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## Promoting handicraft complex at home and abroad

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Kraftangan Malaysia's director-general Zakiah Ahmad had a mission to fulfil since she took over two years ago - to make the complex the hub for all activities pertaining to local handicraft, including sales and promotion.

She also had to realise Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's dream of ensuring there were enough quality handicraft products at the complex to meet the demand of local and foreign visitors.

Zakiah, who was speaking after Dr Mahathir's visit to the complex today, said she had been going on an aggressive campaign, at home and abroad, to promote the complex and its handicraft products through the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board and Malaysia External Trade Development Corp (Matrade).

"The complex has become a one-stop centre not only to sell products by our skilled workers, but also to demonstrate them.

"We have a craft museum and we also hold craft competitions," she said.

The complex also houses little shops, tenants, kiosks and push-carts selling various types of quality craft works where people can visit and buy quality handicraft at reasonable prices.

Zakiah said that August was wedding promotion month, adding that the complex had been holding promotions on pottery, Islamic art, jungle products and sarongs.

"These promotions had drawn huge crowds to the complex, including foreigners from all over the world," she added.

Zakiah also said that handicraft would help generate income for the rural people, especially the poor.

"Kraftangan Malaysia will help people develop their skills in handicraft and also assist them to market and promote their products," she added.

Kraftangan Malaysia conducts market surveys to get feedback on the kinds of products demanded by locals and foreigners and the amount needed.

Asked whether they found it difficult to compete with products from Thailand and Indonesia, Zakiah said: "I must stress that our products are unique and are of quality. There is no competition as people nowadays believe in buying quality products."

"Right now, Thailand and Indonesia are getting a big share of the market.

"We should not be afraid but continue diligently in encouraging our craft producers and entrepreneurs to produce their best."