

13/12/2003

Cool, calm and considerate

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HE is forgiving but not to those who keep defying his orders and directives. He is stern when the situation warrants it and this was seen many an occasion during his two-year reign as the Sultan of Selangor.

Recently, the Sultan threatened to revoke the Justice of Peace appointments of those who still display the Selangor Council of Justice of the Peace emblem on their vehicles.

The directive to members of the council to remove the `JP' emblem from their vehicles came about last December after police and the Road Transport Department were tipped off that some members of the public had been displaying such emblems on their vehicles and abusing the authority that comes with it.

Sultan Sharafuddin had himself come across vehicles displaying the JP emblem in the car parks at the Concorde Hotel and Mandarin Oriental in Kuala Lumpur.

He is also a Ruler who never hesitates to revoke the Datukship of people who had abused their positions or involved themselves in illegal and vice activities.

An example was when on Nov 27 last year, he revoked the Datukship of businessmen Tan Hok Low and Robert Chan Wai Ing after they were found to have abused their positions.

He had warned all State title-holders that he would not hesitate to revoke titles if they were found to have abused their positions for gain.

While being stern and firm, he also has the welfare of the people at heart.

It was he who initiated that all JPs in Selangor must attend an induction course preparing them to assume quasijudicial roles.

Retired Federal Court Judge Tan Sri Mohd Azmi Kamaruddin was chosen by the Sultan to groom the JPs into taking on the roles of second-class magistrates.

The course is to prepare JPs to handle minor cases such as those involving juveniles or the planned traffic tribunal as proposed by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim early this year.

Many of the JPs attended the course and a ceremony was subsequently held in October where they received their "graduation" certificates.

It should also not be forgotten that it was the Sultan who conferred Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad with Selangor's highest award, the "Darjah Kerabat Yang Amat Dihormati" (DK) at Istana Alam Shah on Sept 29.

The award, presented at a special investiture by Sultan Sharafuddin, was in recognition of the services rendered by Dr Mahathir to the nation and Selangor during his 22-year tenure as Prime Minister.

The Sultan is the first Ruler to honour Dr Mahathir for his services.

Amid all his attendance to high-class social gatherings and functions, the Ruler has never failed to meet his Rakyat whenever the opportunity arises, including visiting orphans and the under-privileged.

He always makes it a point to visit them during the fasting month and Hari Raya.

On Sept 21, it was a night to remember for 50 multiracial Muslim couples as they not only went through their bersanding ceremony but also received the honour of having the Sultan gracing the occasion.

The couples - including Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli as well as those from Sabah and Sarawak - were selected by the State Religious Department (Jais) for the event, which made it into the Malaysia Book of Records for having the biggest wedding dais, measuring 23m in length.

The Sultan has also many a time expressed concern about youths and their

need to excel in education and help in nation-building.

Being a person who keeps abreast of what's going on domestically and internationally, the Ruler also recently advised Selangor assemblymen to master information and communications technology to make full use of the new Selangor State Assembly building, which will have electronic communications facilities between the Selangor executive council and department heads.

He had also urged people not to jeopardise the peace of the nation, reminding them to learn from the war in foreign lands and strengthen racial harmony.

Sultan Sharafuddin was quoted saying that the fall of Iraq was a lesson that the key to a country's stability was a strong leadership and Government.

He had called on Muslims to avoid actions such as issuing false fatwa (religious rulings), misusing mosques and surau, and spreading deviant teachings that would create confusion and disorder.

Born at Istana Jema'ah Klang on Dec 24, 1945, Sultan Sharafuddin, the eldest son of the late Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and Raja Saidatul Ihsan Tengku Badar Shah (@ Raja Lat), grew up doted on and adored by his parents, knowing he was heir to the throne.

At nine, he started his education at the Malay Primary School in Kuala Lumpur's Jalan Raja Muda, going on to St John's Institution until 1959.

At 15 in 1960, the year he was proclaimed Raja Muda Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin was sent to Australia to continue his secondary education at the Hale School in Perth.

"My teenage life was spent out of the palace, overseas.

"I had to pursue my education initially in Australia and then in England. I was not around when my late father was coronated. I had to settle for the film and pictures they took of the coronation ceremony," said the Ruler, who still seems to regret not having been present for his father's coronation.

He left for England to further his education at Langhurst College in Surrey in 1964. "Today's children are so lucky as they can fly back home each time they have a long semester break."

Those days, he said, he hardly came back home to visit his parents.

Upon returning for good, Sultan Sharafuddin, then the Raja Muda, was not left off easily by his father, who wanted him to join the Government Administrative Service.

As Raja Muda, he also served in the KL District Office and the police department, gaining experience and knowledge in administration.

His formal installation as Raja Muda was held at Istana Alam Shah in 1970, when he became the Eighth Raja Muda of Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Sultan Sharafuddin was 23 when he married Raja Zarina Raja Tan Sri Zainal in 1968.

The royal couple were blessed with two princesses: Tengku Zerafina, in 1969, and Tengku Zatashah, in 1973.

His marriage to Raja Zarina ended in 1986, and a year later he married Puan Nur Liza Idris Abdullah, an American. In 1990, they had a son Tengku Amir, who is next in line to the throne.

Sultan Sharafuddin was installed as the Regent of Selangor on April 24, 1999, when his father was installed as the 11th Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

As Regent, Sultan Sharafuddin made several visits to districts to get first-hand information on developments and problems, earning from the rakyat the title "the Peoples' Ruler".

Sultan Sharafuddin, who attributes his success today to his late father, hopes his son Raja Muda Tengku Amir Shah will follow in his footsteps and rule the State like him and his forefathers.