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Labour of love: Iskandar showing his Merdeka mural on a wall in Taman Saujana, Johor Baru.

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Artist paints Tunku's portrait for Merdeka mural

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JOHOR BARU: *Bapa Kemerdekaan* (Father of Independence) Tunku Abdul Rahman – the country's first Prime Minister – is synonymous with Aug 31.

However, for artist Iskandar Noor Rahim, it was still a challenge to capture his likeness for a mural on a wall along Jalan Saujana 1/9,

Taman Saujana, here.

Iskandar, better known as Akeem, said he had been encouraged by his friends and neighbours to paint a portrait in conjunction with Merdeka Day.

“I was doing some research and got inspired by Tunku Abdul Rahman as one of the founding fathers and immediately started doing some sketches.

“Although I specialise in portraits

and characters, painting him was challenging.

“I needed to get his look accurately so that whenever people pass by the wall, they can immediately recognise him,” he said in an interview here yesterday.

Besides the portrait, Iskandar used 15 different colours for a series of swirls on top of the number “59”.

It took the 36-year-old some 10 hours to finish the mural, which he

started last Thursday night.

Iskandar, who was among the 10 artists who painted under the #tana-airku Merdeka campaign by Petronas in Jalan Dhoby here last year, said he inherited his skill from his father.

“But my father only painted as a hobby and not for income,” said the second of three siblings, who started showing his interest in art when he was five years old.