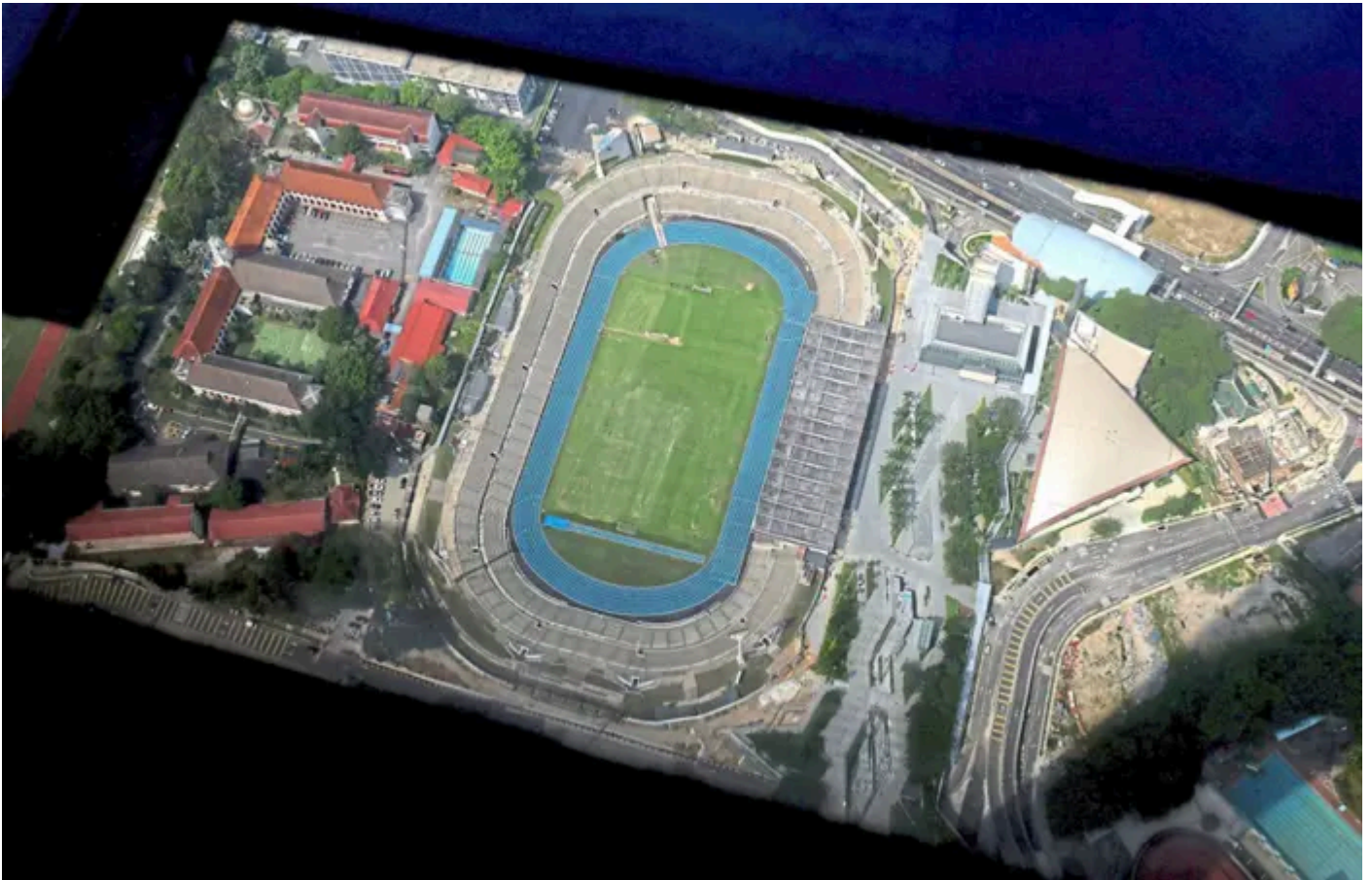


Step back in time to Merdeka



NATION

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Historic venue: An aerial view of stadium Merdeka after restoration works were completed.

KUALA LUMPUR: Stepping into Merdeka Stadium, the historic site where the nation's independence was declared in 1957, is like travelling back in time.

The landmark here, which has completed its restoration process, will reopen to the public on Aug 17, in conjunction with the National Month celebration.

As soon as visitors step in, they will feel as if they are in a time tunnel, able to imagine the act atmosphere when the cries of "Merdeka!" by the first Prime Minister, the late Tunku Abdul R Putra Al-Haj, echoed for the first time on Aug 31, 1957, igniting the spirit of independence.

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Good as new: The rebuilt display board located within the stadium.

According to PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd Communications head Liza Karim, the restoration effort for the stadium – which began in 2017 and is now fully completed – was about returning the Merdeka Stadium to its original state.

“Costing RM2mil, the works included removing the additional seating terraces installed during the 1989 SEA Games, thereby restoring the original capacity of 20,000 seats.

“Other works included rebuilding the display board, restoring the floor tiles at the main entrance, and repairing the stadium lights,” she told Bernama during a recent media visit to the stadium.



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“We followed the guidelines set by the National Heritage Department for the conservation process.

“It can be said that the restoration has achieved almost 100% resemblance to the original condition, allowing visitors to experience the authentic ‘aura’ of the original Merdeka Stadium,” she added.

“Among the challenges throughout the conservation process were the lack of expertise, suitable building materials and skilled labour.

“For instance, some tiles had to be specially ordered because the ones used previously are no longer used in modern construction,” she said.

She added that the first event to be held after the official reopening of the stadium will be the Sultan Selangor Cup football match, featuring the Selangor team against Singapore on Aug 17.

“After that, the stadium’s atmosphere will be enlivened with the organisation of monthly activities, including sales bazaars, sports events, recreational programmes, concerts, music, cultural, and educational activities, which will make this historic location a tourist attraction,” she said, inviting the public to visit Stadium Merdeka to kindle the spirit of patriotism.

Located about 600m from Merdeka 118 Tower, which now serves as the backdrop to this heritage site, Merdeka Stadium is easily accessible via public transportation, including the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) (Merdeka Station).

The restoration effort for the stadium was carried out by Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) through its subsidiary PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd, which established the Merdeka Heritage Trust in 2006 for the purpose of restoring, preserving and managing the Merdeka Stadium.

The restoration project also received cooperation from Badan Warisan Malaysia and the National Heritage Department. This initiative was recognised with an award of excellence from the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO).

Merdeka Stadium, considered an engineering marvel of the Federation of Malaya, began construction in 1956 and was completed within a year. Subsequently, this stadium became the site where Tunku Abdul Rahman had declared the country’s independence on Aug 31, 1957, as well as the formation of Malaysia on Sept 16, 1963.

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