

# 'It will be a hit with the youngsters'

## Kompong maker determined to keep art alive despite poor profits

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**JOHOR BARU:** Despite the small profit, Mokhtar A. Hamid is determined that his traditional *kompong*-making business will strike a chord with the younger generations.

Mokhtar, 40, said he wanted to keep alive the craft that was passed down from his late father.

"It was not until my secondary school years that I started making my first *kompong*. This led to my desire to continue my father's work," he said in an interview.

He said he picked up the skill when he was a young boy in Segamat observing and helping his father create the traditional Malay musical instrument from scratch.

When he got married and settled down in Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Mokhtar made

*kompong* as a side business in 2006 while working as a factory employee.

Three years ago, he started making *kompong* on a full-time basis.

He decided then to focus all his time and energy into the craft with the help of three workers at his workshop in Parit Raja.

"I quit my job for this because I wanted to maintain the quality of the *kompong* similar to my late father's standards even though it is being mass produced now," he said.

Each day, he said his workshop could produce 15 to 20 pieces of the instrument, made from a wooden ring and goatskin.

Each *kompong* typically takes two days to complete.

He said the process began with shaping and hollowing the centre of a round piece of wood, which he sourced from an orang asli village in Pahang.

The goatskin has to be soaked in water

and chalk powder overnight to soften it.

Then it is sun-dried for eight hours the next day before it is pegged and nailed to the wooden frame according to the desired size and tune.

Mokhtar said he managed to reach a wide customer base through marketing and promoting it on various social media channels and websites.

"It costs about RM45 to make a *kompong* but I am only selling it at about RM55 to RM65 depending on the quantity ordered."

"I have to compete with the cheaper Indonesian-made *kompong* that are imported into the country," he said, adding that he was thankful that he could sell about 350 pieces a month.

A big challenge for him was the costly raw materials as the goatskin had to be bought from Kelantan, he said.

The father of four said his children had also shown interest in the craft.



**Master at work:** Mokhtar pegging goatskin onto a wooden frame before nailing it down.