

28/02/2003

Tribute to local craftsmen

MALAYSIAN Handicraft Development Corporation or Kraftangan Malaysia, under the ambit of the Entrepreneur Development Ministry, has made Feb 28 as Hari Kraf Kebangsaan (National Craft Day) to be celebrated annually.

This particular day was mooted to acknowledge the contributions of craft entrepreneurs and craftsmen to the development of local craft industry and the country's economy.

To mark the event this year, Kraftangan Malaysia has organised several activities, which began yesterday with with a number of exhibitions - New Products, Products for Export, Craft Products by Students of Institut Kraf Negara and Craft Technology Exhibition.

New Products showcase crafts created in line with current trends and market demands. Produced by Kraftangan Malaysia's designers in co-operation with local craft entrepreneurs, crafts exhibited are categorised by textile products, jungle resources, ceramic and metal items.

Visiting the exhibition will enable craft makers to derive ideas as well as keep abreast with the latest designs and trends in craftmaking.

They will also be a Craft Bazaar, craft demonstrations, cultural shows related to crafts and traditional pastime activities, all held at Kompleks Kraf Kuala Lumpur in Jalan Conlay.

Today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will launch Hari Kraf Kebangsaan and present the coveted "Anugerah Tokoh Kraf Negara" (National Master Craftsman Award).

The award is to recognise outstanding craftsman whose commitment and skill have contributed immensely to the industry and preservation and practice of heritage craft.

The winner will receive a scroll, cash award of RM30,000, full songket attire worth RM1,500, living allowance of RM1,500 and five-year sponsorship amounting to RM7,000 for first class medical treatment at a Government hospital.

The theme for this year's National Craft Day is "Cintai Kraf Malaysia" aimed at instilling a love for Malaysian craft and expanding its contemporary use while at the same time creating greater awareness on the wide range and usage of local crafts.

They are not only ideal as gifts and souvenirs but also as interior decoration items. These include intricate products made of batik, songket, wood, rattan, bamboo, silver, brassware and ceramic.

"Malaysian craft is of upmarket quality. That is our niche," says Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz.

"Most of the crafts are done by hand therefore the value is higher as compared to machine-made products. Our craftsmen are now more sensitive to market trends and produce craft products according to customer preferences."

National Craft Day activities will be held until Sunday. The Craft Bazaar is the place to head to for some great buys. A total of 110 craft entrepreneurs from all over the country are taking part and offering a textiles, ceramics, metal items and crafts made from jungle resources.

Exhibitions held at the venue are open to the public.

Tomorrow, a forum on "Challenges Facing the Craft Industry in the Era of Globalisation" as well as "Malam Cintai Kraf Malaysia" appreciation night will be held for invited guests.

For details, call Kompleks Kraf Kuala Lumpur at 03-21627459, fax 03-

21612622 or visit <http://www.kraftangan.gov.my>.