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An old newspaper cutting of Balakrishnan and his eldest son presenting a portrait of Tunku Abdul Rahman to the latter in Bukit Tunku in 1982.



Balakrishnan's scrapbook of his first solo art exhibition in 1968 which was opened by then Ipoh Municipality president Dato S.P. Seenivasagam

# A painting for the PM

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Veteran artist Bala yearns to present a portrait of Tun Razak that he completed in 1976 to Najib

IPOH

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JAN 14 marked exactly four decades since former prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein passed away.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of his passing, artist K. Balakrishnan, 75, is hoping to present a portrait of the nation's Father of Development to his son, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The oil painting was completed in 1976. When our current prime minister took office in 2009, I had wanted to present it to him at his office in Putrajaya.

"My son and I made a trip there but unfortunately arrived there late and the place was already closed.

"Hopefully, one day I will be able to make an appointment to meet the prime minister and tell him what a proud son he must be to have such a great man as a father," Balakrishnan said at his Taman Pertama home in Ipoh.

Balakrishnan said he had been inspired by Tun Abdul Razak's bravery in overthrowing the Communists and his wisdom in leading the country.

"In fact, the green background of the portrait symbolises the Rancangan Buku Hijau launched by Tun Abdul Razak to increase the country's food production," he added.

Volunteering as a social worker after retiring from the printing industry, Balakrishnan had previously presented his paintings to several notable figures including former Penang chief minister Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu and People's Republic of China founding father Mao

Zedong through the Chinese embassy in 1978.

"On the eve of National Day in 1982, my eldest son, who was then four, and I presented to our Father of Independence, Tunku Abdul Rahman, a portrait of him, which I had painted in 1968, at his residence in Bukit Tunku.

"In return, Tunku gave me an autographed copy of his book," Balakrishnan said proudly.

A keen artist from an early age, Balakrishnan never had the chance to pursue his love for the arts until much later in life.

"In between work and taking care of family, I managed to come up with a few paintings and even held a solo art exhibition in 1968.

"But it was not until my three sons were grown up and had started their respective careers that I was able to spend all my time painting.

"It finally worked out," said Balakrishnan, who had to take care and provide for his children single-handedly after his wife passed away.

These days, with his dog as companion, Balakrishnan spends his mornings painting, immersing himself in his beautiful works of art for three to four hours at a time.

"I don't just paint portraits, I also love doing sceneries, political cartoons and modern art. I have also drawn several murals for churches and schools.

"Right now, I am focusing on coming up with more paintings for my second solo art exhibition.

"I aim to complete 50 paintings by hopefully the end of this year. I am halfway there.

Also a keen poet, Balakrishnan said inspirations usually come to him in the wee hours of the morning.

"Midnight to 2am is my 'thinking time'," he said.

Asked if his age was any hindrance at all, Balakrishnan said: "I don't think age is a barrier. I love painting. It keeps me alive."



Balakrishnan with his painting of Tun Abdul Razak at his home in Taman Pertama, Ipoh.



Balakrishnan showing his oil paintings of classical Hindu tales. — Photos: RONNIE CHIN/The Star