

Bujang Valley treasures

Museum takes visitors on a journey back in time

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MORE visitors, including foreigners, are visiting the Bujang Valley Archaeology Museum in Merbok near Sungai Petani, which displays alluring temple ruins and artefacts, which are more than 1,500 years old.

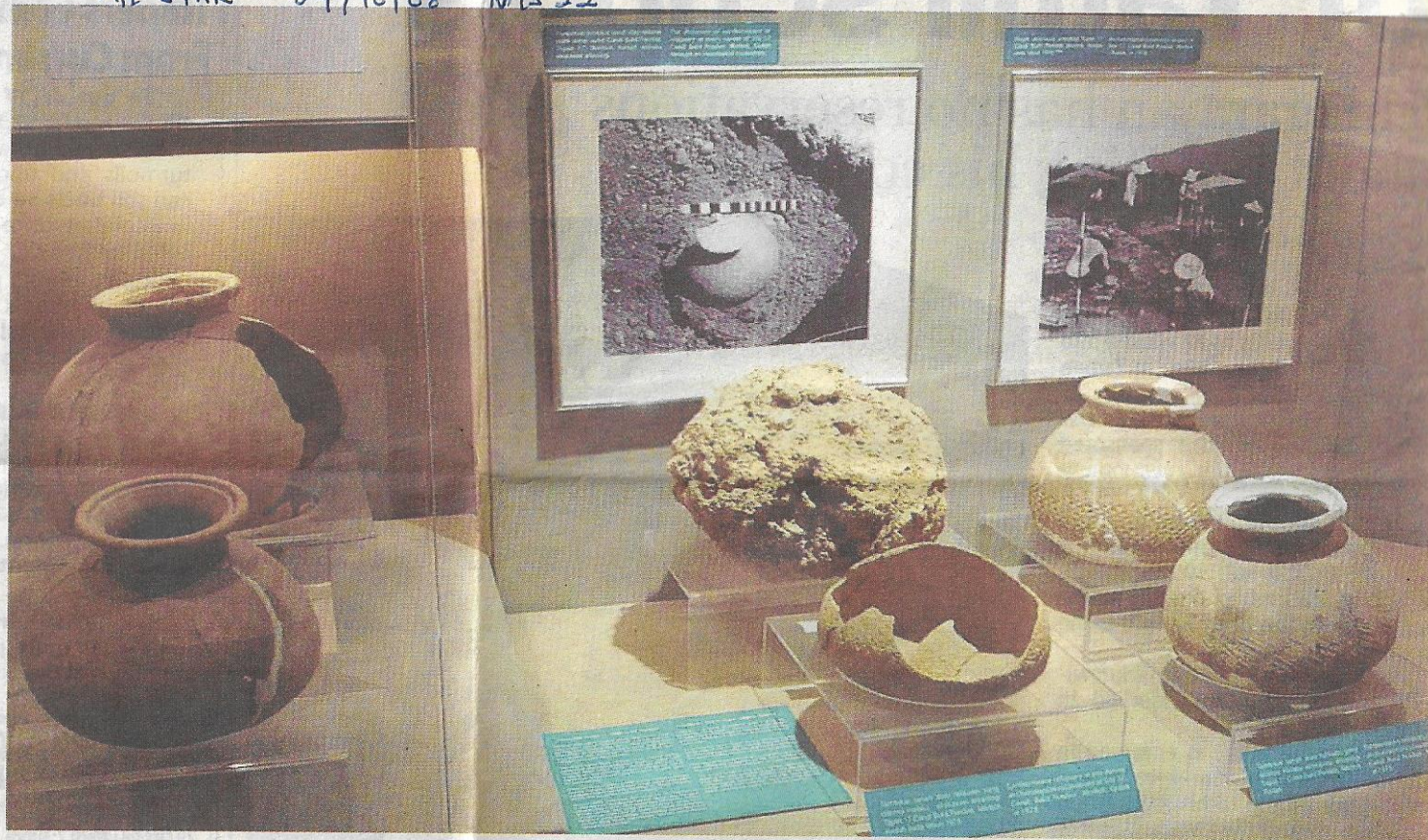
Busloads of people arrive during the weekends and public holidays, and last year, the museum received 127,500 visitors. This year, there has been a marked increase in foreign tourists from all over the world.

Some 1,000 documented exhibits excavated from various sites in the Bujang Valley have been reconstructed and are on display in the museum and its grounds.

This treasure trove transports one back in time to a period between the third and 14th centuries, when the Bujang Valley had a thriving Hindu and Buddhist civilisation.

At that time, the Bujang Valley - also known as Nusantara - was a vibrant trading centre of South-East Asia. Research shows, because of its favourable location along the trade route, it became an important and prosperous kingdom, attracting traders from China, India and the Middle East.

Tamil poets, Arab merchants of the fourth century and I-Tsing, a monk who sailed from



Objects from the past: Exhibits of interesting items unearthed from different sites in the Bujang Valley.

China to India, knew of a highly-cultured Malay civilisation in the Bujang Valley at that time and stopped at the place.

History annals indicate that the spread of Islam resulted in the eventual decline of Hindu-Buddhist influence.

The emergence of ports such as Malacca in South-East Asia contributed to the decline of the Bujang Valley.

One of the largest temples relocated on the museum grounds is Candi Bukit Batu Pahat, which was discovered to the west of Sungai Batu Pahat, about 3km north of Kampung Sungai Merbok.

The temple, predominantly of Hindu architecture, was discovered by colonial researcher H.G Quaritch-Wales, who, together with his wife Dorothy, discovered 30 temple sites

in 1938 and 1939.

Of these, 29 were in Lembah Bujang and one in Seberang Prai.

Another researcher, Alastair Lamb, excavated and reconstructed a site in Bukit Batu Pahat in the late 1950s while Paul Wheatley carried out research on the history of Lembah Bujang in 1961.

Candi Bukit Batu Pahat, once