

Agong, The Pillar Of People's Confidence In National Stability

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KUALA LUMPUR, April 6 (Bernama) - On April 11, Malaysians will once again be able to witness the installation of Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, this time as the 14th Malaysian Monarch.

This is the first time in the country's history a Sultan has been twice proclaimed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong by the Conference of Rulers.

The Sultan of Kedah, Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, 84, was first proclaimed as the 5th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on July 23, 1970 when he was 42 years old.

Malaysia, which practices an administration system based on Constitutional Monarchy and Parliamentary Democracy, first started the election of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong when the country achieved its independence in 1957.

The move is very meaningful because it reflects the people's confidence in the democratic administration system.

As the Head of State, His Majesty is the pillar of national unity.

"The institution of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong provides a focal point for the people to show their loyalty to the country and is free from political nuances, noted history, politics and strategy studies senior lecturer from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Abdul Ghapa Harun.

"Therefore the presence of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong indicates a politically free event or happening, something important in serving as the national identity and symbol of unity transcending races," he said.

During an interview with Bernama recently he noted that the citizens regardless of their ideology, inclination, show their loyalty to His Majesty.

He added that, though the powers of His majesty as the constitutional monarch is limited, his majesty still plays an important role in economy and uniting his subjects.

The Federal Constitution stipulates that as the Paramount Leader, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has legal, governing and judicial powers.

Prof Dr Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali of University Malaya's history department explained that the laws to be implemented not only needs the approval of the Dewan Rakyat but has to be endorsed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"However, following amendments to the constitution even if the Yang di-Pertuan Agong fails to endorse the bill, it still becomes a law in 30 days," he said.

On many matters, almost all government decisions made by the King are made on the advice of the Prime Minister or the Cabinet.

Nonetheless, he can act using his discretion to perform the following duties such as to appoint the Prime Minister, disagree to the request to dissolve Parliament, call for a meeting of the Rulers' Conference solely on the special privileges, status, sanctity and greatness of the Malay Rulers and take any decision at the meeting and on any other matters stipulated in the Constitution.

There are certain duties that can only be performed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, including summoning, suspending and dissolving Parliament.

Apart from having the powers and discretion to appoint the Prime Minister, the King also has the powers to appoint cabinet ministers and deputy ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Dr Abdullah Zakaria noted that his majesty is also vested with powers under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution to declare emergency if he is satisfied that there are threats that could threaten public order, the economic wellbeing and the security of the federation.

Besides being the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the King is also the Head of Islam for states which do not have a Ruler such as Melaka, Penang, Federal Territory, Sabah, Sarawak and his own state.

As the Fountain of Justice, he has the powers to appoint judges, administer the laws, grant pardons, grant reprieves and respites in respect of all offences which have been tried by court-martial and all offences in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan.

As the Fountain of Honour, he bestows awards and honours to the people from all levels of society.

Since the first Yang di-Pertuan Agong - the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan Tuanku Abdul Rahman Ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad - Malaysia has seen 14 Heads of State, including the present Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah.

Based on historical records, the election of the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan by the chieftains who ruled the districts in the state under the Minangkabau customs, provided the inspiration for the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj in drawing up the selection procedure for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Then, Tunku was responsible to streamline the system proposed by the Reid Commission in 1957 where the post of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is not inherited but based on a rotation system - something new and never practised by any country in the world.

In this context, Article 32 of the Federal Constitution stipulates that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is the Paramount Ruler of the Country. He takes precedence over all others in the Federation of Malaysia.

Following the Constitutional amendments in 1993, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, like the Malay Rulers, can be charged in court in his personal capacity. If charged for any offence under any law, the King will be tried in a Special Court set up by the Conference of Malay Rulers.

The Constitution also stipulates that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong must be chosen by the Conference of Malay Rulers by way of secret ballot.

"The Conference of Malay Rulers will offer the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's post to the most senior ruler," said Dr Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali.

Nevertheless, he can step down at anytime by sending a resignation letter to the Conference of Rulers or be expelled as provided for in the Constitution.

So far, no serving Yang di-Pertuan Agong has been expelled or had resigned.

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