

Photograph of Pak Lah draws many to Abdullah's sewing shop
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KEPALA BATAS: A photograph of former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is the first thing to greet anyone who enters a tailor shop here.

However, the shop does not belong to the former premier.

It is owned by Abdullah Ahmad and the photo shows Abdullah taking measurements of Abdullah.

Abdullah, 64, said he was fortunate that their paths crossed when he custom-made a baju Melayu for Abdullah back in 1986.

"Tun, who was the defence minister then, had returned to his Kepala Batas parliamentary constituency to open Mara complex, where my tailor shop was located.

"I casually asked him if he would like me to sew him a baju Melayu, and surprisingly, he said yes," he said yesterday.

Abdullah, who has been in the tailoring business for 36 years, said many customers came to him, especially to have their Hari Raya outfits sewn, after being drawn to the photograph.

"Of course, my sewing, too, must have met their expectations. Otherwise, I would not have so many loyal customers," he said in jest.

He said his baju Melayu orders for Hari Raya had begun pouring in as early as January, noting that he received orders for up to 250 pairs a month.

He said he usually stopped taking orders three months before Hari Raya to meet his deadline and complete the orders in hand on time.

Abdullah, who is assisted by his wife Noor Ijah Yusuf, 50, and worker Nur Liyana Mohd Suki, said during Ramadan, they often worked their sewing machines till past midnight.

Back in the 80s, he said, he also sewed uniforms for Tenaga Nasional and other government agencies, but since 1997, he decided to concentrate on sewing traditional baju Melayu.

"Nowadays, people prefer to bring their own material, and my sewing charges are RM80 for silky material and RM70 for non-silky material," he said.

He said he usually charged between RM100 and RM200 per outfit for those who selected the material from his shop, adding that he often sourced for material from Taiping and Alor Setar.

Abdullah said the former premier still remembered him when they met a few years later.

"I am a little shy to meet him now. But I am thankful that he graced my shop and I am also grateful to all my customers for remaining loyal to me," he said.

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