

04/07/1997

Three-month festival 'good way to experience culture, traditions'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The best way to understand a community and a nation is by experiencing its culture and traditions, a concept that organisers of the Japanese Festival hope to introduce to Malaysians.

"There is more to Japan than its economic success," Minister at the Japanese Embassy Toshiro Ozawa told a news conference today. "We hope to relay the Japanese thought, mindset and outlook towards life."

The Japanese Festival, to be held from July 11 to Oct 11, will have 19 activities.

Speaking at the Japan Cultural Centre here, Ozawa said the festival would start with an exhibition and slide lecture by Japan's foremost contemporary artist Ikuo Hirayama on July 11.

About 30 water colour and ink paintings by Hirayama, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, will be on display at the Sogo Shopping Centre.

A large Bon Odori, the Japanese summer festival dance, has also been planned with organisers expecting 30,000 people to join in, making it possibly the largest Bon Odori in the world, on July 19 at the Matsushita Sports Complex.

A special Urasenke tea ceremony will also be held by Prof Soshi Sen, the 16th hereditary Grand Tea Master of the Urasenke tradition of tea drinking, which Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been invited to attend.

There will also be an aikido demonstration by Kyoichi Inoue, the highest ranking aikidoka of the Yoshinkan School of Aikido (9th dan) at Putra World Trade Centre on Sept 27.

For music lovers, there will be a debut performance in Malaysia by Kenji Watanabe on Sept 6-7, the Kanazawa Concert Orchestra Ensemble on Sept 30 and Asian Music Scene on Oct 11 featuring Zainal Abidin, Jacky Cheung of Hong Kong and Dick Lee of Singapore.

Exhibitions include the "Sharaku: Interpreted by Japan's Contemporary Artists" featuring interpretations of highly artistic wood block prints of kabuki actors by 18th century artist Toshusai Sharaku.

Other exhibitions include the Asian Cartoon Exhibition which features a 90-piece collection of Asian cartoons.

Other activities include an ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) exhibition and demonstration, origami (paper art) workshop, a film festival featuring award winning movies, and the Sansa Odori dance festival.

For more information call the Japan Information Service at 03-2427044 or 2427928.

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