

10/01/2004

New Sultanah of Kedah crowned

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ALOR STAR, Fri. - Che Puan Kedah Haminah Hamidun was today made the Sultanah of Kedah at a ceremony steeped in the royal tradition of the Kedah Sultanate at Istana Anak Bukit here.

A 21-gun salute was sounded as the Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, placed the royal tiara on Sultanah Haminah at the Balai Penghadapan this morning.

Sultanah Haminah, attired in a jewelencrusted embroidered yellow baju kebaya, appeared composed but was seen wiping her eyes shortly after being crowned.

The Sultan also conferred the Darjah Kerabat (D.K) on the Sultanah.

The ceremony was witnessed by the Kedah Royal family, including the Sultan's two daughters Tunku Soraya, 43, and Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz, 37.

The audience also included former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir.

Also present were the Sultanah's father, pensioner Hamidun Taib, 76, and three of her six siblings, elder brother Nordin and younger siblings Hashimah and Nor Azman.

The ceremony began with the arrival of the royal couple at the Balai Penghadapan, accompanied by the nobat court musicians.

Palace officials bore the ceremonial Cogam Agama, Cogam Alam, Cokmar, sword and spear.

As music was played by court musicians, the couple took to the throne, and after the Sultan gave his permission for the ceremony to begin, three palace officials brought in a copy of the Quran, the royal tiara and the royal scroll.

This was followed by the reading of the scroll by Syed Razak.

Syed Razak said the Sultan had declared that under the State's laws, there was provision which granted His Highness the authority to pro-claim his wife as the Sultanah.

Syed Razak said the Sultanah was also entitled to related privileges and benefits.

The scroll was signed by the Sultan of Kedah and stamped with the royal seal at the Istana Anak Bukit on Nov 21 last year.

The ceremony ended with the recital of prayers by State mufti Datuk Paduka Syeikh Hasbullah Abdul Halim.

Sultanah Haminah, 50, was born on July 15, 1953 in Bagan Serai, Perak, and married the Sultan on Dec 25, 1975.

The fourth of seven siblings born to Hamidun and Isma Mohamad, the Sultanah received her early education at SK Matang Jelutong, Bagan Serai, before enrolling at SM Inggeris Bagan Serai.

The previous Sultanah, Sultanah Bahiyah Tuanku Abdul Rahman, died on Aug 27 last year at Istana Kuala Chegar in Anak Bukit.

The State Government will hold a tea party in conjunction with the declaration of the new Sultanah, at the grounds of Istana Anak Bukit tomorrow at 4.15pm.

Tomorrow is a public holiday for Kedah to mark the occasion.