

Hands-on approach to development
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By SIRA HABIBU

WORKING with Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah on the development of Kedah has been an experience to cherish, according to Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak and several of his predecessors.

Azizan, who described Tuanku Abdul Halim as a man of wisdom, said it was significant that Tuanku Abdul Halim was being installed as Yang di-Pertuan Agong during the administration of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"There is a special historical significance as Tuanku was also King in 1970 during the administration of then Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, who is Najib's father," he said.

Having vast experience in the administration of the country as well as the state, Tuanku Abdul Halim placed great emphasis on peace and stability, the MB said.

"That is why during the recent political crisis in Kedah, Tuanku directed me to resolve the matter swiftly and amicably as he did not want the chaos to prolong," Azizan said.

The MB said Tuanku Abdul Halim had pledged to make weekly trips to Kedah to oversee development in the state.

"When in Kedah, Tuanku will be at his office (at Wisma Darulaman) as usual," he added.

Former Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, who served between December 2005 and March 2008, described Tuanku Abdul Halim as an exemplary Ruler.

"While serving as MB, the most challenging task I had was when I had to get the consent of Tuanku to amend the State Islamic Administration Enactment to divide the Religious Department and Religious Council.

"The draft amendments were already drawn seven years before I was appointed Menteri Besar. When I presented the draft to the Tuanku, Tuanku appeared to have some reservation," he said.

Mahdzir said he made arrangements to seek an audience with the Sultan a week later to convince him that the amendment would not erode the power of the Sultan in matters related to Islam.

"I brought with me the mufti, and the Syariah chief judge, among others.

"After we explained in detail, Tuanku understood and consented to the amendment," he said.

Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, who was MB from 1996 to 1999, said the Tuanku was vastly experienced, skilful and wise.

"The King's interest and understanding of matters are very deep. And he takes a more objective approach compared with party-based political figures," he said, revealing that Tuanku Abdul Halim also keenly followed political developments.

Sanusi said the Kedah Sultanate was special in the sense that it was the oldest surviving monarchy in the world from the same family lineage.

"All the current royal families such as in England, Japan and Thailand are from different families respectively, although their monarchy systems had been established much earlier," he said.

He said Kedah took pride in having the longest "unbroken" royal family lineage in the world.

Tuanku Abdul Halim was also among the longest serving monarchs in the world, he pointed out.

Sanusi recalled his most unforgettable experience while serving under Tuanku as the MB.

"I had to terminate the services of three Kedah football import players to cut costs in aid of orphanages that needed RM100,000 a month.

"My unpopular decision to terminate the football players made the Kedah team lose its placing from top to bottom in the following league.

"I was in a dilemma at that time as Tuanku was the biggest Kedah football fan.

"But *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be upon God), Tuanku understood why I resorted to such an action," he added.

Another former Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said Tuanku Abdul Halim was actively involved in formulating the *Kedah Maju 2010* plan.

"Tuanku guided me and gave me advice on ways to improve the plan," he said.

Syed Razak, who served from 1999 to 2005, said Tuanku Abdul Halim was very interested about the plan as he wanted Kedah to strive for developed status.

The *Kedah Maju 2010* masterplan included the re-development of Bandar di-Raja Anak Bukit, development of a mini Putrajaya, expansion and refurbishment of the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport, development of Kuala Kedah waterfront city, re-development of Langkawi and construction of flyovers, among others.

"Tuanku has always paid special attention to economic growth and its spillover effects, tourism in Langkawi, and social development.

"Tuanku has a lot of ideas on ways to boost development. He also cares deeply for the poor and government servants," added Syed Razak.

The former MB also said Tuanku paid special attention to punctuality.

"He takes pride in arriving at functions and meetings on the dot," he said.

Syed Razak said Tuanku Abdul Halim kept abreast with current developments but never interfered in political matters.

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