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## Drumming up a record

Tan Ling Ai

TODAY, Malaysia is set to enter the Guinness Book Of World Records as having built the world's largest wooden drum.

The project is a unique collaboration between Malaysia and China and the brainchild of a local organisation, Kenn Kenn Centre Of Culture And Education.

Drum craftsmen from Jiangzhou (a farming village in Shanxi, China known for its drum-making skills), began their task with a search for a bull that was big enough to skin for the drum.

Work on the drum, carried out by 10 men, started last week. The skin was mounted on the wooden framework of the drum here last Tuesday night.

The completed drum will measure 3.3 metres in diameter. It will be brought to Dataran Merdeka to be displayed and measured by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight at 7pm.

The ceremony, organised in conjunction with the Silverstone 2nd Asian Rally, will be witnessed by officials from the Guinness Book of World Record where the official height and weight of the drum will be announced and recorded.

Later, Malaysians will have a chance to hear the thunderous sound of this gigantic instrument when it is played by the famed Shanxi Jiangzhou Drum Troupe, specially brought in for a few charity performances.

The making of the drum, the charity concerts, and the promotion costs are estimated to be around RM2 million.

"The shows are jointly organised by Kenn Kenn Centre Of Culture And Education, Majlis Belia Malaysia, Young Malaysians Movement and Persatuan Belia Xiang Lian Malaysia," says the project coordinator of Kenn Kenn Centre, See Yoke Chun.

"Proceeds of the performances will go to charity organisations, including Yayasan Bakti, Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Majlis Belia Malaysia, Young Malaysian Movement and Persatuan Belia Xiang Lian Malaysia," says See.

The Jiangzhou art of drum-making started in 621 AD and the first drums were constructed from clay jars and deer skin. The drums were first used to welcome home military troops from successful battles.

Legend has it that drums were later used in temple celebrations to entertain the gods.

As for the Shanxi Jiangzhou Drum Troupe, it was established in 1987 and was originally an amateur folk art group comprising mainly of peasants. However, today the troupe consists of fine musicians who have performed in various countries and have countless awards under their belts.

Besides drums, instruments like trumpets and cymbals are also used.

The troupe will be performing a variety of pieces. One of these is The Chat, which features the rhythmic beating of the huge drum and tells the tale of two long separated friends on the occasion of their happy reunion. Fight Between The Bull And The Tiger describes the tenacity of the bull and ferocity of the tiger as they battle each other.

The Marriage Celebration Of The Mice enacts the happy event which is suddenly spoilt when a huge cat pounces on them.

Included also are two award-winning pieces - Roll Call Of Soldiers By The King Of Qin and Rolling Walnuts. While the former is inspired by an army marching under the command of King Qin, the latter is about the joy of peasants over an abundant harvest.

Incidentally, the record for the world's biggest drum (before Malaysia's project began) is held by China for a drum that measures 2.78 metres in diameter.

That drum, in Malaysia at the moment, will be used in the charity shows.

Those interested in watching the Shanxi Jiangzhou Drum Troupe in action with the world's largest drum, will be pleased to know that there will be 10 charity shows all over Malaysia.

However, at the moment, only five venues have been confirmed, namely Stadium MPJB in Johor Baru on Aug 13, Stadium Indra Mahkota in Kuantan on Aug 16, Dewan Tunku in Komtar Penang on Aug 19, Dewan Wawasan in Menara PGRM Kuala Lumpur on Aug 22 and 23.

All performances are at 8pm except on Aug 23 where there will be a matinee performance at 3pm.

For further information on other venues and ticket prices, call 03-7778899.

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