

Purring *with.* passion

> It all boils down to love – of the feline variety – for Malaysia Cats Fancier Association president Ismail Mohd Ali

BY SHARON WONG

ISMAIL Mohd Ali grew up surrounded by cats – strays brought home by his late policeman father. But his business and frequent travels prevented him from having cats in his adult life.

It was not until a couple of Persians caught his fancy in 2000 that his passion was reignited. One thing led to another and he started a breeding programme. Today, Ismail has more than 12 breeds and over 100 cats with numerous world champions among them.

In 2009, Ismail started the Malaysia Cats Fancier Association (MCFA), a non-profit organisation dedicated to the welfare of this animal, with the objective of gathering cat lovers, local breeders and industry players under one roof and to put Malaysia on the map as a producer of world-class breeds.

To this end, MCFA is running an international judging programme for local cat judges. “We hope to groom Malaysia’s first international cat judge and many more in the future,” said Ismail.

“Then we will be able to hold cat shows every month and the industry can grow. The problem now is the lack of local judges as it is expensive to fly in judges from overseas.”

According to Ismail, the first criterion to becoming an international cat judge is to be a breeder, and after that, own cats that have been judged supreme grand champions.

Only then can they sign on for the judge training programme where they will be tested by international instructors from Europe.

MCFA also holds lectures and seminars, organises international cat shows as well as hosts international cat competitions.

Last Friday, it teamed up with Viva Home Shopping Mall in Kuala Lumpur to showcase famous cat breeds in Malaysia at the mall’s ground floor centre court.

Themed *Love Inspiration for Hope and Happiness*, the MCFA Cat Exhibition 2012, which ends today, showcases over 100 cats from 20 breeds such as the Savannah, Bengal, American Short Hair, American Curl, British Short Hair, Persian, Exotic Short Hair, Russian Blue, Maine Coon and Burmese, among others.

On show are also award winners like Putera Teardrop Potway, a four-year-old Bengal which was judged world’s best Bengal of 2011; and two-year-old Imakatz Tiger Speed Rider, the 2010 supreme grand champion.

Putera’s grandson, eight-month-old Wira Agong Black Knight Stallion (nicknamed Bubur), is owned by Mohd Radhi Cheah.

A cat breeder for two-and-a-half years, he now has 13 cats. “My family started [the breeding business] just for the love of cats,” he



(from top) Mohd Radhi with his beloved Bubur; and Viva Home general manager Kenny Chin and Ismail with Pussy Cat Doll, a three-year-old Bengal Leopard cat.

said. “They are not so much a business as pets to us. But even if we do sell one, we will interview the potential owner to ensure that the cat is going to a good home.”

According to Ismail, each breed has its own profile and a winner is chosen based on the setting of its eyes, ears, muzzle, jaw, skull, bone structure, body build and balance.

“The most important is the animal’s bone structure, which stems from its DNA,” he said. The pattern on the cat’s fur, which is usually the first thing that attracts a person, actually comes third in importance.

The cat must also be well behaved and not bite or it will be disqualified. Thus love, said Ismail, is very important.

“Owners must shower their cats with love and also allow the animals to socialise and get used to strangers. That’s part of being a champion in the making.”

The MCFA Cat Exhibition 2012 also features a cat drawing and colouring contest, cat batik colouring contest and a talk on cat breeds. There is also a display of cat and batik paintings by a local artist.