

Khat Calligrapher From Baling Produces "waticah" For Agong's Installation
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 4 (Bernama) -- Although considered young at age 38 as a "royal" calligrapher, Abdul Baki Abu Bakar already has much experience in producing the "waticah" (instruments of appointment) for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong since 2002.

Istana Negara has given the "khat" (Arabic) calligrapher who had produced the Malaysian Quran Manuscript in 1999, the responsibility to prepare four special documents in conjunction with the installation of Kedah Sultan Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah as the 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on April 11.

The four "waticah" are the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's speech, oath, "doa" and installation declaration.

Abdul Baki, who has more than 16 years' experience in khat calligraphy, said the "waticah" would be handwritten on goatskin parchment using "diwani", "thuluth" and "nasakh" Jawi calligraphy.

"The task takes a week to complete as goatskin is rather slippery in texture with tiny bumps on the surface, so I have to be very careful," the entrepreneur from Baling, Kedah told Bernama.

"The waticah are written on goatskin to ensure they last for hundreds of years," added the owner of Diwani Kraf.

Abdul Baki explained that the preparation involved a few stages, starting with a pencil sketch of the script to prevent mistakes and to balance the writing.

"After that, it will be checked by a palace (Istana Negara) representative before the last stage of writing with a special pen called "batang resam" and using the best waterproof ink from Japan," he said.

Abdul Baki was also involved in the preparation of such documents for the installations of the 12th and 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail in 2002 and Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin in 2007 respectively.

At the time, he was senior executive calligrapher at Yayasan Restu, a foundation which was given the task to prepare the "waticah" and invitations to the installation ceremony.

For the upcoming installation, Diwani Kraf has also been entrusted with the 15 invitations to all the Sultans, Sultan of Brunei Darussalam Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Yang Dipertua Negeri and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Abdul Baki said each invitation would be handwritten with "diwani" and "nasakh" khat calligraphy.

He said his creativity had been recognised abroad through winning calligraphy competitions in Algeria, Brunei Darussalam and Turkey, among others.

And his services had also been sought for engravings on several mosques and famous buildings in Malaysia and abroad.

They included the Ar-Rahman Mosque in Baltimore, United States, the Al-Hidayah Mosque in Sentul, Darul Ehsan Palace in Putrajaya and the throne room of Istana Shah Alam.

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