

## Craftsman spins his way to the top

**KOTA BARU:** More than three decades ago, Ismail Mohamed gave up his secure job as an officer at a telecommunications company to preserve his family legacy.

He decided to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather who were well-known top (*gasing*) makers and spinners in Kelantan.

The father-of-five has earned a reputation for being at the top of his game.

He is not only an expert at making the saucer-shaped top (*gasing piring*) that Kelantan is famous for, but also a champion spinner.

Ismail, 63, who is better known by his moniker Abang Nor Gasing, has produced more than 5,000 *gasing piring* since 1984 when he took

over the family trade following the death of his father.

Since becoming a *gasing* craftsman, Ismail has gotten a handful of orders from various parties, including government departments.

His handcrafted tops are priced between RM350 and RM5,000 apiece, depending on their design.

To ensure the traditional art of top spinning remains alive, Ismail willingly shares his knowledge and expertise to those interested.

Every year, university students carrying out research on traditional games will visit him at his workshop to learn about top spinning.

He also trains new talents who show an interest in the game.

"However, not everyone can

master the skills required to create a good top or become an outstanding *gasing piring* spinner," Ismail said when met at his home at Kampung Padang Bemban here where his workshop is located.

While a keen interest in the game is important, the player must also have dexterity to launch his top in such a way that it falls directly onto the hands of the "scooper" (the person who catches the "flying" top).

And, how long the top whirrs is part of the game, he said.

"Scooping the *gasing piring* after a launch is not easy as the disc can weigh as much as 4kg," said Ismail, who is often invited to participate in top-spinning contests in Malaysia and overseas. — Bernama



**Perfecting the spin:** Ismail spinning his tops in order to test their balance at his home in Kampung Padang Bemban, Kelantan. — Bernama