

PRESS RELEASE

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NUS Baba House to undergo two years of conservation works

Enthusiasts can look forward to a slate of programmes ahead of and during the temporary closure

Singapore, 16 May 2025 — NUS Baba House, a 19th-century Peranakan Chinese townhouse located in Singapore’s historic district of Blair Plain, will temporarily close its doors from 31 May 2025 to undergo extensive restoration and conservation works. This closure is crucial to ensure the long-term preservation of this significant heritage property and its invaluable collection, enabling future generations of researchers and enthusiasts to continue to tap on the House to discover the cultural melting pot that makes Peranakan Chinese so unique.

Located at 157 Neil Road, the historical three-storey House offers an immersive glimpse into the history, culture, and domestic life of a typical prominent Peranakan Chinese family in Singapore. It is a testament to the architecture and design that the Peranakans commissioned, showcasing intricate details and the rich symbolism of their heritage.

The property was acquired in 2006 by the National University of Singapore (NUS), with funds donated by the late Ms Agnes Tan in memory of her father Tun Tan Cheng Lock, a Malaysian businessman and community leader.

Pausing to preserve: The next chapter of NUS Baba House

The upcoming conservation works are essential to address weathering arising from Singapore’s increasingly hot and humid climate, as well as material decline and decay. It is estimated that the project will be completed in approximately two years.

Peter Lee, Founding Curator of NUS Baba House, said, “Baba House is a living breathing gem of a historic building constructed with organic materials. There is no easy way to love an old building. Perseverance is therefore key in studying and conserving it. The works to be carried out will reinforce and protect its inherent beauty for a while longer, while documenting the processes and practices will help guide the care of the building in the future. It is breathtaking what it can still teach us.”

This will be Baba House’s most significant restoration effort since 2007. Built in the 1890s, the townhouse first underwent major restoration works after being acquired by NUS in 2006, before officially opening in September 2008.

“The upcoming conservation works represent a continuation of our dedication to preserving heritage through thoughtful experimentation and educational engagement. This is not just a project, but part of a longer timeline where each conservation effort has contributed to our understanding and appreciation of sustainability and authenticity in heritage,” said Ahmad Bin Mashadi, who heads the NUS Museum as University Curator.

The project will be supervised by a multi-disciplinary team of experts, with MAEK Consulting Pte Ltd as conservation specialist. Building on previous conservation efforts, the upcoming restoration works will aim to maintain the original spatial and aesthetic qualities of the House while ensuring its physical integrity and safety for visitors.

"The challenge with heritage buildings is much like with our own bodies: how do we let buildings age gracefully? Restoring buildings like NUS Baba House is not just about preserving the past; it is also about balancing between the need to conserve as much of the original structure as possible while ensuring compliance with modern building standards," said Yvonne Tan, Curator for Architectural Heritage and Conservation at NUS Museum.

"Singapore's tropical climate adds another layer of complexity as we have to factor in long-term degradation caused by sunlight and humidity, as well as more extreme weather events like torrential rainfall. Ultimately, we are not just working to preserve the past, but making sure that the House can continue to stand and inspire future generations to discover more about our shared heritage."

Exclusive programmes

To offer the public a chance to engage with the House before and during its temporary closure, NUS Baba House will present a series of exclusive programmes:

- **Baba House Exposed Tour** will offer a unique perspective on the architectural elements of Baba House, providing insights into its design, construction and the techniques and challenges that go into its preservation. Its "exposed" state may also reveal more of its history, giving visitors a chance to gain a deeper understanding of its original structure and evolution over time. It is scheduled to launch in July.
- **Blair Plain Walking Tour by NUS Baba House** will explore the rich Peranakan stories and architecture within the vicinity of the Baba House. It will highlight the historical and cultural significance of the surrounding neighbourhood and the communities alongside the Peranakan Chinese. It is scheduled to launch in August.

There will also be three talks in July for those in the built industry and the public to examine issues pertaining to heritage conservation, questions of authenticity, sustainability, and their impact on communities.

Details for the tours and talks will be announced at a later date.

The final day of Heritage Tours at NUS Baba House will be 31 May 2025.

During the hiatus, a selection of artefacts from the Baba House will be put on temporary display at NUS Museum, ensuring that its legacy remains accessible to the public. The Baba House website also features a full virtual rendering of the House's interior that online visitors can view anytime!

NUS Baba House encourages the public to book their final tours and register their interest in the exclusive programmes to celebrate its heritage before the temporary closure.

More information on house tour bookings can be found here:

<https://babahouse.nus.edu.sg/plan-your-visit/>

Images of NUS Baba House can be downloaded here:

<https://nus.edu/4ddGSsw> (pw: bhyefornow)

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About National University of Singapore (NUS)

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education, research and entrepreneurship, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. We have 16 colleges, faculties and schools across three campuses in Singapore, with more than 40,000 students from 100 countries enriching our vibrant and diverse campus community. We have also established more than 20 NUS Overseas Colleges entrepreneurial hubs around the world.

Our multidisciplinary and real-world approach to education, research and entrepreneurship enables us to work closely with industry, governments and academia to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in our faculties, research centres of excellence, corporate labs and more than 30 university-level research institutes focus on themes that include energy; environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems; Asian studies; and Smart Nation capabilities such as artificial intelligence, data science, operations research and cybersecurity.

For more information on NUS, please visit www.nus.edu.sg.

About NUS Museum

As a university museum, NUS Museum's mission is to actively facilitate intellectual and cultural life within and beyond the University. With a distinct focus on Asia, the Museum contributes to and facilitates the production, reception, and preservation of knowledge through collections development and curatorial practice.

The Museum is a cultural hub, developing partnerships within NUS, the culture and heritage industry, and the global knowledge community.

Located at the [University Cultural Centre](#), NUS Museum comprises nine galleries and additional ancillary spaces which host a wide range of [exhibitions](#), [module collaborations](#) and [supporting programmes](#) that contribute to the cultural and interdisciplinary conversation within NUS and beyond.

For more information about NUS Museum, visit museum.nus.edu.sg

About NUS Baba House

Built around 1895, 157 Neil Road is a three-storey townhouse located in Singapore's historic district of Blair Plain. Once the ancestral home of a Peranakan Chinese family, namely the Wee family, the property was acquired by the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2006 with funds donated by the late Ms Agnes Tan in memory of her father Tun Tan Cheng Lock, a Malaysian businessman and community leader.

In 2007, a project was undertaken to restore 157 Neil Road for presentation as a heritage house which contextualises Peranakan Chinese material culture and aesthetics within a

domestic setting. The interior setting takes visitors on an experiential trip into a Peranakan Chinese family home of the early 20th century. [NUS Museum](#), [NUS Department of Architecture](#), [the Urban Redevelopment Authority](#) and [The Peranakan Association of Singapore](#) were the main partners in the conservation project. The house opened in September 2008, and was named NUS Baba House. NUS Baba House is presently managed by [NUS Museum](#).

For more information about NUS Baba House, visit babahouse.nus.edu.sg