

Press release

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Maybank shines spotlight on Iban Weavers and unique *Pua Kumbu* technique

- Also, launches Maybank Women Eco-Weavers' book "*Weaving Communities, Transforming Lives: An ASEAN story*"

Maybank's latest physical Women Eco-Weavers exhibition titled "Threading Hope: A Maybank Women Eco-Weavers Exhibition" spotlights for the first time the weaving technique of *Pua Kumbu* by the Iban community in Sarawak, Malaysia. Four Iban weavers from Rumah Gare in Sarawak will showcase their skills and handwoven textiles at Balai Seni, Maybank in Kuala Lumpur for the duration of the exhibition held from today until 9 December 2022.

Pua Kumbu is a warp-patterned, ceremonial cloth, textile or blanket woven by Iban women on a backstrap loom. However, the term *Pua Kumbu* is commonly associated with the weaving technique that showcases Iban warp ikat (tie-dyeing) designs and motifs. The Iban community typically uses natural ingredients extracted from plants to produce rich dyes.

Meanwhile, the *Pua Kumbu* designs and motifs are said to be influenced by cosmology and spiritual dreams experienced by the weavers, as these weavers are seen as gifted individuals blessed with a skill that allows them to bring to life stories and tales through their artwork. Traditionally, *Pua Kumbu* is used for sacred ceremonies and rites of passages including birth, marriage and funeral as well as healing and farming rituals. It takes a great amount of patience, dedication, care and love to transform a vision or design into the beautiful and skilfully-woven *Pua Kumbu* artworks, which is on display at the "Threading Hope: A Maybank Women Eco-Weavers Exhibition".

Shahril Azuar Jimin, Chief Sustainability Officer of Maybank said this exhibition aims to educate visitors on the history and background of *Pua Kumbu*. "We want to be able to help preserve, share and showcase the unique values, techniques and traditions associated with *Pua Kumbu* to the public. It is important for us to learn and appreciate the various cultures within Malaysia and at the same time, help empower the financial independence of these women eco-weavers."

Aside from featuring the *Pua Kumbu* weaving technique, the exhibition also showcases over 300 products and textiles from other countries where Maybank's Women Eco-Weavers programme is carried out, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Malaysia. The exhibition is aimed at highlighting the importance of economic independence and financial inclusion for women weavers through the production of woven textiles.

At the exhibition, visitors will also have the opportunity to experience weaving demonstrations, partake in 'hands-on' tutorials and gain knowledge on the art of weaving. Visitors can also purchase woven merchandises such as shawls, scarfs, purses, handbags, soap and face masks with prices ranging between RM30 and RM3,000.

Concurrently with this exhibition, Maybank launched a book titled "*Weaving Communities, Transforming Lives: An ASEAN story*", which consolidates narratives, backgrounds and stories from the parties responsible for the success of the Maybank Women Eco-Weavers programme across Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos. It provides readers with a visual experience of the textile weaving process of each country using different lenses.

"What makes this book particularly special is the personal accounts from the weavers themselves interwoven amidst short stories from ASEAN writers. This book is a comprehensive document anchored

on Maybank's mission of Humanising Financial Services. I hope that it will serve as a reference point for those interested to know how a community empowerment programme is able to make a sustainable and meaningful difference in the lives of weavers in the region," said Shariffuddin Khalid, a member of the Maybank Board of Directors. He officiated the launch of the book and exhibition today.

Currently, Maybank is working on producing the e-book version of the book to be made public by early 2023. Proceeds of the e-book will be given to the Maybank Women Eco-Weavers beneficiary partners in the four countries mentioned earlier.

Also present at the launch event were Chairman of Maybank, Tan Sri Dato' Sri Zamzamzairani, Maybank Foundation's Board of Trustee member, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, members of the Maybank Board of Directors and Shahril.

The exhibition will be open to public on weekdays from 9.00am to 5.00pm (Monday to Friday) until 9 December 2023. Admission to Balai Seni Maybank is free.

The Maybank Women Eco-Weavers programme, which is one of Maybank Foundation's flagship programmes, continues to gain traction and reach, and is recognised at the ASEAN level as a programme that promotes textiles globally in a sustainable manner, whilst promoting economic independence and financial inclusion for women weavers across the ASEAN region.

The programme is endorsed and supported by the ASEAN Secretariat as it is an evolving common mission to preserve the region's cultural heritage, create economic empowerment primarily for women, and contribute towards building the ASEAN identity.

Maybank Foundation is the corporate responsibility arm of the Maybank Group, which seeks to positively impact communities in markets that Maybank operates. The Foundation's programmes are focused on six key pillars which are Education, Community Empowerment, Healthy Living, Arts & Culture and Environmental Diversity.
