Star Special

THE STAR, MONDAY 2 JUNE 2025

DAULAT TUANKU

All hail the King

His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, celebrates his official birthday today with warm wishes of good health and blessings from the people.

Sultan Ibrahim posing for a group photo with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Asean leaders during a Royal Luncheon held at Istana Negara on May 27 in conjunction with the 46th Asean Summit and Related Summits. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Reigning with vision and compassion

BY NELSON BENJAMIN
nelson@thestar.com.my

KNOWN for his frankness and deep compassion for his subjects, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, has never hesitated to speak up when the welfare of the people is at stake.

Since ascending the Johor throne in 2010, His Majesty has consistently demonstrated a strong and independent voice even when addressing controversial matters, including calling out political figures who sow disunity.

His Majesty is now serving a five-year term as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, beginning on Jan 31, 2024.

In the past, Sultan Ibrahim made headlines when, upon realising the harm vaping could cause, His Majesty ordered a ban on the sale of vapes, vape liquids and e-cigarettes in the state, effective from 2016.

Johor was the first state in the country to carry out such a bold move.

In 2017, Sultan Ibrahim also ordered a launderette in Muar to immediately end its discriminatory "Muslims-only" policy, warning that failure to comply would lead to its closure.

Sultan Ibrahim also criticised a former Cabinet minister for giving a political talk in a mosque, emphasising that mosques in Johor should remain free from political influence.

The Ruler has repeatedly emphasised inclusiveness.

In 2023, following allegations that a school in Johor Baru had invited only Muslim students to a Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia workshop, His Majesty decreed that no public programme should exclude anyone based on race or religion.

Sultan Ibrahim is active in using social media – particularly Facebook, where his official page has over 1.1 million followers – as a platform to share his thoughts about issues close to his heart, such as environmental cleanliness and public health.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Sultan Ibrahim appealed for calm and urged the public to comply with the Health Ministry's standard operating procedures.

His Majesty also urged teachers to get vaccinated in order to help prevent the spread of the virus among students.

A strong advocate of racial harmony, Sultan Ibrahim has also championed the Bangsa Johor concept to foster unity among the state's multiracial communities.

His Majesty has consistently insisted on inclusive representation from Malay, Chinese and Indian non-governmental organisations for programmes such as the annual Kembara Mahkota Johor expedition.

Despite his commanding presence, His Majesty is also known for his compassion.

Those who have met Sultan Ibrahim often describe him as a warm and approachable leader, known for his ready smile and good sense of humour.

His softer side is most evident when the King listens to the struggles of his people, often moved to tears by their stories.

In the aftermath of the tragic 2016 fire at Sultanah Aminah Hospital that claimed six lives, the Ruler offered the Royal Ward to temporarily house affected patients.

Similarly, during the 2019 chemical pollution crisis in Pasir Gudang, the Johor royal family visited victims multiple times and ensured that aid was provided to them.

In 2023, when severe floods struck Johor, His Majesty cut short a private trip to Turkiye to return home early. Even while abroad, the King remained in constant communication with the state government and instructed the Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation to provide assistance.

Over the years, the foundation has contributed more than RM170mil in aid, including 103,000 tents prepared in anticipation of floods in Johor and other states.

During the Covid-19 crisis, both His Majesty and Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, Queen of Malaysia, showed unwavering support for Johoreans facing hardship.

Johor Council of Royal Court president and long-time royal aide Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Ramli described Sultan Ibrahim as someone who is close to the people, a trait that has long been the hallmark of the Johor Sultanate.

"They like to meet people. That's why the palaces in Johor are built within populated areas, not far away on a hill. They want the palace to be accessible to the rakyat," he said.

During the King's visits to meet his subjects in the districts, Abdul Rahim said Sultan Ibrahim would enter people's homes and sit cross-legged on the floor, enjoying simple dishes such as nasi putih, asam pedas, sambal belacan and ikan kering.

Abdul Rahim, who is set to publish his sixth book on the royal family and Johor traditions, added that while each Johor Sultan has a unique personality, they all share a deep and unwavering commitment to the welfare of their people.

"They never want anyone to be marginalised. They always put the people first," he said, adding that Sultan Ibrahim wants the people to have progressive ideas, discipline, high integrity and the spirit of cooperation.

Abdul Rahim said that Sultan Ibrahim is also very detail-oriented. For example, when an event is being organised, His Majesty would want to see three types of menus for him to choose from.

The King paying a visit to a residential area struck by a gas pipeline explosion in Putra Heights, Subang Jaya, in April this year. During the visit, His Majesty also handed out aid to affected victims through the Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

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DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

Salutations
and Heartiest Congratulations

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN IBRAHIM
KING OF MALAYSIA

on the Occasion of
His Majesty's Official Birthday

on
2nd June 2025 (5 Zulhijjah 1446H)

with sincerest reverence from:

Sime Darby Property

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(Above) Sultan Ibrahim greeting people during the Istana Johor Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house held at Istana Besar in Johor Baru in April this year. Despite the hot and humid weather, thousands of people attended the event.

(Right) The King welcoming China President Xi Jinping at Istana Negara in April this year.

A wise Ruler who always puts the rakyat first

> FROM PAGE 2

When asked about the duties of the royal court, Abdul Rahim said the royal court was established under the state constitution to provide advice to the Ruler.

"In that sense, the Ruler is the Regent now. At the same time, we also have a dual role in advising Sultan Ibrahim, and most of our duties usually involve family matters.

"We plan the birthdays and handle matters when there is a birth or even a death," said Abdul Rahim, who is among 12 members of the council.

Known for his astute business acumen and strong leadership, Sultan Ibrahim aims to transform Johor into Malaysia's next key economic hub after the Klang Valley.

Sultan Ibrahim was crowned the fifth modern Sultan of Johor in March 2015, marking the first coronation in the state since that of his grandfather, Almarhum Sultan Ismail, in 1960.

A seasoned investor with diverse local and international ventures, the Ruler often includes state officials and heads of government-linked companies on his trips to explore opportunities that benefit Johor.

Beyond governance, His Majesty has a passion for vintage and modern cars and motorcycles, many of which are housed in his palace garages.

One of his prized achievements is the unique Istana Flintstones in Mersing – a 24-ha palace inspired by the classic animated series, complete with a nine-storey lighthouse overlooking the sea. The palace has since become a tourist attraction in the coastal town.

The Ruler's bond with his people is further strengthened through the Kembara Mahkota Johor, a royal expedition initiated in 2001 aimed at fostering closer ties between the royal family and the public.

Although the programme has been on hold since 2020 due to the pandemic, it remains a signature initiative close to His Majesty's heart.

His passion for sports, especially polo, is also well documented. In his younger years, His Majesty participated in matches not only in Malaysia but also in Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines.

The King earned the distinction of being the best polo player in Asia during the Polo World Qualifiers in the 1990s.

Besides that, Sultan Ibrahim also enjoys parasailing, boating (jet ski), parachuting, shooting and driving sports cars.

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Sultan Ibrahim and Raja Zarith Sofiah with Tunku Ismail (fourth from left), Che' Puan Mahkota Khaleeda Johor (third from right), Tunku Temenggong Johor Tunku Idris Iskandar (third from left), Tunku Panglima Johor Tunku Abdul Rahman (second from left), Tunku Putera Johor Tunku Abu Bakar (left), Tunku Tun Aminah (second from right) and her husband Datuk Dennis Muhammad Abdullah (right) following a Hari Raya Aidilfitri luncheon at Istana Bukit Serene in Johor Baru in March this year. — All photos from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Sultan Ibrahim visiting a food stall during a walkabout at a Ramadan bazaar in Bangsar in March this year. Also present was Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil (right).

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Tan Sri Dato' Sri Mohamad Fuzi Bin Harun (Independent Non-Executive Chairman),
Tan Sri Dato' Tan Chee Sing (Group Executive Vice Chairman),
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Kingship backed by military and professional milestones

> FROM PAGE 4

His Majesty once won a falling plate shooting event organised by the army at the Malaysian Army Combat Training Centre (Pulada) in Johor.

According to Abdul Rahim, His Majesty parachuted out of a plane 19 times during his American Special Forces training which earned him a Green Beret and wings.

"Very few leaders have undergone such training," he said, adding that Johor Regent Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim has done nine such jumps as part of his own training.

Sultan Ibrahim, who is the third of 10 children and the eldest son, was born at Sultanah Aminah Hospital in Johor Baru on Nov 22, 1958.

His Majesty received his formal education at Sekolah Temenggong Abdul Rahman (1) before moving on to Trinity Grammar School in Australia and later to the United States to further his studies in law and diplomacy.

Sultan Ibrahim also obtained his religious education from Sekolah Agama Air Molek in Johor Baru.

After completing his secondary education, the King underwent basic military training at Pusat Latihan Darat in Kota Tinggi, Johor, for three months.

The King also underwent military training in the United States – first at Fort Benning, Georgia, and later at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Upon completion, Sultan Ibrahim was appointed deputy commander of the Johor Military Force.

Sultan Ibrahim has trained and served in both the Air Force and Navy and is a qualified Green Beret commando in both Malaysia and the United States. The Ruler is also a US Navy SEAL, an honorary member of Indonesia's Kopassus Red Berets and a fully certified divemaster.

As part of preparations for kingship, Sultan Ibrahim joined the Johor Civil Service and served in various departments, including the district office, as well as the land, health and treasury departments.

In 1981, Sultan Ibrahim was proclaimed the Tunku Mahkota of Johor. His Majesty is married to Raja Zarith Sofiah, a Perak princess and Oxford University graduate, who also serves as the Chancellor of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

The couple is blessed with six children – Tunku Ismail, Tunku Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah, Tunku Idris Iskandar Ismail Abdul Rahman, the late Tunku Abdul Jalil Iskandar Ibrahim Ismail, Tunku Abdul Rahman Hassanal Jeffri and Tunku Abu Bakar Mahmood Iskandar Ibrahim.

(Clockwise from top) Sultan Ibrahim having a discussion with Abdul Rahim at Rumah Danga in Johor; Abdul Rahim greeting Tunku Ismail at the royal hangar in Senai, Johor; His Majesty admiring classic Volkswagen cars during a gathering at a cafe in Johor Baru on May 18 this year; His Majesty conferred Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto (left) with the Darjah Kerabat Johor Yang Amat Dihormati Pangkat Pertama during an audience at Istana Negara in January this year; and the King and Queen attending last year's National Day celebration in Putrajaya. — Photos from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

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Raja Zarith Sofiah, flanked by the Johor Regent's consort Che' Puan Mahkota Khaleeda Johor (left) and the Johor Mentri Besar's wife Datin Sharmin Fazlina Mohd Shukor (right), visiting the Kenari flats in Kangkar Pulai last year. — Photo from Media Digital Johor's Facebook page

Touching lives with quiet generosity

Her Majesty handing out personal contributions and food baskets to the underprivileged community in the Federal Territories in conjunction with the National Day celebration in August 2024. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Her Majesty in conversation with artistes (starting third from right) Sherry Alhadad, Zizan Razak and Datuk M. Nasir during an afternoon tea session with the local creative industry in April this year. — Photo from Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil's Facebook page

By YEE XIANG YUN
xiangyun@thestar.com.my

UPLIFTING underprivileged communities and ensuring education opportunities for the people are causes that have always been close to the heart of Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, Queen of Malaysia.

In line with this, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, and Her Majesty mooted the Bangsa Johor Bahagia (BJB) initiative in 2019 to better the lives of urban poor communities by engaging people of various ages in activities such as modern farming and reading.

Through this project, the previously run-down Kenari and Jentayu flats in Kangkar Pulai in Johor Baru have undergone a massive transformation over the years.

The flats are now equipped with facilities such as community spaces, a disposal facility for used items, a library, as well as herb and vegetable gardens cultivated by the residents.

In March 2024, the Queen also inaugurated the BJB container library in Kangkar Pulai.

During the event, Her Majesty expressed hope that the container library initiative would be extended to low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur and other parts of Malaysia to cultivate a more widespread reading culture.

According to a recent posting on Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page, BJB is under the patronage of Their Majesties' charity foundations Yayasan Sultan Ibrahim Johor and Yayasan Raja Zarith Sofiah Negeri Johor in collaboration with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

"The BJB programme at the flats has been successful since its implementation in 2019. Now, Her Majesty wishes to expand the programme to the Taman Plentong Utama flats (in Johor Baru) to improve the lives of the community there," said the post.

On May 5 this year, the Queen granted an audience to Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi and other state leaders at Istana Bukit Serene to discuss the expansion of the BJB initiative in Taman Plentong Utama, which would include the integration of artificial intelligence.

Raja Zarith Sofiah, who is also the Permaisuri of Johor, has a keen interest in academia. She often emphasises the importance of education and creating opportunities for youth to master English, enabling them to take their place on the global stage.

She once said that as a developing nation, it is important for Malaysian children to be trained in reading, writing and speaking English to help them become confident writers and speakers.

The Queen herself is fluent in multiple languages, including Mandarin, French and Italian.

Born at Batu Gajah Hospital in Perak on Aug 14, 1959, Raja Zarith Sofiah is the second daughter and third child of the late Sultan of Perak, Almarhum Paduka Seri Sultan Idris Shah II, and his consort Almarhumah Raja Perempuan Muzwin Almarhum Raja Ariff Shah.

The Queen received her primary education at SK Datin Khadijah and her secondary education at SMK Raja Perempuan Kalsom in Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

Her Majesty continued her secondary education at Cheltenham Ladies' College, a top-ranked all-girls boarding school in England, and is an alumna of the University of Oxford.

There, Raja Zarith Sofiah earned a Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Studies from Somerville College and graduated in 1983.

Her Majesty married Sultan Ibrahim on Sept 22, 1982, during his tenure as the Johor Crown Prince. They are blessed with six children – five princes and a princess.

The royal couple's dedication to their responsibilities has been their hallmark, and they have never wavered in carrying out their duties with sincerity.

Weekly engagements with the people and community leaders, along with visits to various Johor districts, have been the norm since the start of their marriage.

When floods struck parts of Johor in March this year, Raja Zarith Sofiah visited victims at two temporary relief centres in Kampung Maju Jaya and offered her personal contributions.

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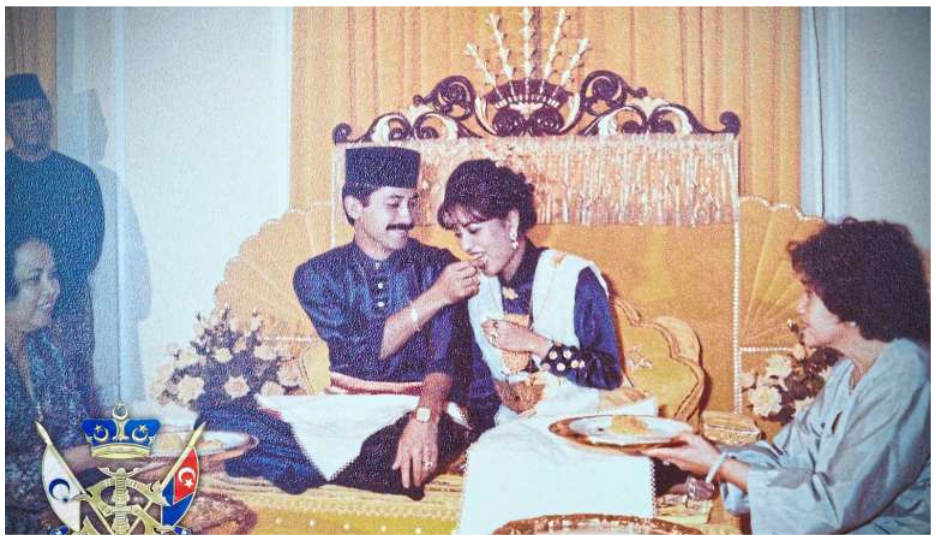

(Above) Raja Zarith Sofiah married Sultan Ibrahim on Sept 22, 1982, while he was the Johor Crown Prince.

(Right) The Queen donning an elegant blue baju kurung kain benang Johor during a state visit to Brunei in October 2024 with the King. — Photos from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

(Above) The Queen visiting flood victims housed at two temporary relief centres in Kampung Maju Jaya, Johor Baru, in March this year. Her Majesty also presented them with personal contributions.

(Left) Her Majesty extending a personal donation to the family of helicopter crash victim Lt Commander Mohammad Amirulfaris in Negri Sembilan in April last year. — Photos from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Royal advocate for lifelong learning

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The Queen also took time out of her busy schedule to visit the family of Squadron 503 Air Tactical Officer Lt Commander Mohammad Amirulfaris Mohd Marzukhi, who tragically lost his life when two helicopters collided and crashed at the navy base in Lumut, Perak, on April 23 last year.

During her visit to his home in Negri Sembilan, the Queen offered words of comfort to his young sons and extended a personal donation to his widow.

The Queen also graced a breaking-of-fast event with 60 single mothers and 240 orphans at Istana Negara in the capital city during Ramadan this year.

Aside from her official duties, Her Majesty has a passion for painting – a talent she inherited from her late father.

Her Majesty is also a strong supporter of the arts and attended an afternoon tea with notable members of the local creative industry in April this year, including National Film Development Corporation chairman Datuk Hans Isaac, singer Datuk M. Nasir and actor Zizan Razak.

Attended by about 400 guests, including school students, the event was the brainchild of the Queen herself, designed to showcase talent and foster positive interactions between local artistes and students.

When gracing official functions, Raja Zarith Sofiah frequently showcases Johor's identity through her fashion choices.

Her Majesty exuded regal beauty and royal authority in a baju kurung Johor adorned with golden hibiscus embroidery at Sultan Ibrahim's installation ceremony as the 17th King of Malaysia at Istana Negara on July 20 last year.

During last year's National Day celebration in Putrajaya, Her Majesty donned a sweet pink baju kurung kain benang Johor alongside Sultan Ibrahim.

Her Majesty also wore an elegantly regal blue baju kurung made of kain benang Johor during the royal couple's three-day state visit to Brunei last October, marking their first official trip to the kingdom since ascending the throne.

Her traditional attire showcased the Queen's motif intricately woven into the songket Johor Maharani pattern, a design crafted exclusively for Raja Zarith Sofiah, with the blue hue symbolising one of the colours of the Malaysian flag.

Her Majesty reviewing expansion plans for the Bangsa Johor Bahagia initiative, which was launched in 2019 to improve the quality of life of urban poor communities by involving people of various ages in activities such as modern farming and reading. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

A post on Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page highlighted that kain benang Johor is a plaid-patterned, handwoven fabric similar to songket, embodying a cherished part of Johor's cultural heritage.

"The production of kain benang Johor takes place entirely at Galeri Tenun, located within the Sultan Abu Bakar Heritage Complex in Johor Baru," the post shared.

As Malaysians celebrate the official birthday of the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Raja Zarith Sofiah's steadfast presence beside His Majesty continues to inspire with her quiet dedication, compassion and tireless service to the people.

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with sincerest reverence from:

Tan Sri Dato' Sri Ir. (Dr.) Lim Hock San, JP
Group Executive Chairman
Board of Directors, Management and Staff

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His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, accompanied by Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, Queen of Malaysia, arriving at Istana Negara for his installation ceremony as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on July 20, 2024. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Unique rotating monarchy

By VENESA DEVI
venesa@thestar.com.my

IN a world where monarchs are typically born into power, Malaysia stands out with a unique rotation system where its King is elected from among nine Malay Rulers.

Malaysia is one of over 40 nations with a constitutional monarchy, but it is the only one in the world that practises a five-year rotation system.

Under this unique system, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is elected from among nine Malay Rulers under the Conference of Rulers through a detailed election process that takes place every five years.

Only nine Malay Rulers are eligible to take part in the process, namely the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, Sultan of Selangor, Raja of Perlis, Sultan of Terengganu, Sultan of Kedah, Sultan of Kelantan, Sultan of Pahang, Sultan of Johor and Sultan of Perak.

Several other eligibility criteria that must be met for a Ruler to be appointed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong are also outlined on the official website of the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal Office.

The first is that the Ruler must consent to be elected, and only the nine Malay Rulers may vote.

If a Ruler is unable to attend the Election Meeting, he may appoint another Ruler as a proxy to vote on his behalf.

Previously, the selection of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong was based on seniority, whereby the Ruler who had reigned the longest was considered the most senior.

However, that rule no longer applies since all nine Malay Rulers have taken their turns as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Sultan of Perak Almarhum Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah, who was the ninth Yang di-Pertuan Agong, was the last Ruler to be selected under the original rotation system.

Sultan Ibrahim reciting the Oath of Installation during the installation ceremony (left) and acknowledging the Royal Salute during the swearing-in ceremony on Jan 31, 2024, with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (right). — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

After that, the Rulers collectively agreed on a rotation list, which is still used today, based on the order of states whose Rulers had previously served as Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Besides that, Schedule Three of the Federal Constitution and the Regulation of the Conference of Rulers states that a Ruler is not eligible for election if he is a minor or has formally informed the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal that he does not wish to be elected.

It adds that a Ruler is also disqualified if the Conference of Rulers, through a secret ballot, determines that he is unfit due to infirmity of mind or body, or for any other reason that would prevent him from fulfilling the role.

However, such a resolution must be supported by at least five members of the Conference of Rulers.

Schedule Three of the Federal Constitution also provides detailed steps to be taken before the election of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, including for the nine Rulers to agree on the date of the Election Meeting.

If both the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong positions become vacant, the election must be held within four weeks from the date the vacancies occur.

The Keeper of the Rulers' Seal will then seek the consent of each Ruler to be nominated as either the Yang di-Pertuan Agong or Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Any Ruler who does not wish to be nominated must submit a written notice to the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal, and the state will be moved to the end of the nomination list.

When the Conference of Rulers convenes to vote, only the Malay Rulers, the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal and the assistant secretary to the Conference of Rulers are involved in the process.

The four Yang di-Pertua Negeri do not attend despite being members of the Conference of Rulers.

The election is conducted through a secret ballot using unnumbered papers, all marked with the same pen and ink.

The completed ballots are placed into a ballot box and once the result is announced, the papers are destroyed (either burned or shredded) in the presence of the Rulers.

The Ruler with the shortest reign, who is not nominated as a candidate for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong or Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, is appointed to assist the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal in counting the ballots.

During the election, each Ruler receives a ballot bearing the name of one candidate and is asked to indicate whether that candidate is suitable to serve as Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The nominee must secure at least five votes before being offered the post by the presiding Ruler. If the nominee declines or fails to secure enough votes, the process continues with the next most senior Ruler on the list.

The election concludes only after a nominee accepts the appointment.

The Conference of Rulers then formally declares the Ruler as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, who will serve for a five-year term.

His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, the current King of Malaysia, was sworn in as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Jan 31, 2024, following the 263rd (Special) Meeting of the Conference of Rulers in October 2023. His Majesty's installation ceremony took place on July 20, 2024.

This marks the second time a Johor Ruler has been installed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Sultan Ibrahim's father, Almarhum Sultan Iskandar Sultan Ismail, had reigned as the eighth Yang di-Pertuan Agong from 1984 to 1989.

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

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2nd June 2025 (5 Zulhijjah 1446H)

with sincerest reverence from:

Sapura

SAPURA (21555-D)

Happy Birthday, Your Majesty

Malaysians nationwide come together to celebrate His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, extending warm wishes to their beloved Ruler on his birthday today.

"On the occasion of His Majesty's birthday, we extend our heartfelt and respectful wishes. May Tuanku be blessed with continued good health and unwavering strength in leading the nation with wisdom, dignity and compassion. Daulat Tuanku!"

Oldery Jungin, 28
Priest, Sabah

"From Melaka's shores where legends dwell,
we send our prayers, sincere and well,
May His Majesty reign with wisdom bright,
a guiding star, a nation's light,
Daulat Tuanku! Long may His Majesty live,
Our hearts and loyalty, we humbly give."

Lee Ai Yun, 31
Procurement officer, Melaka

"I would like to wish the happiest of birthdays to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia. His Majesty has always been my favourite monarch, and I can truly see his sincerity towards the rakyat. I hope to meet him in person someday. May His Majesty continue to be in the pink of health."

S. Kalaiarasi, 41
Trader, Kedah

"The Malaysian Army extends its highest birthday greetings to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. May His Majesty be blessed with good health and strength in leading the nation with wisdom and honour."

Muhamad Ilham Hajaha, 31
Malaysian Army, Kelantan

"I wish His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, the warmest of birthdays. I hope that His Majesty can unite Malaysians from all walks of life and maintain political stability. May His Majesty continue to be blessed with good health and a peaceful reign."

Ahmad Dzikri Hadin Jamil, 31
Operations specialist, Penang

"On the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's birthday, I extend my warmest wishes. May His Majesty's reign continue to be marked by wisdom, prosperity and peace for the people of Malaysia."

Ricky Endu, 31
Civil servant, Sarawak

"I would like to extend my warmest birthday wishes to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, our dearly beloved King of Malaysia. May 'all seek shelter under the shadow of his justice, and rest in the shade of his favour'."

Váfa Eliana Ramanaidu, 12
Student, Labuan

"I would like to convey my best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, on his birthday. May God continue to bestow upon His Majesty abundant blessings and good health to lead a reign filled with peace, prosperity and unity for the nation."

Nur Athirah Mazlan, 30
Enumerator, Terengganu

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PREMIÈRE
HOTEL · KLANG

SKY PARK

Many happy returns of the day

"As Malaysia continues to prosper, I hope that His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, leads us to a greater and prosperous future. May God protect our King. Daulat Tuanku and happy birthday!"

S. Gobi, 37
Education adviser, Johor

"My wishes for His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia: May His Majesty's reign be blessed with wisdom, peace and prosperity for the nation. Daulat Tuanku!"

Khong Chee Seong, 51
Businessman, Perlis

"I would like to extend warm birthday wishes to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia. May Tuanku have a long and prosperous life. I hope that His Majesty will keep bringing the country to greater heights and uniting all Malaysians during his reign."

Nashua Fauzan, 51
Government relations director, Pahang

"On this special occasion of His Majesty's official birthday, I would like to extend my heartfelt wish for His Majesty's continued good health and happiness."

Lily Nurliana Hasreen, 28
Writer, Perak

"I wish that His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, the King of Malaysia, will continue to be blessed with wisdom and good health and that his reign will continue to be prosperous. His Majesty is known for his stern personality, and I hope this will help ensure that Malaysians enjoy political stability and peace."

Rashdan Jamaluddin, 50
Civil servant, Putrajaya

"Daulat Tuanku! Happy Birthday to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia! On this special day, the people of Negri Sembilan send our warmest wishes to Tuanku. May His Majesty always be blessed with good health, happiness and strength to continue leading our beloved Malaysia with wisdom and care. We pray for a peaceful, united and prosperous nation under his reign."

Muhammad Fikri Yusri Mohd Faisal, 24
Marketing manager, Negri Sembilan

"On the occasion of His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim's birthday, I extend my heartfelt wishes for His Majesty's enduring health, joy and prosperity. May the coming year bring continued blessings to His Majesty and all Malaysians under his wise leadership. Daulat Tuanku!"

S. Sabrina Yesotha, 28
Student enrolment advisor, Selangor

"The Yang di-Pertuan Agong stands as an unwavering embodiment of unity and harmony. As a proud Malaysian, I wish His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, a happy birthday and express my utmost confidence in His Majesty's wisdom and dedication to safeguarding the well-being and cohesion of all his subjects."

D. Subash Jai, 29
Senior legal officer, Kuala Lumpur

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

Merafak Sembah Ucapan Setinggi-Tinggi Tahniah

KEBAWAH DULI YANG MAHA MULIA
SERI PADUKA BAGINDA YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG
SULTAN IBRAHIM

sempena

Sambutan Ulang Tahun Hari Keputeraan Rasmi
Kebawah Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Tuanku

pada

2 Jun 2025 Bersamaan 5 Zulhijjah 1446H

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Salutations
and Heartiest Congratulations

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN IBRAHIM
KING OF MALAYSIA

on the Occasion of
His Majesty's Official Birthday

on
2nd June 2025 (5 Zulhijjah 1446H)

with sincerest reverence from:

YAB Dato' Sri Diraja Haji Wan Rosdy Bin Wan Ismail
Menteri Besar Pahang

Pahang State Government and
People of Pahang Darul Makmur State

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THE STAR, MONDAY 2 JUNE 2025

These young guests were among 600 attendees at a prayer ceremony held in conjunction with the King's official birthday. The event was held on May 29 this year at the Muadz bin Jabal Mosque in Kuala Lumpur.

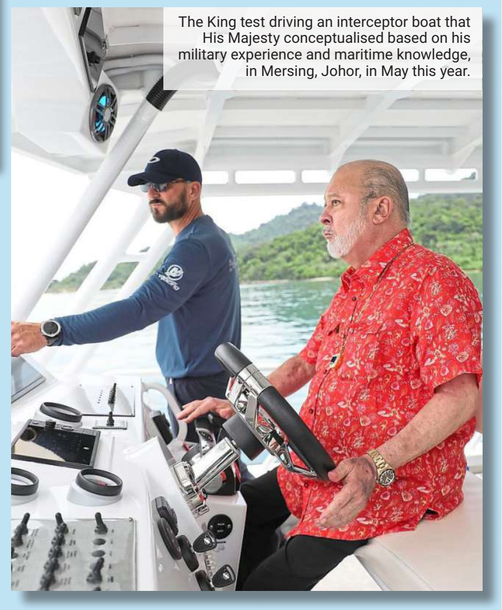
Sultan Ibrahim with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the opening of the first meeting of the fourth session of the 15th Parliament at the Parliament building in Kuala Lumpur in February this year. — All photos courtesy of Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

The King and Queen attending the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration at Istana Negara in March this year alongside Anwar and his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

A Ruler dedicated to the people

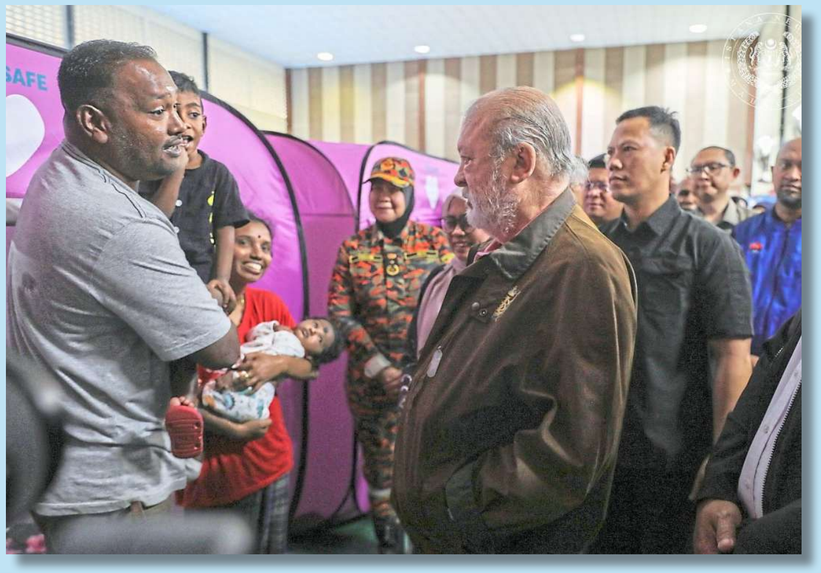
His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, is loved by the rakyat for his compassion and active role in community affairs, with his leadership fostering unity and pride throughout the country.

His Majesty having a discussion with Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi (second from right), Johor police chief Comm Datuk M. Kumar (right) and Johor finance officer Datuk Mohammed Ridha Abd Kadir during breakfast at a cafe in Johor Baru in April this year. During the audience, His Majesty was briefed on the state's current and economic affairs.



The King test driving an interceptor boat that His Majesty conceptualised based on his military experience and maritime knowledge, in Mersing, Johor, in May this year.

His Majesty greeting a young fan during a gathering of classic Volkswagen enthusiasts in Johor Baru in May this year.



Sultan Ibrahim greeting a woman and her child following a breakfast session with Anwar at Nasi Lemak Burung Hantu in Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur in January this year. His Majesty also spent time chatting with and posing for photos with other diners.

(Left) The King visiting flood victims at a relief centre in Kota Tinggi, Johor, following floods in the state in January this year.

Royal regalia reflect cultural legacy

As King of Malaysia, His Majesty's official ceremonial attire is the Muskat, featuring the royal headdress known as the Tengkolok Diraja, along with a buckle and short dagger. (Left) His Majesty often dons the uniform of the Supreme Commander of the Malaysian Armed Forces at official events, reflecting his military background. — Photos from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

By YEE XIANG YUN
xiangyun@thestar.com.my

HIS Majesty Sultan Ibrahim may now serve as King of Malaysia but his Johorean roots remain firmly woven into royal protocols, attire and traditions that set him apart from his predecessors.

In Malay royal traditions, regalia are not just ornaments but "instruments of authority" and symbols that convey a Ruler's source of power and sovereign rule.

Johor Council of Royal Court president Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Ramli said each Malay Ruler has his own set of regalia reflecting the customs of his state.

"Royal regalia are instruments of authority, meaning that they exhibit the source of power of the Ruler. Each state Ruler has his own regalia, including Sultan Ibrahim, as His Majesty is also the Johor Ruler.

"However, there are subtle differences between his state regalia and that of the federal throne as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," he told *The Star* in an interview.

As the King of Malaysia, Sultan Ibrahim's official ceremonial dress is known as the Muskat, complete with a royal headdress, buckle and short dagger, which are part of the royal regalia.

The Muskat is a long, black robe adorned with golden embroidery and its design is inspired by the traditional outfits of the people of Oman and Kedah's baju sikap – the official dress of the state officials.

The King also wears a royal headdress known as Tengkolok Diraja, made of black songket embroidered with gold thread, complete with a royal buckle and keris.

Affixed at the front of the royal headdress is a platinum ornament in the shape of a crescent and a 14-pointed star with Malaysia's coat of arms in the centre.

Abdul Rahim pointed out that there are subtle contrasts between federal and Johorean royal traditions in attire.

"Although His Majesty's forefather Sultan Abu Bakar designed the baju Melayu teluk belanga, that attire is not used as the official ceremonial uniform.

"With Johor being a modern state, Sultan Ibrahim wears a tunic and military cap. His Majesty also carries a sword instead of a keris due to his military background," he explained.

As the Supreme Commander of the Malaysian Armed Forces, Sultan Ibrahim is also often seen wearing a variation of ceremonial dress representing different branches of the army, police or the Johor Military Forces, complete with berets.

In terms of royal regalia, there are similarities and differences in the federal and state instruments.

Abdul Rahim notes that there are subtle differences between Sultan Ibrahim's royal regalia as the King of Malaysia and as the Johor Ruler. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

(Right) The Tengkolok Diraja is crafted from black songket embroidered with gold thread; the Cogan Alam and Cogan Agama.

The royal regalia of the Agong includes two royal sceptres known as Cogan Alam (Sceptre of the Universe) and Cogan Agama (Sceptre of Religion).

Cogan Alam, a silver mace measuring 162.66cm, is headed with an orb on which a crescent and a 11-pointed star made of gold are surmounted, symbolising Islam as the main religion of the country.

The orb is decorated with the crests of the 11 states in the peninsula. These are also made of gold and supported by four tigers symbolising national bravery. The shaft features six stalks of paddy carved in gold.

Meanwhile, the Cogan Agama is 155.04cm long and made of silver. The item consists of a large, conical head with a five-pointed star made of gold mounted on a long shaft. Quranic verses are embossed on the headshaft.

Abdul Rahim noted that Johor's royal regalia also includes the Sceptre of Universe, marked by a crescent and star symbolising Islam, while the Sceptre of Religion has a head shaped like a betel leaf with the names of Allah and Prophet Muhammad written in Jawi.

"One key distinction since Sultan Ibrahim ascended the federal throne is the use of royal umbrellas. Previously, the kings were shaded with a yellow umbrella during ceremonies and the inspection of guards.

"But since Tuanku became Agong, this practice has stopped. In Johor, royal umbrellas are always closed as His Majesty feels that an unfurled umbrella creates distance between the Ruler and the people. He wants the people to feel close to him, true to the saying of *rakyat dan raja berpisah tiada* (the people and the king are inseparable)," he added.

In another departure from conventional federal protocol, the practice of angkat sembah, where both palms are held together at the forehead to salute or greet the king, is no longer done.

"A simple bow is sufficient," said Abdul Rahim, citing a long-standing Johor tradition that avoids hand clasping.

Other differences can be seen in the royal court music – Istana Negara uses nobat while Johor relies on its military brass band for ceremonies and royal functions, another reflection of its modern roots.

Even colour schemes at the federal palace have changed since Sultan Ibrahim's reign. Previously, yellow was the dominant colour at Istana Negara as it is traditionally linked to royalty.

"In Johor, blue is associated with the royal family as it reflects the colours of the state flag. Now, the carpets at the palace in the capital city have been changed to blue in a firm nod to Johor's identity," he said.

As someone who has served five generations of the Johor royal family – from Sultan Ismail to the present Raja Muda of Johor Tunku Iskandar (first son of Johor Regent Tunku Ismail) – Abdul Rahim said Sultan Ibrahim ensures Johor's traits are maintained even when His Majesty is the King.

"These are subtle but meaningful differences," he added.

While the regalia and royal customs may differ between federal and state, what remains constant is His Majesty's love for Johor and commitment to serving the people, both as their state Ruler and as King of Malaysia.

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

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KING OF MALAYSIA

on the Occasion of
His Majesty's Official Birthday

on
2nd June 2025 (5 Zulhijjah 1446H)

with sincerest reverence from:

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Princes shaping motorsports future

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH
farhaan@thestar.com.my

IN recent years, Malaysia's motorsports scene has gained unprecedented momentum thanks to the high-octane involvement of two royal siblings from Johor.

The growing achievements of Tunku Panglima Johor Tunku Abdul Rahman Al-Haj Ibni Sultan Ibrahim and Tunku Putera Johor Tunku Abu Bakar Al-Haj Ibni Sultan Ibrahim on the racetrack are not only rewriting motorsports history in Malaysia, but also igniting national pride.

Tunku Abdul Rahman's passion for motorsports turned professional in 2019 when he made his debut in the Blancpain GT World Challenge Asia Series.

Representing Johor Motorsport Racing, Tunku Abdul Rahman quickly established himself as a competitive force in the region.

In 2024, Tunku Abdul Rahman achieved one of his career highlights by securing his first victory in the Asian Le Mans Series at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi.

Teaming up with Luca Stolz and Jordan Love in a Mercedes AMG GT3, their victory was a culmination of strategy, endurance and pure racing prowess.

Following closely in his brother's tracks is Tunku Abu Bakar, who began competing in the GT World Challenge Asia – GT3 series in 2022 with Triple Eight JMR.

Though younger, Tunku Abu Bakar's talent was evident from the start, where he achieved his first career pole position and race win in Thailand.

Tunku Abu Bakar's 2023 season ended on a high note with a runner-up finish in the GT3 Drivers' Championship, further cementing his reputation as one of Malaysia's most promising young racers.

The royal siblings' shared passion led to the formation of Johor Motorsport Racing (JMR) early this year.

Sultan Ibrahim and Raja Zarith Sofiah graced the GT World Challenge Asia at the Sepang International Circuit on April 13 this year. The royal couple cheered on Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Abu Bakar, both of whom competed in the prestigious race. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

The goal is to elevate local talent while competing at the highest levels in global GT racing competitions through JMR. The initiative reflects not just their love for the sport, but also a vision to see Malaysia dominate the international racing circuit.

In a major move, JMR became South-East Asia's first team to field the Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R, an engineering marvel and a defining move by the Johor royals.

This partnership marked a turning point, aligning Malaysia with some of the top racing technologies in the world.

For the 2025 season, Tunku Abdul Rahman teamed up with Corvette factory driver Alexander Sims in car No.99, while Tunku Abu Bakar drove car No.66 alongside Jordan Love.

Together, they have secured several podium finishes, firmly establishing themselves as serious contenders.

Their efforts were recently recognised at the prestigious National Sports Award 2024, where both Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Abu Bakar were conferred a special award for their outstanding contributions to motorsports.

The ceremony was attended by none other than their father, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia – a proud moment for both the royal family and the nation.

This recognition highlights how their journey has evolved beyond racing to become a powerful symbol of inspiration and national pride. It also reflects the government's growing acknowledgment of motorsports as a serious and emerging discipline.

Beyond racing, both princes have become mentors and role models, introducing talent scouting programmes and technical training for aspiring drivers through JMR.

Their goal is to nurture future champions from Malaysia who can shine on the international stage.

Sultan Ibrahim and Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, Queen of Malaysia, have shown their unwavering support, notably by attending races such as the GT World Challenge opener at Sepang.

Their presence reflects how deeply motorsports is embedded within the Johor royal family.

Both princes are known for their hands-on involvement in the day-to-day operations of JMR.

From technical decisions to marketing strategies, their leadership is shaping a new kind of royal influence, one that is grounded in action rather than mere symbolism.

Social media has played a crucial role in connecting them with fans, as their Instagram and TikTok accounts offer followers a glimpse into their training, race-day rituals and camaraderie, making motorsports more accessible and appealing to the younger generation.

Their journey has not been without challenges, but they have approached each hurdle with resilience and professionalism.

Whether facing technical setbacks or fierce competition, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Abu Bakar remain unwavering in their drive and commitment – with an impact that extends far beyond the track.

Young Malaysians now view motorsports as a viable career path – one accessible not just to the elite, but to anyone with talent, determination and proper support.

The establishment of JMR is already paying dividends, as several young drivers have begun training under the team's development programme, laying the groundwork for a future Malaysian motorsports dynasty.

Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Abu Bakar's involvement is a testament to how sports can unite people from all backgrounds. By leveraging their status for the greater good, the princes are not only enhancing the Johor royal family's legacy but also contributing to Malaysia's sporting excellence.

The princes are not merely participating in motorsports – they are also actively shaping its future in Malaysia.

As the 2025 season roars ahead, one thing is certain: the Johor princes are racing not just for titles, but for legacy, for youth and for Malaysia's place on the global motorsports stage.

Raja Zarith Sofiah, flanked by Tunku Abdul Rahman (right) and Tunku Abu Bakar (left), during the GT World Challenge Asia at the Sepang International Circuit. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

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King's visit cooks up buzz

By VENESA DEVI
venesa@thestar.com.my

A YEAR ago, a humble restaurant tucked away in a Kuala Lumpur village was thrust into the limelight following an unexpected royal visit.

At about 9am on June 3 last year, the restaurant, famous for its nasi lemak, had the honour of welcoming His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, for the first time.

His Majesty, then in his first year as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, chose to celebrate his official birthday with a simple traditional breakfast at the restaurant.

"It was such a great honour to have the Yang di-Pertuan Agong grace the restaurant and enjoy a meal we prepared.

"What made it even more special was that His Majesty had chosen to drop by for breakfast here on such a special day," said Nasi Lemak Wanjo Kampung Baru restaurant manager Mohd Nazri Samsuddin.

Mohd Nazri, the third-generation caretaker of the restaurant, said Sultan Ibrahim's visit sparked excitement among customers, many of whom took the opportunity to snap photos with His Majesty.

"Everyone was surprised by the visit, as it is not every day we get to see the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in person.

"Many were also in awe of His Majesty's easy-going and down-to-earth personality, which is not what one might expect from a King.

"Unfortunately, I was unable to be among the lucky ones who met His Majesty, as I was out of town when the surprise visit occurred.

"I hope that some day, I'll have the opportunity to meet His Majesty and serve him a meal in person. That is the dream," the 45-year-old said, adding that Sultan Ibrahim had nasi lemak during the visit.

He also noted that Sultan Ibrahim's visit had since drawn more crowds to the restaurant, which was founded by his grandmother in 1963.

"We have had other well-known figures visiting the restaurant before, including former prime ministers Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Datuk Seri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"However, that was the first time we received a royal guest.

"Although His Majesty has yet to make a second visit here, his officers have come several times to collect packed food for him," Mohd Nazri added.

Hua Mui restaurant, a decades-old eatery in Johor Baru, also welcomed a royal visit on a special day.

On Jan 23 this year, His Majesty marked the anniversary of his accession to the throne with yet another breakfast, this time featuring a chicken chop with a local twist.

His Majesty's visit drew a large crowd to the restaurant, with many eager to catch a glimpse of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The third-generation owner of the restaurant, Jeremy Chiang, said he was honoured and touched that the King chose to spend such an important day at the 79-year-old family restaurant.

"His Majesty visited this restaurant back in 2017, but I wasn't here at that time.

"His Majesty's visit to the restaurant in January was not only the first time I got to serve him, but also the first time I saw him in person," the 44-year-old quipped.

Jeremy, who is learning the ropes from his 71-year-old father David Chiang, described the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as a humble person.

"His Majesty's unexpected visit, accompanied by Johor police chief Datuk M. Kumar, was a pleasant surprise for all of us, including our staff and patrons who were enjoying breakfast that morning.

"Although he is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan Ibrahim was very humble and down-to-earth with everyone," Jeremy said, adding that His Majesty spent nearly an hour dining and engaging warmly with the people.

He added that other members of the Johor royal family, especially Tunku Temenggong Johor Tunku Idris, have also visited the restaurant from time to time.

"It is always an honour to serve His Majesty and the Johor royal family.

"We are grateful for their support over the years, which has not only helped drive business but also promoted Malaysia's local delicacies," he said.

He said Sultan Ibrahim had their signature Hainanese chicken chop with a glass of iced kopi-o during his visit.

"It was a privilege to have shared a piece of our tradition with him.

"We are honoured and grateful to His Majesty for the wonderful visit and for sharing this memorable moment with us.

"It has truly inspired us to serve with pride and passion," he said, adding that he hoped to meet His Majesty again in the future.

His Majesty graciously accommodating photo requests from patrons during a visit to Nasi Lemak Wanjo Kampung Baru on his official birthday last year. — All photos courtesy of Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

> Many were also in awe of His Majesty's easy-going and down-to-earth personality, which is not what one might expect from a King.
>
> MOHD NAZRI SAMSUDDIN

Sultan Ibrahim, accompanied by Comm Kumar, enjoying breakfast at Hua Mui restaurant in Johor Baru in January this year.

Sultan Ibrahim's visit to Nasi Lemak Wanjo Kampung Baru last year sparked much excitement among customers.

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

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(Above) YSIJ managing trustee Avinderjit (right) and chief executive officer Mohd Anizam (second from left) visiting patients at Sultanah Aminah Hospital after handing over new medical equipment to the hospital. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

(Right) YSR chairman Sugumaran (second from right) visiting victims of a house fire after extending financial aid.

Five foundations uplift Johor communities

By VENESA DEVI
venesa@thestar.com.my

HIS Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, has long been known as a compassionate Ruler with a deep sense of duty to his people.

Come rain or shine, His Majesty always stands by Malaysians, not only by providing aid but also by being physically present to offer moral support during difficult times.

Beyond lending support during disasters, His Majesty and the rest of the Johor royal family have also established five charitable foundations dedicated to serving the people, namely the Sultanah Rogayah Foundation (YSR), Sultanah Fatimah Foundation (YSF), Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ), Raja Zarith Sofiah of Johor Foundation (YRZSJ) and Tunku Laksamana Johor Cancer Foundation (TLJCF).

Each foundation focuses on different segments of society in Johor but all share the same goal – to uplift and support the community.

The YSR focuses on uplifting the Indian community through initiatives in education, welfare and entrepreneurship, while the YSF primarily supports the Chinese community, with emphasis on education and financial aid.

The YSIJ supports a wide range of charitable initiatives, including disaster relief, education, housing and healthcare.

The YRZSJ concentrates on educational programmes, while the TLJCF is devoted to providing medical aid and support for cancer patients.

Although these foundations primarily serve the people of Johor, His Majesty has also extended assistance to other states in his capacity as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Datuk Avinderjit Singh, YSIJ managing trustee, stated that their assistance extended beyond Johor, including 87,814 cubic tents delivered to state disaster committees nationwide.

"At the moment, we continue to focus on efforts to extend donations to Johoreans, as that is the main vision and mission behind the foundation.

YSF chairman Wong (centre) handing over a symbolic key for a new house to a family whose home was destroyed in a fire.

"However, His Majesty has also channelled aid to other states since assuming the role of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"This includes providing thousands of tents to flood-hit states, distributing over 1,428 food baskets to families in Melaka and donating laptops to students in Labuan," he said.

He noted that in 2024 alone, the foundation channelled allocations worth about RM4.2mil, including RM1.5mil in cash.

"The allocations cover various initiatives, including those focusing on education, housing, health and disaster relief.

"His Majesty is also a very hands-on Ruler who ensures that the allocation reaches the right people," he said, adding that His Majesty has a big heart.

Echoing this sentiment is YSIJ chief executive officer Mohd Anizam Jamian, who is also the founding chief executive officer of the TLJCF.

"Sultan Ibrahim's generosity is beyond what one could imagine. His Majesty is willing to go above and beyond to ensure his subjects are well taken care of.

"His Majesty always keeps a close eye on things happening on the ground and is often the first to extend a helping hand.

"Over the years I have served under the royal foundations, I have seen and felt His Majesty's and the royal family's sincerity," he said.

Meanwhile, YSR chairman Datuk R. Sugumaran said the establishment of the foundations is a testimony to His Majesty's love and compassion for the people.

"Being the kind-hearted Ruler that he is, His Majesty established five foundations in Johor to eradicate poverty and improve the people's quality of life.

"Sultan Ibrahim wants his people to live a dignified life, with no one left below the poverty line.

"His Majesty is also firm when it is necessary. His Majesty is a leader who wants to see his people succeed," he said.

Sugumaran, a former police officer and Sultan Ibrahim's former aide-de-camp, said the YSR is deeply committed to improving the lives of the Indian community.

"We focus on three key areas, namely education, welfare and entrepreneurship. We study each case thoroughly to ensure that aid reaches the right hands," he said.

He added that the foundation also places special emphasis on women's empowerment, students, the poor and individuals with special needs.

"Among the assistance we have provided are payments for tuition fees for underprivileged students, coverage of utility bills for those in need, subsidies for operation costs, and the provision of prosthetic limbs and other essential items from time to time.

"We also assist entrepreneurs who face challenges in starting their businesses," he said, adding that the foundation continuously reviews its initiatives to stay relevant.

YSF chairman Mejar Cina Datuk David Wong Khong Soon said that while the foundation primarily focuses on the Chinese community, they are committed to assisting individuals of all races.

"For now, our focus remains on serving those in Johor, but if the need arises, we are ready to assist on a national level.

"The YSF has gone across all districts in Johor several times, so we are well prepared to expand our reach nationwide whenever and wherever help is needed," he said.

He added that among the initiatives carried out last year were the allocation of RM1.5mil in financial aid to 3,000 Chinese high school students, and the awarding of bursaries worth RM1mil to 500 students of Southern University College.

"This year, we will again be providing RM1.5mil in financial aid to 3,000 Chinese high school students statewide, and RM1mil in bursaries to students at Southern University College.

"We will also renovate teachers' offices in 10 Chinese high schools with a total allocation of RM50,000," he added.

DIRGAHAYU TUANKU

Merafak Sembah Ucapan Setinggi-Tinggi Tahniah

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SAJ

Conservation efforts drive a greener future for all

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH
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> His Majesty's advocacy influences both minds and hearts because when the Sultan speaks, people act.
>
> NINA DIANA NAWI

LONG before becoming Malaysia's monarch, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, always emphasised the importance of conservation and safeguarding the environment to ensure the country's rich natural habitats are preserved for future generations.

Former Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) president Vincent Chow said he personally knew Sultan Ibrahim, who has a deep passion for environmental and wildlife conservation.

"In His Majesty's younger days, Sultan Ibrahim would always bring his children on camping trips to Endau-Rompin.

"Back then, I was a technical adviser for Johor National Parks and each time His Majesty went camping, I would be present.

"I also tutored Sultan Ibrahim's children about the various animals and plants found in the forest," he said.

Chow recounted instances where His Majesty would invite him to the palace, leading to hours-long discussions about protecting Johor's rich flora and fauna.

He noted that some 17 years ago, driven by his compassion and strong advocacy for nature and wildlife preservation, Sultan Ibrahim suggested establishing the Panti Bird Sanctuary in Kota Tinggi.

Chow added that this was because the area ranked among the top four birdwatching sites in South-East Asia.

"The Panti Bird Sanctuary, spanning about 1,200ha within the Panti Forest Reserve in Kota Tinggi, was officially gazetted as a bird sanctuary in 2008.

"This initiative aimed to protect the area's rich biodiversity, which includes over 300 bird species, some of which are rare and endangered," he explained.

Chow also said that over the years, development carried out by the authorities – particularly the Johor Forestry Department – has helped establish the Panti Bird Sanctuary visitor centre to educate the public on the importance of conservation.

He added that the Panti Bird Sanctuary is recognised as an Important Bird Area and has attracted many birdwatchers from around the world.

Chow also mentioned that Sultan Ibrahim's passion for environmental and nature conservation was passed down to his children, especially to the late Tunku Laksamana Johor, Tunku Abdul Jalil.

"Just like His Majesty, Almarhum Tunku Abdul Jalil was very passionate about environmental issues and wildlife protection.

"In fact, Almarhum Tunku Abdul Jalil even joined MNS as a committee member and patron, where he consistently offered valuable and constructive ideas to advocate for nature conservation. Sultan Ibrahim was very proud of Tunku Abdul Jalil's active role in society," he added.

Meanwhile, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) innovative science and mathematics education senior lecturer Dr Nina Diana Nawi stated that Sultan Ibrahim's clear stance on environmental issues has triggered tangible change.

"His Majesty's public criticisms have resonated strongly with both the public and local authorities, as Sultan Ibrahim has always emphasised that cleanliness and environmental responsibility are both a civic duty and a moral obligation – one that people are listening to," she added.

Nina, who is also affiliated with the Young Scientist Network–Academy of Sciences Malaysia (YSN-ASM), said that from a policy standpoint, His Majesty's assertiveness has stirred a sense of urgency.

"Local councils now respond more swiftly to environmental complaints while private companies tread carefully, wary of drawing royal disapproval. What might once have been buried in bureaucracy now receives public attention and swift action.

"Sultan Ibrahim's involvement is not just symbolic but a form of enforcement by presence, raising the stakes for those responsible," she added.

Nina said that His Majesty's visit to the heavily polluted Sungai Danga several years ago ignited a media storm that sparked immediate clean-up efforts and public debate.

She added that it was not just about one dirty river but instead became a mirror reflecting how society treats its shared spaces.

Nina said that in another instance, Sultan Ibrahim's criticism of filth in low-cost housing areas prompted renewed discussions about community responsibility and the importance of a maintenance culture.

"His Majesty's advocacy influences both minds and hearts because when the Sultan speaks, people act," she said.

Nina also said that in a society where the monarchy transcends political and social boundaries, His Majesty's voice carries a rare unifying power.

"In a constitutional monarchy, when the Yang di-Pertuan Agong speaks, it cuts through partisanship. It signals urgency to policymakers and pride to the public, elevating the environment from a technical issue to one of moral importance," she added.

Nina also said that, in her view, moral framing is essential for fostering long-term commitment – not only from institutions but also from ordinary Malaysians.

She added that higher learning institutions like UTM are stepping up to complement that mission.

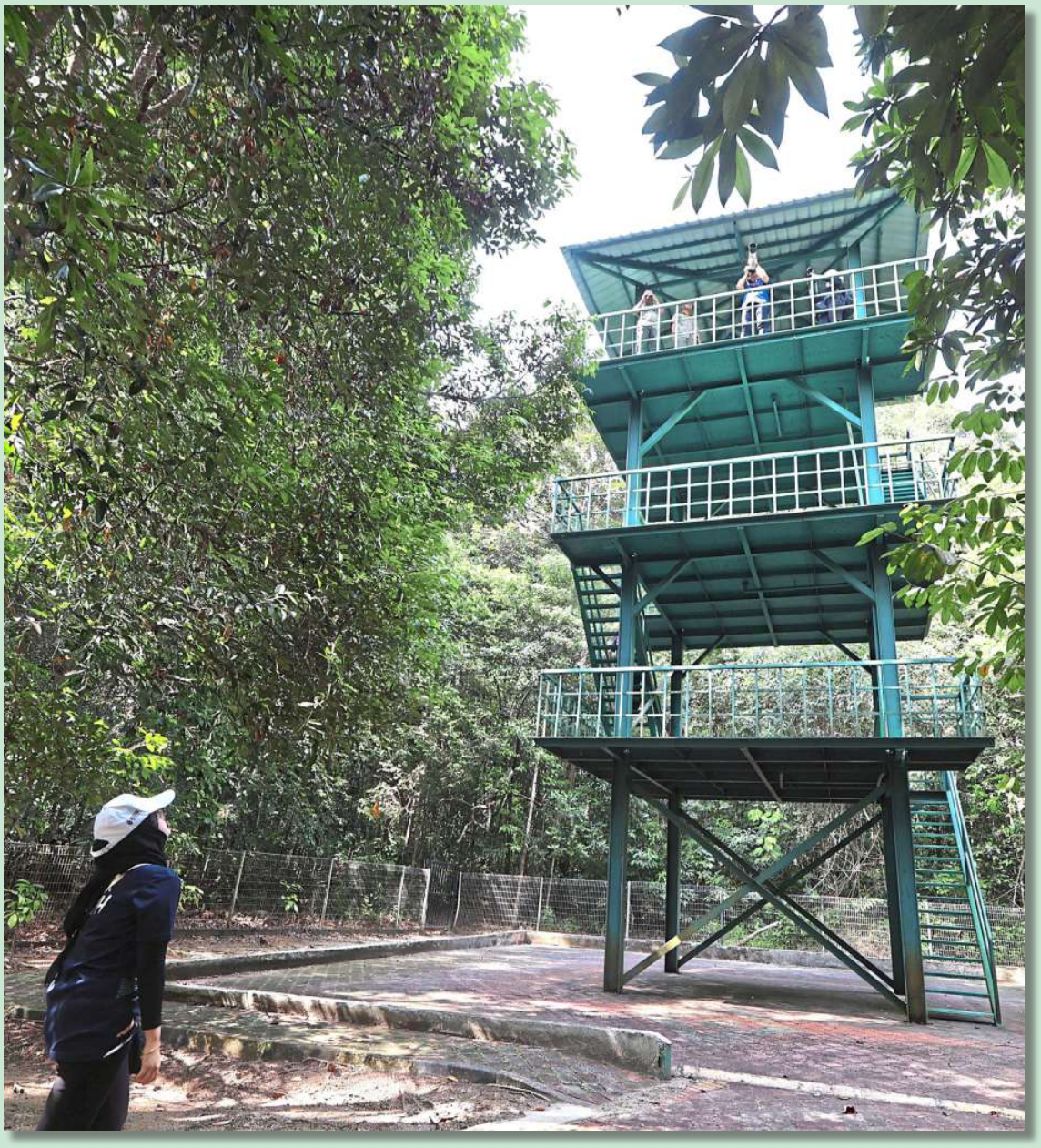
"As one of Malaysia's leading research universities, UTM is actively involved in projects ranging from flood risk analysis and water management to climate resilience and low-carbon living.

"These efforts are part of a broader academic responsibility to bridge science, policy and community engagement," she said.

Nina added that UTM serves as a think-tank, incubator and knowledge hub, supporting Sultan Ibrahim's vision by providing practical solutions through innovation, education and public programmes.

She said that the alignment between visionary leadership and academic expertise could be the key to building a greener Malaysia.

"Everyone has a role to play but when leadership is strong, people feel empowered to follow," she said.



A watchtower at Panti Bird Sanctuary provides visitors and birdwatchers with a vantage point to observe birds and other wildlife in the area. Located within the Panti Forest Reserve in Kota Tinggi, Johor, the sanctuary was established in 2008 with the support of Sultan Ibrahim.

Visitors at the Panti Bird Sanctuary using binoculars to observe the various birds in the area.

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His Majesty's Official Birthday

on
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Respect bridges all differences

By YEE XIANG YUN
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AMIDST the country's vibrant diversity, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong stands not only as a constitutional monarch but also as a steadying force and symbol of unity for all Malaysians, regardless of race or religion.

Known for championing harmony even during his reign as the Johor Ruler, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, continues to embody the spirit of unity on a national scale.

For 31-year-old youth volunteer and entrepreneur T. Thashidaran, the King's call for racial unity resonates deeply.

Inspired by His Majesty's words that unity is the greatest gift Malaysians can offer, Thashidaran has dedicated much of his time to helping the underprivileged, including the Orang Asli community.

"I also believe that sports is a powerful medium to unify people from different backgrounds.

"That is why I provide free football coaching to over 150 students from several schools in the Klang Valley twice a month," he shared in an interview.

Thashidaran, who won the Selangor-level National Prime Minister's Youth Award this year, said he is actively involved in various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including the Hindu Youth Organisation.

He has also helped install solar panels in Orang Asli villages and offered free school transportation for students at risk of dropping out.

Ho (left) and Ahmad Farhan both acknowledge the proactive role of the royal institution in building bridges among communities.

Thashidaran credited the start of his active volunteerism with an incident a decade ago when his car tyre burst on an expressway in Kuala Lumpur.

He didn't know how to replace a tyre at the time and his location meant complications with towing.

"Left with no choice, I stood by the roadside for about two hours in the drizzle. Thankfully, a kind Chinese uncle stopped his car and came to my rescue. Soon after, an elderly Malay motorcyclist also pulled over to help us.

"The experience changed my outlook on life. This camaraderie is one of the small things that happen daily in Malaysia and is something we often take for granted," he said, adding that after fixing his car, he called the two generous men to thank them for their help.

He added that the King has always emphasised unity and harmony, and he hopes Malaysians take that message to heart.

Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) secretary-general Ahmad Farhan Rosli echoed this sentiment, highlighting the royal institution's vital role in safeguarding national harmony.

"The Agong is our symbol of unity and the umbrella that protects all Malaysians.

"His Majesty has the authority to speak up on issues that threaten peace and uses that voice wisely," he added.

The MBM represents over 40 youth-based NGOs as Malaysia's largest youth federation and recently launched its Harmony Committee.

This initiative aims to enhance inter-racial and interfaith dialogue across the nation. Ahmad Farhan noted that the committee was officiated by Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who serves as the Bandar Tun Razak MP and is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's wife.

"Unity is a shared responsibility. We must go beyond tolerance as we must truly understand and get to know each other despite our differences.

"We need to actively seek understanding by engaging in dialogue and appreciating each other's cultures," added Ahmad Farhan.

Meanwhile, Johor Baru Tiong-Hua Association president Ho Sow Tong said Johor's deep-rooted multiracial harmony can serve as a model for the entire nation.

"The concept of Bangsa Johor was introduced by His Majesty's forefathers and reaffirmed by the Sultan himself.

"It shows how a multiracial society can thrive when built on mutual respect and cooperation," he said.

Ho pointed out that many in the younger generation are unaware of the long history of the Chinese community in Johor, which dates back to the reign of Sultan Abu Bakar in the 19th century.

He said Sultan Abu Bakar personally invited the Chinese to settle in Johor and help develop the state's economy by planting pepper and gambier.

The royal family also introduced the Kangchu system, under which the Chinese established riverine settlements known as kangkar across Johor.

"At one time, there were more than 20 kangkar settlements across the state, each led by a chieftain or Kangchu.

"The Chinese were not *pendatang*; they were invited guests of the Sultan. This sense of welcome and shared purpose laid the foundation for harmony,' he said, adding that the spirit continues to this day.

The goodwill between the Johor royalty and the Chinese was further cemented when the Chinese community leaders gifted Sultan Abu Bakar the Dewan Cina, a hall within the Istana Besar grounds that still stands today.

"The hall was once used as a meeting place for the state assembly. Today, it is still known as the Chinese Hall and houses plaques, gifts, and royal collections of the Johor royal family.

"More than that, the building symbolises friendship, appreciation and cooperation between the Malays and the Chinese," said Ho.

Ho added that Sultan Ibrahim walks the talk as His Majesty is often seen mingling with the people at various cultural functions, including the annual Johor Chingay Festival organised by Ho's association.

This serves as a reminder that Malaysia's strength has always come from its people – united in diversity, bonded by mutual respect and guided by a monarch who rises above politics to safeguard the nation's soul.

Thashidaran (left) provides free football coaching twice a month to students from schools in the Klang Valley.

Thashidaran (right) and other volunteers preparing to distribute food to the needy in the Klang Valley.

Thashidaran helping to install solar power panels in an Orang Asli village in Cameron Highlands.

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Tucked along Jalan Mahmoodiah in Johor Baru, Warung Saga has earned a loyal following for its authentic Johor cuisine. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Tradition served with every plate

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH
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FOR 39 years, a popular restaurant in Johor Baru has welcomed a diverse range of customers, both local and international, including His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia.

Warung Saga owner Ahmad Ismail, 44, said he still remembers the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's visit to his shop along Jalan Mahmoodiah about seven years ago.

"It was a Sunday in December 2018 when I received a call from one of Sultan Ibrahim's officers at around 11am saying that His Majesty wanted to have breakfast at my restaurant," he recalled.

"I started to panic because we were in the midst of preparing for the lunch crowd."

Ahmad explained to the palace officer that only one plate of mee rebus remained, as the other breakfast dishes had already finished.

He added that the palace officer assured him it was fine since His Majesty specifically wanted to try the mee rebus at Warung Saga and nothing else.

"Upon arriving, Sultan Ibrahim took a moment to look around my shop, which is filled with pictures of the Johor royal family, including past Sultans and former Yang di-Pertuan Agongs.

"There were no other customers at the time – just me, my staff and the officers accompanying Sultan Ibrahim as His Majesty sat at a table," he said, noting that he personally took the order from his royal guest.

Ahmad shared that His Majesty enjoyed a plate of mee rebus with a glass of teh tarik and spent nearly an hour at the restaurant, which is popular among locals for its authentic Johor delicacies.

"Sultan Ibrahim later called me over and asked how the restaurant was doing. His Majesty also offered valuable advice, encouraging me to continue running the business my late parents founded back in 1986," he added.

Ahmad recalled that just as Sultan Ibrahim finished his mee rebus, a lunchtime crowd began to gather outside the restaurant. His Majesty graciously motioned for them to come in.

"Before leaving, Sultan Ibrahim told me not to accept payment from the customers and gave me money to cover the cost of everyone's food that day," he added.

Ahmad said that nearly 39 years ago, his parents humbly started the restaurant with just a push cart and three small tables.

"Eventually, my late father decided to upgrade the warung into a proper restaurant while my late mother, who was a truly excellent cook, took charge of the cooking.

"My father wanted a name that resonated with the people. At that time, Malaysia had just launched its first national car, the Proton Saga, which inspired him to name the restaurant Warung Saga," he added.

Ahmad said that besides the good food, people from all over Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia also came to his restaurant to see the pictures of historical figures, including royalty, leaders and celebrities, as well as scenes from old Johor Baru.

He added that his father had thousands of photographs in his collection and hung them up in the restaurant so that customers could see them while enjoying their meals.

"My father even displayed photos of past presidents and prime ministers from Indonesia and Singapore, as we often have customers from both countries dining here.

Ahmad added that when Sultan Ibrahim was sworn in as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, he displayed pictures of that historic moment in his shop.

"When customers dine here, they often study the pictures and reflect on how much we have progressed as a nation. This progress is thanks to the leaders who have shaped our country," he said.

"I'm truly grateful for that, and having the chance to serve leaders like Sultan Ibrahim in my humble restaurant is a great honour for both me and my family."

Ahmad proudly showing a photograph of Sultan Ibrahim's visit to his restaurant in December 2018.

Warung Saga is well known for its display of pictures of historical figures, including royalty, leaders and celebrities, as well as scenes from old Johor Baru.

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Tranquil homes amid lush greenery

Artist renderings of a children's pool in Rosewood (left) and Rosewood's Garden Condo and Duplex Suite. — Photos courtesy of Tanah Sutera

By ZAZALI MUSA
metro@thestar.com.my

TANAH Sutera Development Sdn Bhd (Sutera) continues its commitment to creating vibrant and sustainable communities with the unveiling of Rosewood, its latest residential phase at The Seed.

This premier low-density development redefines urban living by offering residents a serene, resort-style environment.

Situated within a secure gated enclave, Rosewood provides a tranquil sanctuary surrounded by lush greenery and an array of thoughtfully curated lifestyle amenities.

Residents will benefit from a comprehensive selection of facilities designed to support wellness, connectivity and community living.

Key features include an Olympic-size swimming pool, a fully equipped gym, a jacuzzi, indoor badminton courts and spacious green areas.

Rosewood offers two home types meticulously designed to meet the needs of individuals and families at every stage of life, from young professionals and growing families to retirees seeking comfort and tranquillity.

The Garden Condo (Type A) boasts a spacious built-up area of 1,324 sq ft, thoughtfully crafted with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a utility room and a private garden spanning 290 sq ft.

The Duplex Suite (Type B), on the other hand, features a smartly optimised layout of 1,211 sq ft, offering three bedrooms and three bathrooms to suit modern lifestyle needs.

Strategically located in Taman Sutera Utama, Rosewood offers seamless access to major highways, including Jalan Skudai, the Coastal Highway, and the Second Link, facilitating convenient travel to Johor Baru City Centre and Singapore.

The development is surrounded by essential amenities such as Sutera Mall, Aeon Big, a wide selection of dining options, go-karting, entertainment and banking services from Public Bank and RHB Bank, all of which further enhance everyday convenience.

Families will also benefit from the close proximity to leading international educational institutions, including Small Wonder International Preschool, 100 Lambs and The New Bridge International School.

Senai International Airport, Vista Eye Specialist and medical centres are also within easy reach, providing comprehensive support for a well-rounded lifestyle across all generations.

The take-up rate has exceeded 85% as of the end of May this year – even before the official launch.

Show units are now open for viewing by appointment. For sales enquiries or to schedule a private tour of the show units, call 019-771 9009.

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