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Painter needs help to finish mural on nation's history

WITH little over a month to go, painter Ismail Salim is desperate for help to finish a mural depicting major events in Malaysia's history.

The 35-metre long mural "Sejarah Malaysia" is on display at Level 4 of the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

The section he is working on, "2003", covers the period when Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi succeeds Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister.

Ismail, 50, has also included in his mural the upcoming meeting of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) members here next February as well as the meeting of members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

"I want to finish this (mural) in January before the NAM delegates arrive," he said.

He also has to write a piece in Bahasa Malaysia and English on the events in the mural.

"There is just too much to do and not enough time," Ismail said, in welcoming help from novice painters.

The mural begins with a panel of key events in Malaya in 1940.

Ismail has done panels of major events for every year since then, with the last finished panel being 1999.

He started the mural in 1990 by delving into the country's history, and staying abreast with the latest news to get new ideas.

"It's not just about painting, I also have to do research."

He started work on the last four panels - "2000", "2001", "2002" and "2003" - two weeks ago, working past midnight everyday.

For 2002, he has done a segment on Dr Mahathir's visit to the Vatican City to meet Pope John Paul II.

Ismail, from Kuala Lumpur, studied art in the United Kingdom and has worked as an artist all his life.