



Press Release

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Blue Plaque unveils at Jewish Synagogue

YANGON: A commemorative Blue Plaque was installed at the Jewish Synagogue in Pabedan Township in downtown Yangon today.

The Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue was built in Yangon in 1893-96 to replace a wooden structure from 1854. The Jewish community of approximately 2,500 was a respected presence in business and a valued part of local society. As of today, there are only a handful of Jews in Yangon.

“The synagogue was part of a once-flourishing Jewish community in Yangon and a reminder that Yangon has always been, since its founding in the 1750s, home to people with connections across the world. We have dozens of religious sites, belonging to all major religions, in downtown Yangon; this is something to be proud of and celebrated,” said Dr Thant Myint-U, the founder and chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust.

“The first known Jew to have lived in Myanmar was Solomon Gabirol who was a commissar in king Alaungpaya's army. But it's very likely that Jewish links to Burma go much further back, perhaps to the time of the first Roman trading missions to the East nearly 2,000 years ago,” he added.

Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue is the only Synagogue in the world that used to have 126 Torah Scroll. But many families took their own Torah when they left the country and now there are only 2 left. These 2 Torahs are originally from Baghdad and over 100 year old.

For more than 35 years, the Samuels family has taken care of the synagogue, cemetery, and what remains of the Jewish community in Yangon.

“We are very proud to have the blue plaque at Yangon's only Synagogue. The blue plaque is not just showing the architectural significance but also recognizing the dedication of each families and individuals to preserve the building in this beautiful city of Yangon,” said Sammy Samuel, the care-taker of the Synagogue.

YHT's commemorative Blue Plaque is a part of the Trust's work to promote the city's unique cultural and built heritage and the importance of conservation in making Yangon liveable while it also highlights renowned residents who contributed to the city. Yangon Heritage Trust hopes that the introduction of commemorative Blue Plaques will make Yangon's history accessible to people of all age and backgrounds.

Royal Philips agreed to contribute US\$ 75,000 for the Yangon Blue Plaques initiative. Aside from the highlighting key cultural heritage locations, the contribution will also support the research and curation of historical sites, and creation and installation of Blue Plaques that will share the historical relevance and background of notable people and places across the city.

Yangon Heritage Trust is an independent centre of excellence working to promote and integrate Yangon's unique urban heritage into a 21st century vision of Yangon as one of Asia's most liveable cities. Yangon Heritage Trust advocates for heritage protection, develops clear and sustainable policy options, engages with government, business and civil society, communicates its ideas to the widest possible audience, undertakes specific conservation projects, and facilitates research and training.

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