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Ruler with the people at heart

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IT was amidst great splendour and pomp that Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Alhaj, 73, known to be the "Peoples' Ruler" for his concerns for the people of Selangor in good times and bad, was appointed the 11th Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on April 26.

Born on March 8, 1926, coinciding 22nd Syaaban 1344 (according to the Muslim calendar), His Majesty was appointed the new King when the 10th Yang Di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar, the Negri Sembilan Ruler, completed his five-year term as Supreme head of the Federation on April 25.

It would be exactly 40 days into his term as the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong when His Majesty celebrates his official birthday on June 5.

Within those 40 days, His Majesty as the Supreme head of the Federation had performed notable duties at the Istana Negara, among which were the presentation of appointment letters to the Federal Court to Court of Appeal judges Datuk Abu Mansor Ali and Datuk Abdul Malek Ahmad.

His Majesty also granted an audience to Iraqi vice-president Taha Yasseen Ramadhan, and handed appointment letters to three new ministers and a deputy minister.

His Majesty handed the appointment letters to Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, 60, as Information Minister, Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, 59, as Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister and Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, 46, as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Datuk Mohd Shafie Apdal, 41, received his appointment as the new Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government.

His Majesty also received the credentials of the new Nigerian High Commissioner to Malaysia Mahmud Abdullah on May 26.

The highlight was when the Federal Government conferred the Darjah Kebesaran Yang Maha Utama Kerabat DiRaja Malaysia on His Majesty on May 28.

The Federal award was bestowed on the King by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a ceremony in Istana Negara.

At the same ceremony, the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah was conferred the Darjah Kebesaran Darjah Utama Seri Mahkota Negara.

His Majesty, noted for his warm smiles and deep concern for the welfare of the people, is very much in touch with the developments in the State and country.

Where Selangor is concerned, His Majesty has been the guiding force behind the many development programmes undertaken by the State Government as he offers his advice when they were sought by State leaders.

His Highness is the eldest son of His Royal Highness the late Sultan Sir Hisamuddin Alam Shah Alhaj and Her Royal Highness the late Raja Hajah Jemaah binti Raja Ahmad, Tengku Ampuan of Selangor.

His Majesty was educated in a background steeped in tradition and Malay customs. He was guided according to palace customs, taught the religious norms, and orientated with the Malay principles and customs within the Royal Family.

The Malay school, Pengkalan Batu, Klang was where His Majesty learnt the worldly subjects like history, mathematics, language, geography and art. In 1934, while as an eight-year-old, he started mixing freely with the common people, especially of his class and school.

At that time, the official residence of the Sultan was Mahkota Palace in Klang.

His Highness studied at Pengkalan Batu, Klang for only two years. In 1936, he was transferred to the Malay College Kuala Kangsar to face a more challenging educational world.

His Highness was educated in this elite centre of education for only six years because in 1941, the Second World War erupted.

The Japanese occupied the Malay States and his studies were disrupted and had to go back to Klang to stay with his parents at the Jama'iah Palace until the Pacific War ended.

His special position as a prince in Selangor opened opportunities to His Majesty to further his studies.

In August 1947, he left the country to further his studies in London. At first, while staying at Earl's Court, His Highness entered a private school. After that, he was transferred to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, to study public administration and the English language.

And as a student there, he mixed freely with a few students from the Malay states, who later became prominent politicians, lawyers, educationists and industrialists in this country.

Among them were the late honourable Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj, the late Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein and Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz.

His Majesty was reported to be active in the activities of the Malay Society of Great Britain. The education he received and his association with his colleagues helped him face the challenges in his future career.

His return to Selangor after studies saw him plunging straight into public administration by holding several positions in the palace and government.

On May 13, 1950, at the age of 24 and while holding the post of administrative officer in the Selangor administration, His Majesty was made the Raja Muda.

His Majesty always took time to follow his father on official visits to various places, areas, districts, and villages in his State, being present at official functions organised by the government and various institutions and mixing freely with the people.

He was always interested in the changes and progress in the State, noting the dissemination of Islam, the living standard of the Malays, and learning of the structure and style of government, organisations, administrative bodies and the public sector.

He also showed interest in welfare bodies like social clubs, associations, and public organisations.

This attitude and character greatly influenced His Majesty to this day. It was always stated that if there is a King or a Sultan in Malaysia who is vocal, clear in criticising something which is not right, or praising something that is right, then it must be his Royal Highness.

On March 10, 1956, he was engaged to Tengku Rahimah binti Sultan Abdul Aziz, a cousin of his Royal Highness (his father's side) and two years later in 1958, she was appointed the Raja Puan Muda (Crown princess) of Selangor.

His Majesty was proclaimed the Sultan of Selangor on Sept 3, 1960.

His Majesty has six other brothers and sisters. They are the late Tengku Laksamana Tengku Badli Shah Alhaj, Tengku Bendahara Tengku Azman Shah Alhaj, Tengku Besar Putera Tengku Ismail Shah Alhaj, Tengku Ampuan Besar Terengganu Tengku Hajah Bariah, Tengku Taksiah and Tengku Raudzah.

The marriages between the Selangor Royal Family and the Royal families of other states bonded their relationships.

The sharing of his life with three of his wives has granted His Majesty ten children - four princes and six princesses.

His princes are the Regent of Selangor Tengku Idris Shah, Tengku

Panglima Diraja Tengku Sulaiman Shah Alhaj, Tengku Panglima Besar Tengku Abdul Samad Shah and Tengku Ahmad Shah.

His princesses are Tengku Puteri Safiah, Tengku Puteri Zakariah, Tengku Puteri Arafiah, Tengku Puteri Aishah, Tengku Puteri Nor Marina and Tengku Puteri Nor Zihan.

Presently, at 73, His Majesty's princes and princesses are actively involved in industry, culture, arts, sports, welfare, economy and social fields.

In the chronology of Sultans who has administered Selangor, His Majesty is the eighth titular head to hold the post.

His Majesty is the direct descendent of the late Sultan Salehuddin (Raja Lumu or Marhum Salleh), the first influential figure to be the ruler of Selangor and who administered Malay sultanate from 1765 to 1778.

According to the recent recorded descendants, His Majesty is the direct descendant of the Bugis Rulers and the Bugis Royal Family, originally from south-west Sulawesi.

Selangor experienced many changes in social, culture, economy, welfare, arts, and government over the centuries.

All these experiences has gone to shaped the development of the State and its people.

And Selangor is indeed the fastest developing and most populated State in the country. The State has now a vision of becoming fully industrialised by the year 2005.

The smooth State administration under the capable hands of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar is set to achieve the vision with the co-operation of the leaders and the people.

However, it cannot be disputed that the driving force of Selangor's success is also His Majesty, who is always kept abreast of the events taking place in the State.

And he freely expresses his views, opinions and ideas on how to further expedite the rapid developments which he strongly believes would benefit the people in the State over the long run.

Anything that benefits the people, His Majesty is in support of them. But when the people faces hardships, he is there amidst them to get to the root of their problem and find solutions with the co-operation of the State Government.

This was clearly seen when His Majesty returned from overseas after his second heart surgery last year. He promptly expressed his unhappiness on learning that the people of State were suffering without water due to drought.

His Majesty, who was supposed to be resting before taking over his official duties, never hesitated to go to the ground to find out how best to resolve the water problem.

The attention of the Ruler led the State Government to quickly undertake short and long term measures to ensure that the people had access to water even when their taps ran dry.

Under His Majesty reign, Selangor is fast witnessing balanced development in all sectors and both in rural and urban areas, resulting in people benefiting from improved amenities and facilities wherever they reside.

The mega projects in Selangor also created employment for the people, raised their monthly income, improved education opportunities for the children and in fact, helped uplift the living standards of many over the years.

There are now 3.2 million people in Selangor and the population is steadily increasing every year, especially around the Klang Valley, Gombak, Shah Alam and Klang.

Given the high demands of a State under intense development, His Majesty does not hesitate to criticise government officers and staff who are weak and careless in discharging their duties, especially when they are slow in implementing government policies, particularly those which involve socio-economic development.

His Majesty is known for venting out his frustrations at local government authorities in the State on such matters as cleanliness, and always eager to push ahead infrastructural development of towns or districts and even the villages.

He strongly supports the slogan "Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy" for government staff, as proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

When the Federal Government launched the campaign to wipe out the drug menace in this country, His Majesty issued a statement that he would not lend mercy to any Selangor `rakyat' sentenced to death for dadah-related activities.

The distinct voice of His Majesty in various issues that did not satisfy him, is heard not only through his speech in ceremonies or official functions but also conveyed through the mass media.

Recently, he told Malaysians to be wary of those using sophisticated information technology to slander others. He said this could pose a threat to unity and harmony among the people.

He urged the people not to believe such slander without verifying the facts.

His Majesty said: "Remember that slander is prohibited by Islam and is worse than murder. I hope those in and outside the Government take immediate steps to overcome this menace which can threaten the nation and State's security besides placing both in unstable situations."

His Majesty is indeed a man who has the nation and people at heart and does not want any internal or external force to disrupt the peace, tranquility, harmony, political and social stability and most importantly the economic growth of the country.

cleanliness as he says uncleanliness brings many problems including outbreak of diseases such as dengue, Japanese encephalitis and Nipah virus.

His Majesty had stressed that there was always room for improvement where cleanliness was concerned. He also felt that certain parts of the State were still dirty.

His Majesty is also a Ruler who never hesitates to give credit to those who deserved it.

During his recent 73rd birthday celebration, he said he was happy that Selangor under the leadership of Abu Hassan has come up with several innovative policies and strategies through the Selangor Economic Action Council to overcome the economic downturn.

He also praised Abu Hassan for his "Tonggak 10" which is used as a guiding tool towards achieving the Vision 2005.

His Majesty, who ensures that development projects are carried out swiftly, smoothly, efficiently and fulfil their objectives, usually visits project sites privately.

He usually goes, accompanied by top government officials, to visit the development areas, and seek solutions if there are weaknesses in the project.

During his younger days, he would even ride a bicycle to visit those areas. If he had to walk to reach those places, be it rain or shine, he would also do that.

It must also be emphasised that His Majesty gives much stress to the Islamic religion being the Head of the Islamic state.

As a Ruler who holds firmly and believes in the democratic principles and the constitutional monarchy, His Majesty is a person who obeys and adheres to the Malay customs that has been passed down for centuries in Selangor.

His Majesty is also a person who is interest in scholastic affairs and education.

He is a Ruler who wishes to meet, to get to know, to mix freely, and to hold discussions with any of his subjects, regardless of the time and the place, and their creed and religion.

His Majesty always advises the youths in the country to respect the aged as well as their parents. This is because he realised that in many areas, the generation gap between the young and old has widened.

Many of the young people no longer follow their cultural or traditional practices.

His Majesty also wants parents to guide their children, by providing them with education as he stresses that education forms the foundation for the development of good values and attributes essential to a happy life.

His ardent hope is that young people would avoid using drugs or get involved in anti-national activities, and also not get trapped by unhealthy influences.

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