

11/01/1998

Songkok maker Sardi's head for business

BOOMING BUSINESS ... One of the most-sought after "accessories" by Muslim men for the Hari Raya Puasa festival is the traditional Malay headgear called the songkok.

It is used to complement the Baju Melayu which is worn especially on the first day of Hari Raya, to the mosque and for attending open houses.

It is not surprising to see many making a beeline for shops or stalls selling the headgear during months leading to Hari Raya.

One such businessman who is enjoying brisk business is Sardi Dahar, 39 (picture) of Pekan Rabu in Alor Star.

Sardi said the puasa month was the busiest for songkok makers as most, if not all, Muslim men always made it a point to buy a new one to celebrate Hari Raya.

"Business always doubles during the puasa month and I have to work extra long hours to cope with demand," he said, adding that he could make an average of 10 songkok per day.

Sardi, who inherited the business from his father, Dahar Dato, has been making and selling the headgear for the last 19 years.

He said making the songkok has been their family vocation for a long time.

"My grandfather was a songkok maker with quite a reputation in his hometown in Sumatra.

"He passed on the tricks of the trade to my father, who migrated to Malaysia in the 1940s, and later taught me how to make the headgear," he said.

Living up to the family reputation, Sardi himself now commands a reputation of making fine quality songkoks.

His long list of clients range from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, ministers, politicians and ordinary folk.

Most, if not all, songkok buyers in Alor Star know of Sardi's shop and have at one time or another purchased the headgear from him. Prices for songkoks made by Sardi range from RM15.50 to RM55, while pint-sized songkok for children are priced at RM9.50 onwards.

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