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HANDWOVEN SONGKET TO BE SHOWCASED IN PARIS

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THE STAR



KUCHING: Exquisite handwoven *songket* will be showcased on the international stage when Tanoti Sdn Bhd makes its debut at Paris Fashion Week next week. The Sarawak-based *songket* house was selected by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) to be one of 10 Malaysian designers for the Malaysia Fashion Showcase in Paris on Sept 28.

Tanoti will show a selection of *songket* shawls and necklaces from its Luxe Handwoven line on the runway, director Jacqueline Fong said.

“The collection is called Luminesque. We will portray the radiant qualities of gemstones in our *songket* designs and presentation.

“The textile designs are contemporary and edgy, with colours inspired by gemstones such as sapphire, diamond, peridot, citrine and aquamarine,” she told *StarMetro*.

Fong said Tanoti's collection comprised about 30 separate pieces, all handwoven using the peninsula songket technique.

She said the pieces were designed in-house by Tanoti creative director Dr June Ngo, who is also an associate professor from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's applied and creative arts faculty.

"We produced two types of *songket* shawls for the collection - organza, which is slightly stiff and sheer, and soft chiffon. We will have eight looks for the runway in Paris," she said, adding that Tanoti's weavers started working on the collection about two months ago.

After the runway show, Tanoti will take part in an exhibition on Sept 29-20 in Paris, displaying its other fabrics and handwoven leather line.

"The leather collection features our most cutting-edge products, whereby we use the weaving technique with leather strips to give dimension to the songket," Fong said.

By participating in the show, Tanoti aims to introduce the possibilities available to the intricate heritage craft of *songket* beyond its traditional confines.

"We want to show that this cottage industry can enter the world of high fashion on their terms, that songket can be an option for *haute couture* designers, for example.

"We hope to be able to supply to the fashion market bespoke fabrics produced using our precious *songket* technique," Fong said.

This in turn would add value to the pieces created by Tanoti's weavers, a group of women trained in the craft of *songket* weaving.

"Yes, we are empowering women by giving them skills to earn a livelihood while reviving and preserving a heritage craft. But we also want the women we empower to see the value in their work and be recognised as artisans," Fong said.

She added that going to Paris Fashion Week was "exciting and nerve-wracking" at the same time.

"This is Tanoti's first time and we want to create a strong impression on a potential worldwide audience. The message is that Tanoti is about songket renaissance," she said, adding that the Sarawak Tourism Board had come on board as a sponsor of Tanoti's Paris trip.

