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Ancient Japanese art of tea drinking

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - As part of the Japan Festival in Malaysia 1997, members of the Urasenke Tradition of Tea Foundation today held a lecture and demonstration on the ancient art of Japanese tea drinking at the Japan Culture Centre.

Performed under the supervision of the Grand Tea Master, Professor Soshi Sen, the foundation members displayed their skills to an attentive group of dignitaries, among whom was the Regent of Negri Sembilan, Tengku Naquiyuddin Tuanku Ja'afar.

Soshi explained that the tea ceremony, known as chanoyu in Japanese, was an aesthetic pastime peculiar to Japan and which features the serving and drinking of matcha, a powdered green tea.

"It's a form of Japanese tradition to show respect for one's guests which has its origin rooted in as early as the eighth century.

"Although the tradition is not as popular as it used to be, I believe it will remain as part of the Japanese culture because as it is with Japanese society, we value our tradition no matter how advanced we get." - Soshi said he was delighted to learn that there was so much interest in the Japanese culture among Malaysians.

"I was greatly honoured when three days ago I was given the opportunity to perform the ceremony for your Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and I hope it will contribute towards the enhancement of cultural understanding between our two countries."

Naquiyuddin, who was the guest of honour, later tried his hand at the art of tea-serving to the applause of those present.

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