

Family At Kedah Sultan's Service Over Three Generations
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ALOR SETAR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- For former Istana Negara telephone operator Zulkapli Othman, the appointment of Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah of Kedah as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for the second time evoked sweet memories for him and his family who have served the Sultan over three generations.

In fact, he recalled vividly the days when the family served the Sultan when he was the fifth Yang di-Pertuan Agong from Jan 21, 1970 to Sept 20, 1975.

Zulkapli, 55, from Alor Gunung, Pumpong near here, said at that time, he was 18 years old and still studying but worked as the night shift telephone operator from 10pm to 7am from 1973 to 1975 at Istana Negara.

Meanwhile, his late father Othman Ismail, an Istana Kedah staff, was brought by the Sultan to Istana Negara to help manage the King's protocol attire when he was the Yang di-Pertuan Agong the first time.

Zulkapli's late grandmother Jamaliah Awang, who was a cook at Istana Kedah, was also brought to Istana Negara to prepare royal dinners, he told Bernama here.

Zulkapli said, however, his grandmother passed away after working for two years at Istana Negara.

He, however, could not remember the date of his grandmother's demise.

"At that time, I was still studying in a private school in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur and I chose to be on night duty to enable me to study during the day," he said.

He was responsible for putting through telephone calls from outside as well as receiving calls from His Majesty to be connected to specific people such as national leaders.

Zulkapli said he was also responsible for delivering messages from national leaders or news happening in the country to the King.

He said when he started working, he was quite afraid and nervous when delivering messages to His Majesty but later he got used to his job.

"Despite working for only two years I have lots of memories working under the administration of Tuanku Abdul Halim," he said.

Zulkapli returned to Kedah in 1975 and worked as clerk at Wisma Negeri and is now the chief administration assistant in the Kedah Menteri Besar's office at Wisma Darul Aman here.

Meanwhile, his father who began working at Istana Kedah since the reign of the 26th Sultan of Kedah, Almarhum Sultan Badlishah Sultan Abdul Hamid, the father of Sultan Abdul

Halim, was promoted as Head of Istana Kedah after Sultan Abdul Halim returned to Kedah following the completion of his term as Yang di-Pertuan Agong in 1975.

Zulkapli said his father passed away in March last year at the age of 74 of old age.

The appointment of Sultan Abdul Halim as the 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong will certainly be a joyous moment for him and his family to reminiscence as they were given the opportunity to faithfully serve the Sultan over three generations.

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