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Long live the people's monarchy

THE 60th birthday of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail is a joyous occasion for the rakyat and nation, and an opportunity to show their love and respect for the sovereign. The nation-wide birthday celebrations also serve to further strengthen the bond between the King and his loyal subjects.

As a constitutional monarchy, Malaysia has successfully managed to blend the finest traditions of hereditary rule with the practices of a modern democracy. Our system is such that the King is elected from his brother Malay rulers to reign for a fixed term.

Like his predecessors, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin as the 12th Yang diPertuan Agong is ably enhancing the monarch's crucial role of helping the Government unite the country's diverse communities to live and work harmoniously. In paying tribute to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the King was a symbol of pride for the people and that the King had played an important and effective role in bringing the monarchy closer to the people. The King is a symbol from whom the people and Government can draw strength to overcome the nation's challenges.

Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin brings to the throne a wealth of experience as a leader and administrator. He was trained as a professional soldier and served as an army officer for a number of years. Not surprisingly, he still maintains a keen interest in the armed forces. He is approachable, and the least protocol-conscious of the elected monarchs, while maintaining the dignity of the office.

His concern for the welfare of the people and nation is well reflected in his speech at the investiture where he called for noble values to be nurtured in the family and educational institutions to curb social ills. The people should pay heed to the King's call for good ethics and a healthy lifestyle. The King's attendance in public occasions is especially appreciated because it enables his subjects to establish a connection with a sovereign that is traditionally perceived as regal and transcendent.

The monarchy is the oldest political institution in history and here it continues to thrive in its unique way. Its continuing longevity will depend not just on the legitimacy of constitutional rights but its empathy and popularity with the masses. His Majesty is doing an excellent job.