

# INSIGHT

WTC COMMUNITY WEEKLY



## HOW IT'S MADE

## Batik

Whether you're Indonesian or a foreigner living in Indonesia, there's a good chance you have a piece of *batik* clothing in your wardrobe. It's so versatile it can be used on pretty much all occasions.

The word *batik* derives from the Javanese words *amba* ('to write') and *titik* ('dot'). In definition, batik is a process of creating intricate patterns on textiles with wax-resistant dyes.

In October 2009, UNESCO designated Indonesian batik as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. To celebrate this, National Batik Day was initiated on October 2 and it has become the Friday dress code on government offices and private companies ever since.

To date, there are over 2,500 patented batik patterns in the country such as *kawung*, *parang*, and *mega mendung*. What's your favourite?

- A cloth is washed, soaked and beaten with a large mallet.
- Patterns are drawn with pencil and later redrawn using hot wax made from a mixture of paraffin or beeswax, sometimes mixed with plant resins, which functions as a dye-resist.
- The wax can be applied with a variety of tools. A pen-like instrument called a *canting* is the most common.
- After the cloth is dry, the resist is removed by boiling or scraping the cloth. The areas treated with resist keep their original colour; when the resist is removed the contrast between the dyed and undyed areas forms the pattern.
- This process is repeated as many times as the number of colours desired.

**Yours trully,**  
the community editor