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First-day covers to commemorate Tengku's 100th birth anniversary

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - First-day covers commemorating the 100th birth anniversary of Tengku Abdul Rahman went on sale today at post offices nation-wide, to a warm welcome by collectors and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In a statement commending Pos Malaysia Bhd for its initiative, Dr Mahathir spoke about the Tengku's efforts in freeing the country of colonialism.

He encouraged all Malaysians, especially younger generation and students to buy the commemorative stamps as an appreciation of the Tengku's contributions, and to learn about the struggle for independence.

Calling him Wira Negara (National Hero), Dr Mahathir said the Tengku's charisma, beliefs and dedication helped build the foundations of the nation's development, while his tolerant leadership united the country's races and forged the spirit of muhibbah.

"His deeds for the country and its people cannot be repaid in ringgit."

A visit to the main post office here today saw a group of eager Malaysians queuing up to buy the first-day covers, with many people seated at tables outside the Philately Bureau pasting their stamps before having them stamped.

Avid stamp-collector Chai See Seng, 53, who had bought 20 of the first-day covers said it had a "special commemorative value", reminding him about the value of the country's independence, as the Tengku was Bapa Kemerdekaan (Father of Independence).

Chai said he had been collecting stamps since the 1960s after his teacher told him that the hobby was useful to gain knowledge about geography and cultures. Ten of the first-day covers are for himself, and the rest for friends.

Siti Noorsalwana, 38, whose husband works at the bureau, said she picked up the hobby of collecting firstday covers from him, adding that the ones of the Tengku were special as a sign of her pride about the nation's independence.

She also bought them for her father, whose health prevented him from doing so himself.

Student Olivia Liew Ee Lene, 23, had another reason for collecting the first-day cover as the date of launch would read 03-03-03 numerically.

A collector since she was six, Liew bought five sets for herself and has never missed a first-day cover.

The commemorative stamps come in five variants, with 1.5 million stamps of 30 sen being printed, 50,000 of 50 sen, and 1.02 million of the two different RM1 stamps. Of the second, larger one, 80,000 stamps have been printed.