

Historic moment for the King
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FULL CIRCLE: It will be the second time around for Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah who will be installed as Malaysia's 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong

TODAY, the Sultan of Kedah, Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, who succeeded Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu, will be installed as the 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The king's position is in line with Article 32(1) of the Federal Constitution, which among other things, stipulates that:

"There shall be a supreme head of the Federation, to be called the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, who shall take precedence over all persons in the Federation..."

The phrase "supreme head of the Federation" places the king of the Federation of Malaysia as the supreme leader of the country.

This pronouncement has been provided for since the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya 1957, following the recommendations of the Lord Reid Commission as the drafter of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya.

At the same time, Article 32(2) provides that "The consort of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to be called the Raja Permaisuri Agong shall take precedence next after the Yang di-Pertuan Agong over all other persons in the Federation."

While the Federal Constitution spells out the format and the pronouncement of the oath of office of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong as stipulated in the Fourth Schedule, the Raja Permaisuri Agong is not required to take any oath of office even though Her Majesty is accorded the highest rank and position after the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Tuanku Abdul Halim is the only sultan to be installed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for a second time.

He ascended the throne as the fifth Yang di-Pertuan Agong between 1970 and 1975, the period which saw the leadership transition between the first prime minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman and second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak.

His Majesty is a nephew of the Tunku.

He is also the first Yang di-Pertuan Agong to take up residence at the new Istana Negara.

His Majesty will be attending all the royal ceremonies from morning until at night when the state banquet takes place.

Historical elements

Historically, the post of the supreme head of the Federation was proposed by the Reid Commission as the Yang di-Pertuan Besar -- based on an idea by Tunku Abdul Rahman, after observing the rotational monarchy system in Negri Sembilan.

In Negri Sembilan, the Undang Yang Empat as the "rulers" or ruling chieftains elect a king for the state in accordance with the state's custom and tradition.

When the views of all parties representing the Malay rulers, Umno and the Alliance Party as well as numerous others were taken into consideration, the title of Yang di-Pertuan Besar was replaced with that of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong so as not to create confusion with the Negri Sembilan ruler.

History is therefore clear that the post of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is the manifestation of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya (1957) and continued under the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia (1963).

His Majesty will rule based on the concept of constitutional monarchy -- a king who has to listen to the advice of the cabinet or its representative (normally the prime minister) as provided for under Article 40 of the Constitution.

In terms of legislative powers, His Majesty is one of the three components which make up Parliament (Dewan Rakyat, Dewan Negara and the Yang di-Pertuan Agong).

The Malaysian Parliament is not complete without the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as one of the components.

Hence, it is compulsory for His Majesty to sign all the bills approved by both houses.

His Majesty shall be regarded as the paramount ruler and the vertex of the sovereignty of Malaysia.

The people, regardless of race, religious background, culture or beliefs, are honour-bound to accord respect and recognition to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

True, His Majesty is a Malay king and a Muslim, but in terms of nationhood, he is the king for Malaysia and its people.

A simple parallel can be drawn from the United Kingdom in that Queen Elizabeth is the royal head of state for all citizens of the United Kingdom who now comprise various races and ethnicities.

It is only that Queen Elizabeth's royal status is not rotational as the Anglo-Saxon monarchy dates back 400 years ago, while Scotland and England's royal families formed a union in 1603.

After today, the official photographs of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Raja Permaisuri Agong will be displayed in all government offices nationwide and all 104 Malaysian missions abroad.

Constitutional Monarchy

The concept and practice of the constitutional monarchy in Malaysia has been accepted and acknowledged by various parties, including the Reid Commission, to be the most suitable for the country.

This is due to the fact that prior to the country's independence, it was the Malay rulers who had been holding the reign of power and sovereignty in each state.

Although due to tumultuous historical process, states like Penang, Malacca, Sarawak and Sabah ended up without a king, the monarchy rule continued to gain recognition, especially under the British colonial administration.

After 1963, all states which were without a king (Penang, Malacca, Sabah, Sarawak and the Federal Territories) accepted His Majesty as their constitutional monarch although there was no proclamation made to that effect.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is a king who rules in accordance with the advice of the Executive branch.

His Majesty has a long list of responsibilities and functions for the three branches of the government -- the executive, legislative and judiciary.

His Majesty appoints the prime minister and his deputy, the ministers and deputy ministers, the attorney-general, judges at all levels (except magistrates), and commissions Malaysian ambassadors and high commissioners for their duties abroad.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, as stipulated under Article 41 of the Constitution, is the supreme commander of the armed forces of Malaysia.

His Majesty has the power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites in respect of all offences which have been tried by court-martial and all offences committed in the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya.

When the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 was still in force, His Majesty could also act upon an appeal by the ISA advisory board.

His Majesty also has the power, upon being advised to do so, to declare a state of emergency in accordance with Article 150 of the Constitution.

Conference of Rulers

The Conference of Rulers is the highest royal body which elects the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong as provided for under Article 38.

Although matters regarding national policies can also form an agenda for the Conference of Rulers, most of the issues being deliberated and considered are matters concerning the royalty as well as pardons, reprieves and respites, Malay customs and matters concerning Islam.

Normally, the Conference of Rulers also deliberates on certain appointments, such as those of judges, and the rules made under Article 32 concerning the public service. In short, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is involved in many matters relating to his position as the paramount head of state.

Programmes

Special programmes have been planned. Although the practice and line-up of events would not be much different from the practice in the past, owing to the need to stay true to tradition, the Main Committee on the Installation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong will be focusing on the theme Raja dan Rakyat Berpisah Tiada (The Ruler and His Subjects Are Always Together).

The installation ceremony will be attended by the monarchs and state governors starting at 9am.

The theme stresses the notion that "there will be no king without his people" and that the relations between the two entities should be carefully safeguarded in that the people's interest should not be neglected and at the same time, the constitutional monarchy institution should be upheld and respected.

There will be a recital of the Yassin at the National Mosque tomorrow followed by a special sermon on Friday. There will also be other religious events to express well wishes for His Majesty.

There will be a golf tournament on Saturday at the Glenmarie Golf & Country Club in Shah Alam from 7.40am.

The "Our King" exhibition will be held on Sunday from 11am at the old Istana Negara. It will showcase numerous aspects of the monarchy rule and the institution of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong from 1957 until today.

In conjunction with this, some 50,000 booklets, titled Raja Kita (Our King) will be distributed, especially to schoolchildren and youngsters to nurture their knowledge on the royal institution, particularly the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Her Majesty the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah will fete a large group of children at the Multipurpose Hall of the new Istana Negara on April 21 from 9am. Numerous fun-filled programmes for children will take place.

A massive "Raja dan Rakyat Berpisah Tiada" performance will be held on the night of April 21 at Dataran Merdeka. This grand finale of the installation ceremony will showcase cultural performances by various races, as well as music and songs and a variety of interlude programmes.

Uniqueness

Events taking place between April 11 and 21 will demonstrate the uniqueness of a society centred on the 1Malaysia Community: that we are one in diversity.

We are one in determining our nationhood's objectives and we dare to have differences in opinion to put forth the best for Malaysia. It is in this endeavour that the royal institution — His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong — will become the pillar of our strength.

His Majesty is not only a symbol of nationhood, of strength and unity but also a symbolism steeped in sovereignty.

Daulat Tuanku, Daulat Tuanku, Daulat Tuanku.

The ruler and his subjects are always together.

Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim is also the Chairman of the Installation of the 14th Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

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