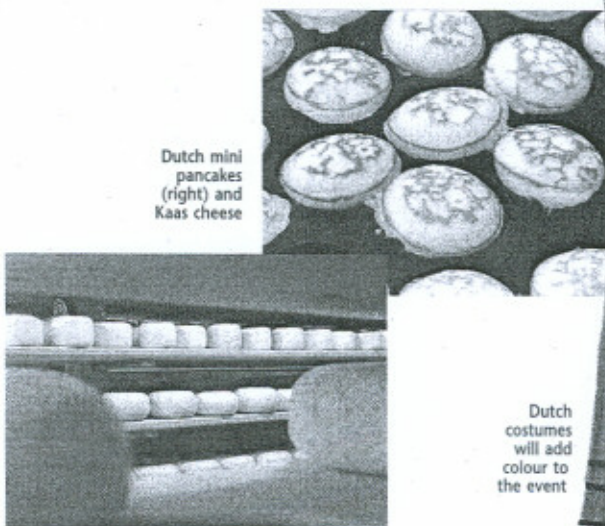




Delft Blue porcelain painter will demonstrate the craft



Dutch mini pancakes (right) and Kaas cheese

Dutch costumes will add colour to the event

## Go Dutch for a week

Holland Days In Melaka will show Malaysians that there are more than just tulips in that country, writes **ANIS RAMLI**

WITH Malaysia's 50th birthday coming up, it is not just the nation that has gotten itself excited. The Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, for example, is joining in the celebrations to mark half a century of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The embassy has organised Holland Days In Melaka from Sept 1-9, 2007, a week-long celebration of all things Dutch that promises to be fun, fun, fun!

"The original idea for Holland Days In Melaka came from the general manager of the Melaka Museums Corporation, Haji Khamis Abas," explained Luc Schillings, Deputy Head of Mission. "Ambassador Lody Embrechts discussed this with Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam and Mayor Datuk Zaini Md Nor, who immediately responded enthusiastically," he said.

Besides showcasing the many traditional Dutch products and traditions, Holland Days is also part of the embassy's year-long series of events under its Holland, More Than Tulips theme, organised in conjunction with Malaysia's 50th year of independence.

This, said Schillings, was to get Malaysians to get to know more about The Netherlands.

The week will see a host of events that include Dutch menus at selected cafes and restaurants, Delft Blue pottery painting, traditional Dutch costumes and souvenirs, as well as special Dutch performances. Most of the events will take place at Malacca's Dutch Square, while Dutch cuisine can be sampled at participating restaurants — Dutch Harbour Café and The Windmill Station.

"The most well-known Dutch specialties are pea soup, hutsput (mashed potatoes with carrots and onions and braised beef), croquettes (beef ragout encased in breadcrumbs and deep fried), oliebolien (beignets), poffertjes (mini pancakes) and stroopwafels (waffles with syrup)," said Schillings.

Visitors can sample some of the food at the Dutch Market, while participating restaurants will be serving typical Dutch breakfast (chocolate

sprinkles on white bread, pancakes with Dutch syrup, brown bread with cheese), Dutch chicken soup, Dutch tomato soup, Haché (stewed steak) with braised red cabbage, chicken fillet with orange sauce and classic Dutch meatballs.

The newly-opened Dutch Harbour Cafe will also serve typical Dutch specialties, such as Dutch cheese and bitterballen (similar to croquettes, but shaped like a ball) during the month of September. Additionally, there will also be a cooking demonstration by Celine Marbeck at the Quayside Cafe on Sept 8 and 9.

One particularly interesting activity that will help visitors understand Netherlands' rich culture is Delft Blue porcelain painting. Delft Blue is as Dutch as tulips, clogs and gouda cheese. The familiar blue-and-white, with its rich paintings of flowers on vases and pastoral landscape on dishes, has its origins in the 17th century, which was also known as the Dutch Golden Era. It was created from the original decoration of Chinese porcelain during the Ming dynasty imported during the era, hence explaining its shared likeness. With the co-operation of the Malaysian Dutch Business Council (MDBC), well-known Delft Blue painter, Martin v.d Berg, will be at the Dutch Market daily for a demonstration as well as taking custom made orders.

Holland Days will also celebrate one of Holland's famous sons, Rembrandt. Rembrandt van Rijn is an original act on the life and works of Rembrandt, staged via painting demos, sketches, talks and performances. Visitors will have the chance to see world-famous paintings such as The Nightwatch and The Masters of the Cloth Guild come to life during the weekend of September 8 and 9.

Malacca, said Schillings, was the obvious choice as host city for the Holland Days as the city has played a vital role for the Netherlands as a major trade hub for the Dutch East India Company, for nearly 200 years between 1641 and 1825. "To this day, many of the most visible buildings like the Stadhuyts town hall and Christ Church are built by the Dutch. There are also quite a few Malaysian Eurasian descendants of the Dutch living in Malacca. In fact, the launch of Holland Days will appropriately be held at the Dutch Square," Schillings explained.

Noticeably absent though, will be Holland's famous tulips. "We would have loved to have them, but the tulip season is between the end of March and the end of May," Schillings said, apologetically. Still there will still be a flower booth at the Dutch Square, decorated with typical Dutch items, including artificial tulips.

While Schillings agree that tulips, windmills and wooden shoes have all become well-known symbols of The Netherlands, "if you don't count Van Nistelrooij or other Dutch football players!", he still believes that visitors will enjoy Holland Days and hopes "Malaysians will be able to get to know more about The Netherlands and the ties that bind us."

More information on Holland Days can be found by logging on to the embassy's website [www.netherlands.org.my](http://www.netherlands.org.my)