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## Inviting Selangor Islamic Arts Garden

Shanti Gunaratnam

THEIRS is a version of the rags to riches story. The first few years saw non-profit Yayasan Restu operate from a small and cramped shoplot in Sungai Buloh. But hard work and dedication plus a visit from former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad three years ago changed everything.

Today, the organisation occupies a "nice" and strategic building in Shah Alam, opposite the imposing Sultan Salahuddin Aziz Shah Mosque, which draws busloads of visitors daily.

The place is now known as the Selangor Islamic Arts Garden. "Yes, our organisation has come a long way from its humble beginnings. We are also grateful to Dr Mahathir and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Khir Toyo for their assistance," says business development manager Pauziah Pauzi.

The garden was officially opened on Sept 25 by the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah and has seen local and foreign visitors mostly from China, Indonesia, England and the Middle East.

"The centre is open to all, not just Muslims. Those keen to know more about Islam are most welcomed," Pauziah says.

There are three main exhibition galleries where ancient manuscripts and motifs used on the various Quran, manuscripts and calligraphy are on show.

There is also a small area where local craftsmen who make tiles, songket and household items have been invited to showcase their products; a lecture hall; and cafeteria.

"Yayasan Restu has made a name internationally for its art work and calligraphy. Visitors will also get a chance to see the fruit of the labour of our designers on motifs used for the Quran," Pauziah says.

"These motifs can also be applied on tiles, cards, songket and various interior designs. We have just started work on the official Selangor Quran and are compiling the appropriate motifs."

Some subjects included in the motifs are the various flora and fauna Selangor is known for, plus some intricate designs used on the state throne.

There is a souvenir shop where Quran, mugs, paintings and other items can be purchased by visitors. Entrance to the garden is free and opening hours are 9.30am to 5.30pm, Tuesdays to Sundays.

The other attraction in Shah Alam is the Royal Mint International at Section 15, popular with schoolchildren. Visitors are given a guided tour on the various processes of coin making at the mint.

"It also makes gold coins, souvenirs, mementos and even chocolates. The souvenir shop outside the mint is well frequented by those looking for commemorative coins and medallions," says Habibah Zainal Abidin, the mint's sales and marketing executive.

Royal Mint International is open Monday to Friday with two sessions for visitors - at 10am and 2.30pm. Photography is prohibited inside the factory. For booking arrangements, call 03-55191611.