

Showcase of our rare textiles at UN headquarters

SEVERAL of the rarest Malay world textiles from Malaysia will go on display at the main lobby of the United Nations headquarters in New York from now to May 5.

Some of these original pieces date back to the 18th century. Titled "Textiles of Malaysia with Special Accent on Kelantan", the display includes songket and batik as well as rarer articles like *kelingkang* veils favoured by the Kelantan royalty.

Supported by the Kelantan State Museum, the exhibition is held in conjunction with the Kelantan Food Festival launched by the Sultan of Kelantan Tuanku Ismail Petra and the Raja Perempuan of Kelantan, Tengku Anis Tengku Abdul Hamid.

Seven pieces of rare textiles from the Pucuk Rebung Royal Gallery-Museum's permanent collection will be displayed in four museum-quality glass cases.

Information tracing the evolution of Malaysian textiles are also available through exhibition literature and picture boards.

The items that will be displayed include a 19th century royal *sarong* (tube skirt) and a *selendang* (scarf) woven using a combination of *ikat* on the silk weft *songket*, a gold thread supplementary weave technique.

Both *limar songket* items are survivors of a lost artform as this unique blend of weaving disciplines no longer exists due to the disappearance of the single *ikat* technique for *limar* textiles.

Another gem in the collection is the *selendang cindai*, a coarse silk shoulder cloth of the famed double-*ikat* trade textiles from the Indian Gujarati coast dating back to the 18th century.

Used as protective talismanic textiles, double-*ikat* fabrics were highly-prized

court possessions in Kelantan and are testament to historic trade links between India and the Malay peninsula.

According to Henry Bong, founder and chief executive officer of the Pucuk Rebung Group, Malaysian batik and *ikat* are used by international fashion designers while the very same textiles have been largely relegated to souvenir shops.

"This limits the international exposure Malaysian craftsmanship deserves," he said.

"Through these textiles, visitors will witness the artistic cross-cultural pollination which resulted in Malaysia's distinctive, cosmopolitan heritage.

This display encapsulates Malaysia's unique identity and exposes our culture to a wider audience."

Bong believes the best and most credible proponents of Malaysia's artistic and cultural traditions are Malaysians.

"We not only appreciate the

aesthetics of our native textiles, but by incorporating these materials in our daily lives, we are also active participants in the preservation and stylistic evolution of these treasures."

The display will be available for public viewing to all United Nations visitors. Nearly 8,000 visitors pass through the doors of the United Nations every week.

The exhibition will also be expanded to display a fuller repertoire of Malaysian textile masterpieces in the Pucuk Rebung showroom in Suria KLCC later this year to commemorate Malaysia's 50th year of independence.

Incorporated in 1997, Pucuk Rebung is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the best traditional and artistic endeavours across the Malaysian cultural landscape.

It aims to elevate Malaysian art forms to international standards through sharing and education both at home and abroad.

Located on the third floor of Suria KLCC, the Pucuk Rebung Royal Gallery-Museum houses an extensive collection of Malaysian art and artefacts with special focus on old Malay works including antique fabrics, metalwork, jewellery and contemporary art for both the history-loving visitor and the antiques collector.

For more information, call Zaridah Zainal Azman or Jia-yi Loo at 03-2283-2730 or fax 03-2283-2750.



Bong in front of the kain limar songket case at the United Nations main lobby.