

SPEECH BY
YAB DATO SERI DATIN PADUKA
DR. SITI HASMAH BTE HAJI MOHD. ALI
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AMERICAN
EXPRESS-KARYANEKA MALAYSIAN HANDICRAFTS
HERITAGE EXHIBITION AT KARYANEKA
JALAN RAJA CHULAN, KUALA LUMPUR
ON SATURDAY, 3RD. SEPTEMBER 1983
AT 3.00 PM

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to officiate the opening of the American Express-Karyaneka Malaysian Handicrafts Heritage Exhibition.

2. As you may be aware, there is a great need to increase the public's awareness of the high quality of our local handicrafts. I am indeed very pleased that American Express has come forward and involved itself in such a beneficial project. It is very encouraging that the private sector is playing its part in what has, until now, been considered to be solely the government's concern.

3. Let us take a brief look at the history of our handicrafts. It dates back to as early as the 14th. century when it was a thriving and profitable cottage industry, especially among the people in the east coast states of the Peninsular.

4. Unfortunately, modernisation has resulted in a decrease in the demand for handcrafted ware. Only in Kelantan, Trengganu and a few other parts of the country, where adherence to traditional Malay arts is stronger than anywhere else, has this decline been slower. It was not until the 1960's that a new cultural awareness began to

spread across the country, and with it, a timely desire to revive the dying traditional skills.

5. Since then, the government has been taking firm measures to give the handicraft industry a new lease of life. The rising cost of imported crafts and home decor items, compared to the relatively cheap but high quality local crafts, has of late made Malaysian handicrafts more affordable and worthy of serious consideration to many. Karyaneka, formed in 1979, has now made available a fairly wide range of reasonably-priced handicrafts.

6. Karyaneka was established with the special responsibility of looking after the Malaysian handicraft industry and to promote the craft both locally and internationally. It has, since its establishment, been taking various measures to provide training as well as incentives to the industry through the help of government agencies like The Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation, and Bahagian Kemajuan Masyarakat (KEMAS). Nevertheless, the handicraft industry still needs the support and assistance of other parties, notably the private sector.

7. This week-long exhibition is one of the biggest demonstration-exhibition-sales of handicrafts ever held in our country. To mark this exhibition, a total of \$20,000 from American Express will be donated to three charitable organisations namely the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital Fund, The Haemophilia Society of Malaysia and the Lion's Lyfe-Line Leukaemia Fund.

8. The Lion's Lyfe-Line Leukaemia Fund was launched early this year to help needy patients suffering from leukaemia and other blood-related cancers. For the time being, the fund will cater for patients in the University Hospital. It is hoped that when donations received are substantial

enough, the fund will be extended to patients in other hospitals in the country.

9. The Haemophilia Society of Malaysia was formed as a support group for people suffering from congenital blood disorders resulting from deficiencies of certain clotting factors in the blood. The society is also committed to advancing the knowledge and management of the disease as well as promoting study and research work.

10. The Tun Hussein Onn's National Eye Hospital Fund was founded in June 1983 to provide preventive measures to eradicate the scourge of blindness and also to raise the standard of eye care services. It also provides facilities for staff training and research on eye diseases. The hospital's facilities and services will be available to all Malaysians, as well as others in the ASEAN region, and is funded privately through donations.

11. In addition to the \$20,000 donation by American Express to the three charitable organisations, Karyaneka will donate 10 per cent of the proceeds of the sale during this one week exhibition to one or more charitable organisations. I therefore take this opportunity to appeal to members of the public to purchase as many handicraft as possible, as a portion of the proceeds will be given as donations to relieve the suffering of the unfortunates.

12. I wish to congratulate American Express and Karyaneka for their successful effort in organising this exhibition, and also to everyone who has contributed in one way or another to the realisation of the whole project. I am sure the exhibition will receive the necessary support and hope that this will not be the last time the private sector comes forward with such projects.

13. With these words I have much pleasure in declaring the American Express Karyaneka Malaysian Handicrafts Heritage Exhibition officially open.

Thank you.
