



## Ex-crooner turns batik designer

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KOTA KINABALU, Wed. - From singing to batik painting.

One of Sabah's top crooners in the 1970s and 1980s, Rothman Buntar, is now a household name in the batik craft, earning an average of RM30,000 a month. Going by the label "Rothman Batik", his batik creations, mostly inspired by Sabah's natural beauty and diverse culture, are much sought after by locals and foreigners. Many of them find his batik to be unique.

His favourite batik paintings are based on the colourful Murut culture and Sabah's rich marine life and plants.

So popular are his batik creations that his factory in Kampung Marabhai in Tuaran has become a tourist attraction.

"Tour operators have included a visit to my factory as part of the itinerary for tourists going to Mount Kinabalu or for white water rafting in Kiulu," said 56-year-old Rothman.

"The factory is by the road leading to Mount Kinabalu and Kiulu."

His interest in batik painting began after meeting such painters in Kuala Lumpur in 1981 and seeing their works.

"Art was my favourite subject in school and I told myself I should give batik painting a try," he said, adding that a local event company, Bronz Music, was helping to promote his batik creation.

Eager to learn the ropes, he visited batik factories in Kelantan and Johor.

He stopped singing in 1983 and opened a small batik workshop in Selangor.

In 1989 he decided to return to Sabah and opened a batik workshop in Luyang.

Rothman attributed the success of his business to his popularity as a singer.

He was the leader of the group called Nada Sukma which won the coveted Bintang RTM title in 1977.

The group, comprising Kadazandusun singing legend, the late John Gaisah, Halil Ahmad Noor and Awang Shaari Noor, was regularly featured over TV and radio after winning the title.

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