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# Souvenirs, gifts and mementos

By ANNA VIVIENNE

**W**henever we visit a place that is a bit far away from home, we will buy souvenirs. We will bring them proudly home and distribute them among our family members and friends. They are usually greeted with exclamations and shrieks of delight, sincere or otherwise.

We also buy souvenirs as mementos of our brief sojourn in another people's land, State or country. Those souvenirs will usually bear the identity of our host country and will remind us of our stay with them.

This is a norm. Everybody does that. Well almost everybody; and as such handicrafts makers and vendors stand to earn a lot from tourists. This can be the main income earner for them.

In Kota Kinabalu those involved in the handicrafts and souvenirs industry are mostly located in the Handicraft Centre, which used to be called the UNCHR Market. This is where you can obtain pearls and crystals, various types of costume jewellery, knick knacks carved from woods and shades.

One of the more settled vendors there is Janna Isa, 47. She has been in the industry for the last 20 years.

"Actually my husband started a small souvenir business before we got married. The variety of items he has then was quite limited, but he worked to make it a success," she shares.

"When we got married, I helped him in his stall. Maybe he saw that I could handle it so he left the running to me. I quite enjoy it and I am very happy with the development of my stalls."

She now has a booth, LOT83, at the centre and she is looking forward to opening a small shop in Kota Kinabalu soon.

On souvenirs as tourism products, she believes that this is an industry with big market potential.

"Whenever tourists come and visit us, we will be able to sell a lot to them. In my booth for instance, they have many choices. There are authentic pearls that cost up to RM20,000 per string and there are key chains and knick knacks that cost RM1.50."

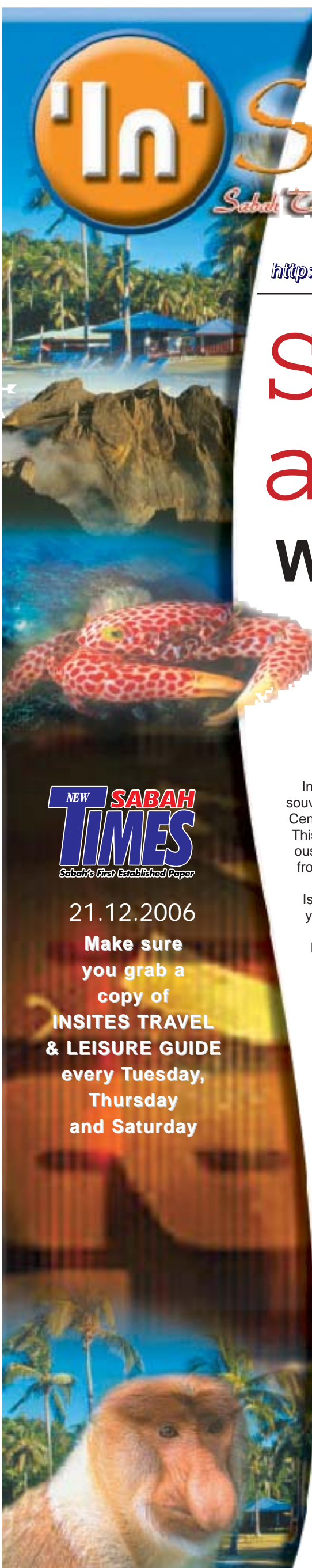
She says she cater for all level of people and believes that she can meet the demands of almost all customers.

"We can also design costume jewellery for our customers. They can walk in and talk to us. We can create a bracelet in ten minutes; we are very adept at this sort of thing. However, we still want ample time to carry out our work and send the finish product to customers."

According to her they are already taking in orders from their customers who range from as far away as Thailand.

"I am aided by five very hard working and skilled staff so I have no problem with meeting our customers' desire," she adds.

Recently she sponsored crystal jewellery to participants of Miss Borneo Beauty Pageant held at the Le Meridian Hotel.



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