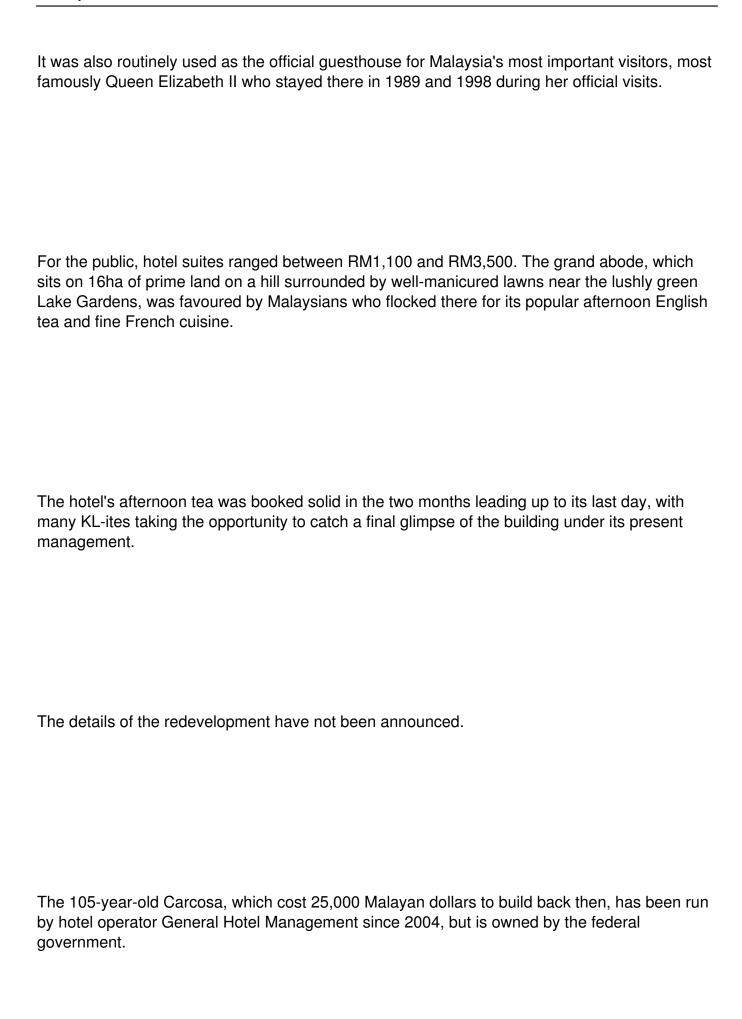


First published in The Malaysian Insider

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 28 — A window into Malaysia's colonial past shut last Saturday when the Carcosa Seri Negara mansions closed their doors for good for "redevelopment".

The two stately bungalows, widely considered to be the most beautiful colonial houses in Kuala Lumpur, were turned into a luxury boutique hotel 20 years ago, after being built in 1904 to be the home of the most senior British official in colonial Malaya.



"We hope there is a conservation management plan which will ensure that any redevelopment of the buildings, lands and its environment will not only retain but also enhance its heritage values," said its executive director, Elizabeth Cardosa, in a statement on the Heritage Trust's website.
She urged the government to consult members of the public before making any final decisions on the redevelopment.
Hotel manager Caroline Filtzinger said that the Carcosa was not likely to be torn down as it was declared a national heritage site in 2007.
She said she had received hundreds of e-mail messages from the public protesting against the redevelopment plan. Some, however, had also expressed support for the proposal, as long as its colonial identity is retained.
"After 20 years, the hotel is admittedly a little old and tired-looking. The government might also have some other plans for the land, especially the revenue it could generate, and the redevelopment could also help offset the huge maintenance costs of a property this size," she was quoted as saying by The Star daily.

The land and property management division under the Prime Minister's Office, which handles government-owned real estate, has said that it had put out open tender notices in several dailies in October, inviting companies with experience in hotel management to upgrade and operate the Carcosa.

But the future of the Carcosa remains hazy. Division secretary Hasnol Zam Zam Ahmad was quoted by *The Malaysian Insider* news website as denying that the government would redevelop the hotel.

But memories of the destruction of other old, iconic buildings make many Malaysians nervous about what lies in store for the grand Carcosa. — The Straits Times