

August best for nation's sales fest

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 ■ Pictures by S. Sugumaran

HAVING received feedback from various quarters, the Tourism Ministry and Kuala Lumpur City Hall have agreed that August is indeed the best month in the whole year for Malaysia to have its nationwide sale in anticipation of the Merdeka celebration.

A brainchild of Kuala Lumpur Datuk Bandar Datuk Mohamad Shaid Mohd Taufek, the Kuala Lumpur August Festival 2004 aims to lend further support to the mayor's vision of making Kuala Lumpur a "City with A Soul" and "A Garden City of Lights".

The festival is organised with the influx of foreign tourists to Malaysia in mind. This will be an annual signature event that will help support and complement the Mega Sale Carnival.

The three-week festival will kick off on Saturday until the end of the month. It will showcase Malaysian arts, culture, food and lifestyle, which includes music and fashion.

"August and September are the best time for us to exploit. This is one period which promises maximum benefit to retailers, shoppers, hoteliers, travel agents, etc. Al-

though Kuala Lumpur is the gateway to other destinations, together with Penang, it is still the preferred tourist destination especially for those coming from the Middle East," said Mohamad Shaid, adding that the rationale to hold only one Mega Sale Carnival was to cut cost.

During the KLAF2004, one key festival component will be showcased each week at selected venues and supported by pocket or mini venues.

Beginning Saturday until Aug 13, visitors to BB Park can look out for arts-based activities like wood-carving, glass-painting, pewter-making, sculpture and others.

At Bintang Walk from Aug 14 to 20, it's all about culture. There will be shows of *joget lambak*, *wayang kulit*, *mak yong* and games of *congkak* and *gasing* as well as performances depicting the various races of Malaysia.

Food connoisseurs should mark Aug 21 to 26 in their calendars as the Kuala Lumpur Tower will be showcasing some of the best local and international dishes for all to sample. Some of the local delicacies to be featured are *dodol* and *lemang*



Above: **ALL READY:** Mohamad Shaid chatting with a taxi driver at the flag-off ceremony; Below: **WELL-MAPPED OUT:** (from left) Rashid, Mohamad Shaid and Razali with brochures of events lined up for this month.



as well as a bid to make the longest *kebab*.

For music and fashion, hop over to Berjaya Times Square. Shows are slated to be held from 6pm to 10.30pm. On some days, the fun may start earlier.

The KLAF2004 will also be promoted via smart taxis, which are equipped with GIS dispatch management system and an information management system with a help desk, featuring an interactive "KL City Guide" on the places of interest as well as information on shopping, dining and entertainment for tourists.

About 100 smart taxis are carrying the KLAF2004 logo. These taxis are operated by Smart Card Ventures Sdn Bhd.

"The smart taxis are quipped with computerised gadgets that will come in handy for tourists wanting to get around the city," said Mohamad Shaid at a Press conference held recently.

Also present were Malaysia Airlines senior general manager Datuk

Rashid Khan and Tourism Malaysia director Razali Mohd Daud.

The festival will end with a "Batik Gala" fashion show by Yayasan Budi Penayang. However, the time and venue for the show will be announced later.

Rashid said in anticipation of the influx of tourists, MAS had increased flights for this month and next to several cities in China, the Middle East and Stockholm in Sweden.

"In future, we plan to bring world-class entertainers to coincide with the KLAF. Still, with the launch of KLAF2004, it makes it easier for MAS to position Kuala Lumpur as a friendly and safe city among tourists," he said.

Razali said compared with last year, the flow of tourists to Malaysia from January to May this year has increased by 67.9 per cent.

"We have about 6.5 million tourists arriving in the country until May this year as compared with 3.87 million for the same period last year," he said.



NEW LOGO: Some of the 100 taxis which have the KLAF2004 logo to help promote the festival.