

# Museum without originals

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## Artefacts too expensive to acquire

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry has denied a claim by a senator that Muzium Negara was a third-class museum as it showcases only "photocopied pictures" rather than original documents and artefacts.

Its deputy minister Datuk Wong Kam Hoong said the museum was unable to display original artefacts because many of them had been taken out of the country during the colonial era.

The high price quoted by sellers to acquire the artefacts was another reason, he said.

"After the collapse of the Malacca Sultanate, we were colonised for 500 years. During the period, many artefacts of historical significance were taken out of the country.

"Since the artefacts were not smuggled out or stolen, we tried to buy them from foreign owners but they asked for exorbitant prices," he said, refuting the claim by Senator Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi in the Dewan Negara yesterday.

Among the items Malaysia tried to buy were letters written



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by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, who was highly knowledgeable on Malayan history and Malay customs.

"Raffles had also written letters in the Jawi script but the price quoted by the seller was RM40mil," he said.

Earlier, when replying to the original question from Senator Nordiana Shafie on the status of efforts to bring back historical artefacts from foreign countries, Wong said not all artefacts in the hands of foreigners could be reclaimed.

"Artefacts that can be claimed are items that fall under the Unesco Convention guidelines, which regulate the movement of artefacts from one country to another, particularly items obtained from smuggling or theft," he said.

He said many attempts have been made to claim the artefacts from foreign countries but the efforts have not been successful. —  
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