

# StarSpecial

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DAULAT TUANKU



## Long live His Majesty

Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum  
Sultan Iskandar celebrates his 63rd birthday today.

# Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

**DULI YANG MAHA MULIA**  
**SULTAN IBRAHIM IBNI ALMARHUM SULTAN ISKANDAR**  
**SULTAN YANG DIPERTUAN BAGI NEGERI DAN JAJAHAN TAKLUK JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM**

Merafak Sembah  
 Menjunjung Kasih Dan Setinggi-Tinggi Tahniah

Sempena  
**Sambutan Ulang Tahun Hari Keputeraan Rasmi**  
**Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku**

Pada 23 Mac 2021 Bersamaan 9 Syaaban 1442 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya  
 Yang Berdatang Sembah



**PETRONAS**

# Ruler funds aid to his people

By NELSON BENJAMIN  
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SINCE the Covid-19 pandemic hit the state last year, Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar and Johor Permaisuri Raja Zarith Sofiah Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah have been busy providing assistance to countless Johoreans.

This includes supplying more than 16,000 food packages with basic household groceries weekly since April last year to needy people from all 10 districts in the state.

They have also donated millions worth of medical supplies, hand sanitiser, face masks, personal protective equipment, ventilators and other items to frontliners in Johor.

Sultan Ibrahim, who celebrates his official birthday today, is often described as a caring and generous Ruler who never fails to come to the aid of his rakyat in dire times.

While many of his activities have been curtailed since the pandemic began, the Ruler has been working with his Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation and state government officials to dispatch aid to the rakyat.

According to Royal Press Office chief press officer Ravi Nambiar, Sultan Ibrahim has been personally funding most of this aid to the people and frontliners.

“He takes the time and effort to personally look into every detail, including the packaging of food boxes and even the cooking of food before they are distributed.

“His Majesty has been concerned about the sufferings of the people, especially during this pandemic, and is always thinking about what he can do to help,” Ravi added.

He said Sultan Ibrahim had also provided boat engines to fishermen and cash aid to the Orang Asli community and taxi drivers.

Besides aid during the pandemic, Sultan Ibrahim has also been helping flood victims in the state.

Those who meet Sultan Ibrahim for the first time might see the Ruler as a strict or stern person.

However, the Ruler is actually warm-hearted with an amiable personality, a good sense of humour and a love for cooking.

Sultan Ibrahim, who comes from a line of strong-willed, savvy and independent Rulers, is passionate about developing Johor into a modern and progressive state.

The Sultan’s vision is to transform the state into Malaysia’s next economic powerhouse after



Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar (seated, second from left) with Permaisuri Johor Raja Zarith Sofiah Binti Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah (seated, right) taking a family photo with the Johor royal family in conjunction with Hari Raya Aidilfitri at Istana Pasir Pelangi here in Johor Baru on May 24, 2020. – Photos courtesy of the Royal Press Office

the Klang Valley.

Sultan Ibrahim was crowned the fifth Ruler of modern Johor in March 2015, marking a historical moment as the last coronation in the state was held for his late grandfather, Sultan Ismail Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ibrahim, in February 1960.

The Sultan takes a keen interest in development policies and projects spearheaded by the Johor government as well as the Federal Government, and is always concerned about their impact on his subjects.

Since ascending the throne in 2010, Sultan Ibrahim has had no qualms about voicing his opinions or displeasure on various issues, including reprimanding politicians who sow distrust and disunity among the people.



The Johor Ruler having a discussion with Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (right) during the opening of the Johor state assembly in Kota Iskandar on May 14, 2020.

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The Johor Ruler cooking bubur lambuk to be distributed to frontliners at Istana Pasir Pelangi in Johor Baru on April 24, 2020.



Sultan Ibrahim enjoying breakfast at Restaurant HD along Jalan Maharani in Muar on Oct 17, 2020.



Sultan Ibrahim donated 42 ventilator machines to hospitals in Johor on April 11, 2020.



Sultan Ibrahim (left) receiving an audience from Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Hasni Mohammad at the grounds of Istana Pasir Pelangi in Johor Baru on June 3, 2020.

# Selfless and savvy Sultan

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The Ruler is also very IT-savvy and regularly posts his thoughts and comments on his official Facebook page.

Sultan Ibrahim has a huge following among his subjects; his Facebook page has over one million followers mainly from Johor, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Amid the current Covid-19 outbreak, Sultan Ibrahim has appealed to his subjects to keep calm and adhere to advice and the Covid-19 standard operating procedure set by the Health Ministry.

The Ruler has also called on his people to band together to curb the spread of the virus and to stop the spread of fake news.

Sultan Ibrahim is also a firm believer in Bangsa Johor, a concept aimed at promoting greater unity among people in the state.

The concept was initiated by his great-grandfather, Almarhum Sultan Sir Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar, in 1920 to unite the various races in Johor as one cohesive and united people with a strong sense of solidarity, harmony and peace.

A savvy investor with investments in an array of businesses both local and foreign, the Ruler is also an avid traveller just like his ancestors, who embarked on various voyages.

The Sultan also regularly brings along top Johor state officials and heads of government-linked companies during these business and trade trips abroad to help bring more investments into the state.

One of his passions is collecting old and new cars and motorcycles, which are all parked in garages within the palace grounds.

Sultan Ibrahim is also proud of his latest palace in Mersing, better known as Istana Flintstones.

This palace, located on a 24ha site overlooking the sea with a nine-storey lighthouse, is now a tourist attraction in Mersing town, which is known for its tourism and island-hopping packages.

*The Flintstones* was an American

animated series framed against a romanticised Stone Age backdrop and was hugely popular during its run from the early to mid-1960s.

In 1994, it was also made into a movie featuring big-name actors like John Goodman, Rick Moranis, Halle Berry and even Elizabeth Taylor.

On his interaction with his subjects, the Ruler is clearly happy with the *Kembara Mahkota Johor* programme, which started in 2001. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme was cancelled last year.

The expedition on vehicles, led by the Ruler, is aimed at forging closer ties between Johor's royal family and the people through various programmes carried out at each stopover along the journey.

Sultan Ibrahim's passion for sports is also well known. In his youth, he played a mean game of polo not just locally, but also in tournaments held in Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines.

He earned the distinction of being the best polo player in Asia during the polo world qualifications in the 1990s.

Sultan Ibrahim also enjoys parasailing, boating (jet ski), parachuting, shooting and driving sports cars. He once emerged champion in a falling plate shooting event organised by the army at the Malaysian Army Combat Training Centre (Pulada) in Johor.

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.

He received his formal education at Sekolah Temenggong Abdul Rahman (1) before leaving for Trinity Grammar School in Australia.

Later on, he travelled to the United States to pursue his studies in law and diplomacy.

He obtained his religious education from Sekolah Agama Air Molek in Johor Baru.

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



The Johor Ruler (in pink shirt) inspecting a house that sustained damage during a storm that hit Endau in Mersing on Oct 29, 2020. — Photos courtesy of Royal Press Office

He also received military training in the United States at Fort Benning, Georgia, and later at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

He was appointed deputy commander of the Johor Military Force upon completing his military training overseas.

He has trained and served in the Air Force and Navy, and is a qualified green beret commando in Malaysia and the United States. He is also a member of the Red Beret Kompasus of Indonesia and a fully qualified divemaster.

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

In 1981, he was proclaimed the Tunku Mahkota of Johor.

Sultan Ibrahim is married to Raja Zarith Sofiah, a Perak princess and an Oxford University graduate. She is also 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 Hassanah Jeffri and Tunku Abu Bakar Mahmood Iskandar Ibrahim.



Sultan Ibrahim pictured with a horse at the Istana ground on Feb 19, this year. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

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**Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai** (Chairman),  
**Tan Sri Dato' Tan Chee Sing** (Group Executive Vice Chairman),  
**Board of Directors, Management and Staff of**



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CORPORATION BERHAD

# Capable and optimistic MB



Hasni (centre) visiting booths during the launch of the Johor Farmers' Association mentor-mentee programme in Benut earlier this month.

We are now actively pursuing our state's food security programmes, where we encourage more land to be utilised for food production.

Another issue that Tuanku fully agrees on is the need for the land border with Singapore to reopen.

**The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the state. It has claimed many lives and infected countless people statewide. How have you and the state government been coping with the situation? What are the major lessons learnt?**

The pandemic has had an impact on the state, especially with regard to the tourism industry and the closure of the border with Singapore since last year. Many people have been adversely affected. It has been a challenging time but we have done our best to tackle it.

At one point, Johor was considered a green state as we managed to control the number of Covid-19 cases. But we couldn't do much when the new clusters started emerging, especially those involving the industries.

Not adhering to the standard operating procedures (SOPs), including bad housing and hostel conditions, was the main reason for the huge spike in cases in Johor.

We also started seeking cooperation from the foreign consulate offices here, including Indonesia, and associations dealing with foreign nationals to educate them on the SOPs for foreign workers.

As the number of foreigners who tested positive for Covid-19 started growing, we had to quarantine them at various centres, including at national service camps. When the number became too high, we started sending them to the MAEPS quarantine centre in Serdang, Selangor.

One of the major lessons learned is to get local authorities to check on worker hostels statewide. There should no longer be 40 people living in cramped conditions in one house. We should better manage our foreign workers.

Our communications team should also emphasise more on public awareness and get people to comply with the SOPs. We should also have more applications or online services to keep people informed about the latest developments so that if there is a similar outbreak in the future, we will be better prepared.

**How has Covid-19 impacted Johor's finances? Did the state**

**government have to stop or delay many projects or trim its annual budget? Does the government have adequate reserves and funds to ride through these challenging times?**

As you know, our budget this year will be a deficit one after enjoying surplus for 10 years. But it is designed in such a way so as not to disrupt any of our development programmes.

We want to help as many people as possible via assistance in terms of reduction of quit rent or land assessment tax, exemption on rental for facilities provided by the government such as local council stalls or shops and even reduced rental for low-cost homes.

Overall, the state's revenue is expected to be affected but for me, the most important thing is to manage our cash flow properly. At the moment, I can assure you that the state's financial status is very healthy in terms of collection, be it land tax or other forms of revenue.

It's still flowing in, except for one or two cases when requests were made to the government for payment rescheduling. This involves privatisation projects where developers have commitments to the government.

We also still have more than RM2bil in our reserves, which we have not touched despite being a deficit budget.

Based on the current situation, we have to give incentives to workers affected by the pandemic such as bus and taxi drivers, food delivery personnel and tourist guides.

Personally, I would prefer to have all these businesses back on their feet and running as usual, but all this can only happen if I can have the border with Singapore reopened. So, the assistance being handed out now is just meant as a temporary relief. I am hopeful that the economy will pick up in the coming months.

**Now that the national Covid-19 immunisation programme has kicked off in Johor, you have also taken your first vaccine dose. How is everything? What are your post-Covid-19 plans?**

So far, I am fine and feeling upbeat about taking my next dose later this month. After that, I hope I will have the necessary antibodies to fight off this virus.

Based on the information I have received, the vaccination programme in Johor is going well. There are no serious side effects and only a few people have

reported a mild fever or minor health issues after getting their jab.

I hope that post-Covid-19, we can start embarking on programmes to lure more investments into the state, including investments for our food security programmes with Singapore.

I would also like to visit some Middle East countries that have shown interest in collaborating with Johor in terms of food security and digital technology. All our planning is geared for when the border is reopened.

Johor also hopes to participate in some international forums, including a water forum in Singapore. We also want to intensify our Invest Johor efforts to get more companies to set up offices here.

I hope to visit Dell or HP in the United States as there are many opportunities that come with opening up a data centre here, as well as investments in green energy in Johor. Some of these companies have headquarters in Singapore and they are welcome to expand their activities to Johor.

**With the vaccination programme fully underway, are there any plans to reopen the two land borders to those who have been vaccinated? What are your thoughts about having a special immunisation permit or passport to let people commute regularly between both countries?**

I hope that the vaccination certificate, which is available on the MySejahtera app once a person is vaccinated, will be recognised by Singapore. I also hope there can be some kind of arrangement between Johor and Singapore for daily commuters to travel without having to be quarantined.

Johor is now consolidating its SOP and we have proposed to the Federal Government to reopen the border to the third category. First was the Reciprocal Green Lane, followed by the Periodic Commuting Arrangement. Now there is the Daily Commuting Arrangement.

The reopening of the border with Singapore is vital to spur Johor's economy. We are looking at reopening the border in May or June.

The use of the vaccine certificate is the best option to reopen the border. To achieve this, the government is expected to dispatch more Covid-19 vaccines to Johor soon to inoculate between 50,000 and 100,000 Malaysian workers.

To do this, the Federal Government will have to import more vac-

cines so that those who have to work in Singapore can get vaccinated earlier.

Our Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry will be handling the supply of additional vaccines to Johor to help inoculate these workers. For this, we are very grateful to minister Khairy Jamaluddin for his assistance.

As Malaysia is using the same vaccines as Singapore (Pfizer-BioNTech), it should not be difficult for both countries to recognise the inoculation process via the MySejahtera certificate.

I advise those working in Singapore to register for the vaccination and show proof of their employment there when the time comes. We have sent our proposal to Putrajaya to open up a third category for cross-border travel with Singapore.

For me, as long as the two countries can agree on a common SOP and vaccination certificate, it will mean that Singaporeans who have been vaccinated can cross into Johor without the need for quarantine.

**There are many transportation mega projects underway in Johor such as the double tracking project, Rapid Transit System (RTS) and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). How are they progressing and what are your hopes for them to be completed on time?**

The RTS project is scheduled to be completed in 2026. While the High Speed Rail project has been cancelled, the state has expressed hope for the project to be continued to Johor Baru, if not to Singapore.

We have pointed out the economic spillover effect of this project to the Federal Government. Also, the BRT will further strengthen our transportation system but we are looking at this project as something temporary as it can easily be converted into an LRT should the ridership increase.

Our present double tracking rail link between Gemas and Johor Baru is also progressing well.

**The number of homeless in Johor Baru seems to be on the rise, especially with the long queues of people coming to take food given out by NGOs and volunteers daily. How is the state government planning to address this problem?**

Yes, we acknowledge that there are some homeless people in the city area and we are trying to help them by providing food. But those are just temporary measures. We need to look at how we can resolve this issue in the long term.

Various agencies such as the Johor Baru City Council and the Women's Development Committee need to help find ways to tackle this problem. The state appreciates all the help from NGOs, associations and other bodies which have come forward to provide assistance to these people.

**It has been a year since you took over as Mentri Besar. How has it been for you personally?**

It has been a challenging year, but I take everything in my stride and do my best for the state and people. I have moments where I do feel that I need to push myself further for the betterment of the people and state.

After one year, I am optimistic that things will get better and that I can do better too.

IT has been a year since Datuk Hasni Mohammad became Johor's 18th Mentri Besar. Just 20 days after he was sworn in on Feb 28, 2020, the two land borders with Singapore had to be closed due to the movement control order (MCO) announced to tackle the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Star's NELSON BENJAMIN and MOHD FARHAAN SHAH talk to Hasni about an array of issues during his 12 months in office and his relationship with the Johor Ruler.

**You have known the Johor Ruler, Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, for many years. Since taking over as Mentri Besar, how has your relationship with him been? Do you meet with him often to seek his advice and discuss matters involving the state and rakyat?**

I have known Tuanku even before I became Mentri Besar. We share a common interest, namely big bikes, and I joined him during his Kembara Mahkota programme when he was the Tunku Mahkota.

Tuanku is not a person of protocol but he is always concerned about the state's affairs, especially the well-being of the rakyat. I meet him every Wednesday morning before my weekly state executive councillors meeting.

Our meetings are casual and I brief him on the happenings in the state. He also gives his ideas and input on matters involving the state and people.

Tuanku is a jovial and easygoing person who can join in any discussion. He also has a lot of insight when it comes to border and sovereignty issues with neighbouring countries such as Singapore. This certainly reflects how knowledgeable Tuanku is as the state Ruler.

As Mentri Besar, I have to be clear in whatever I explain to Tuanku as the matter must be within the state's purview. If it is not, I will let him know that we have to leave the matter to the Federal Government.

One example is the water negotiations with Singapore. Tuanku is concerned about this matter because under the contract, we have to supply 250 million gallons of raw water per day from the Johor River to Singapore. This is because our present water reserves stand at less than 5% while Singapore's water reserves are 56%.

To ensure that we can adhere to the water agreement, Tuanku always reminds us to ensure that our waterways and rivers are clean so that our rivers can support the state's consumption needs.

**Sultan Ibrahim has always been passionate about Johor and its development. What are his main concerns or issues which he has constantly reminded the state government to focus on?**

Tuanku is always supportive of plans to bring about development and investment into the state. He wants Johor to be the preferred state when it comes to investments but to achieve this, he wants us to ensure that all the infrastructure and human capital are in place.

He also supports the state governments' initiatives via its Seven Ikhtiar Makmur Johor, a guide for the state government to boost and revive the economy post-Covid-19.

Tuanku also supports the state's 2021 budget announcing many incentives to help the people, especially during the pandemic.

He also wants us to continue focusing on going digital or using new technology via our Johor Digital initiatives. He wants more Johoreans to get involved in this sector, especially with regards to emerging technologies.

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**YAB DATUK HAJI HASNI BIN MOHAMMAD**

Menteri Besar Johor dan Isteri  
 serta

Kepimpinan Kerajaan Negeri dan Rakyat Johor Darul Ta'zim.

# Role of a Mejar Cina

By YEE XIANG YUN

THE title "Mejar Cina" has a different role today compared to when it was last bestowed during Almarhum Sultan Sir Abu Bakar Ibn Almarhum Temenggong Seri Maharaja Tun Daeng Ibrahim's reign back in the 1800s.

Mado's oil palm estate manager Datuk David Wong, who was appointed the title on Sept 1 last year, said the general role of a Mejar Cina back then was to be a representative of the Chinese community to the royal palace.

"The Mejar Cina was one of the mediums between the palace and the Chinese community at the time, relaying the decrees of the Sultan.

"He was also tasked to convey the sentiments from within the community to the palace as a basis for plans to improve their livelihoods and integration into society – something like an assemblyman, if I may say so.

"With the changing of the times and also the style of governance, the role of Mejar Cina is very different today from what it was originally," he said in an interview with *The Star*.

He said the Mejar Cina's role today was clearly outlined: to work with all of the royal family's charitable foundations as well as the government to help those in need.

Wong, who is a descendant of Wong Ah Fook, a prominent leader and chief government contractor

who built some of the most recognisable heritage buildings in Johor, said he was grateful and honoured to be bestowed the title.

It also showed that current Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Almarhum Sultan Iskandar recognised the contribution of the Chinese community to the development of Johor from the time of his forefathers, he added.

As Mejar Cina, Wong mostly deals with the distribution of food aid to the less privileged members of society.

He said so far, over 16,000 boxes of basic food necessities had been distributed to those in need all over Johor from April 2020 until February this year.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has hit all levels of society hard. It is sad to see some families struggling to get by with insufficient food supplies.

"One box of basic food aid donated to a family will help them out for a few weeks. I hope more people will come forward to work with the royal family's foundations to help the less fortunate.

"It is important for those who are able to contribute, in any manner they can, to help those who have fallen on hard times," he said.

Wong added that the Sultan Ibrahim of Johor Foundation, along with other foundations under the royal family, had contributed various kinds of aid such as food, education supplies and medical equipment.

Wong said he would continue

working hard under Sultan Ibrahim's watchful eye to help as many people as he could.

"He is truly a Sultan for modern times, a man who has no qualms about rolling up his sleeves and taking action for the good of our state," he added.

According to the Johor Royal Court Council, the conferment was in line with His Majesty's decree of reviving the Mejar Cina title as a continuity of modern Johor's history.

In 1840, Temenggong Daeng Ibrahim allowed his followers of Chinese descent to move to Johor from Singapore and placed them in a settlement called "kangkar", or a river port by the Tebrau River.

By 1870, there were 29 such kangkars in Johor. The Chinese community was able to conduct activities such as agriculture and raising livestock as well as practising their religion, culture and traditions without interference.

The Temenggong also appointed a Kangcu (translated as master of the riverbank) among them to manage the community and take care of their security.

The outstanding ones among the Kangcu would then be appointed as Kapitan Cina and Mejar Cina.

Among their responsibilities were acting as the mediator between the Ruler and the community to ensure that the community's needs were met, as well as to shape and strengthen unity within the society as a whole.



Wong presenting financial aid to a recipient in Endau, Mersing. His duties as Mejar Cina involve working with the Johor royal family's charitable foundations and the government to help those in need.



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By VENESA DEVI  
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# Dining with the rakyat

NORFAEZAH Borhan never thought that her stall selling simple kampung dishes would become one of Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar's favourite places to stop by.

"The Sultan first stopped by my stall in November last year when he was passing through the area on his way to Mersing.

"I was out buying some things for my stall when I received a surprising phone call from one of my employees informing me that the Sultan was having a meal there.

"I was extremely nervous to hear that but also very excited," she said.

The 34-year-old mother of two added that she felt honoured to be able to talk to the Sultan, whom she described as friendly and down-to-earth.

"As a child, I would wait anxiously to get a glimpse of Sultan Ibrahim during his annual Kembara Mahkota tour. I used to only be able to see him from a distance.

"I never thought that one day, I would be able to not only talk to him in person but also serve him his favourite meal," she said.

Norfaezah said Sultan Ibrahim's favourite dish at her stall, R&R Dusun Pantii, was traditional lontong (rice cake), which she later named "Lontong Mahkota".

"After his first visit, he has dropped by two more times to get a taste of the lontong and other kampung dishes such as sambal kacang," she said.

She added that her stall is open daily from 7am to 6pm and offers a variety of kampung fare such as asam pedas ikan baung, soto, sayur lemak and traditional kuih such as apam balik.

Norfaezah, who is the daughter of a Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (Felcra) settler, said she started her business three years ago with a banana fritters stall that was located at the entrance of the R&R she is currently managing.

"I sold banana fritters at the stall for about two years before I started managing this R&R.

"I made it a point to employ children of Felcra settlers as my workers because I wanted to give them job opportunities, which are lacking in the area," she said.

Norfaezah started managing the R&R, owned by a Felcra co-operative, in March last year, just eight days before the first movement control order was announced.



Norfaezah showing a framed photo collage of Sultan Ibrahim's visit to her stall R&R Dusun Pantii. — THOMAS YONG/The Star



Sultan Ibrahim's favourite dish from Norfaezah's stall has been dubbed 'Lontong Mahkota'. (Right) Asam pedas ikan baung is among the dishes sold at R&R Dusun Pantii. — Photos by THOMAS YONG/The Star



"We had to stop operating shortly after opening, which was tough. However, Sultan Ibrahim's visit has helped to boost business as it allowed more people to find out about this R&R, which is located between Kota Tinggi and Mersing," she said.

Another small business owner who was able to share meaningful moments with the Johor Ruler through food is R. Janaki, 38, who owns a stall selling traditional Indian delicacies in Kulai.

"The Sultan visited my stall during his Kembara Mahkota tour in 2016. I was nervous but also honoured and excited when he chose to drop by my stall," she recalled.

"Not only did he eat at my stall, but he also went into the kitchen to try making his own thosai.

"We thought that we needed to first show him how it was done, but he seems to know his way around the kitchen.

"He spent around 10 minutes making a perfectly shaped thosai

on his first try without any assistance," she said, adding that she was impressed by the Sultan's skills.

The mother of two said that despite his short visit, Sultan Ibrahim was able to spend some time talking to and posing for photos with Janaki and her family.

"He was very friendly and humble. I asked if we could have a family photo with him and he was not only happy to do so, but he was also willing to wait for me to fetch

my children, who were not at the stall at that time.

"My children, who were about five and nine years old then, were both excited to take photos with the Sultan as they had only seen him on television before that," she said.

She added that although the Sultan only visited her stall once, his presence helped it gain popularity among locals and visitors from other states.

"Previously, only people from Kulai or nearby areas would frequent my stall.

"However, after Sultan Ibrahim's visit, people have come from as far as Singapore, Penang and Kuala Lumpur just to try the dishes here," she said, adding that she was grateful to the Sultan.

Janaki is the second-generation owner of the food stall in Jalan Besar Kulai here, which has been around since 1985.

"We sell traditional Indian dishes such as curry, thosai, puri as well as banana leaves dishes," she said, adding that the stall opens daily, except on Wednesday, from 6am to noon.



Janaki showing the thosai that has become famous at her stall in Kulai since the Johor Sultan's visit there in 2016.



Janaki's husband M. Kunalan preparing thosai at their stall.

# Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

**DULI YANG MAHA MULIA  
SULTAN IBRAHIM IBNI ALMARHUM SULTAN ISKANDAR  
SULTAN YANG DIPERTUAN BAGI NEGERI DAN JAJAHAN TAKLUK JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM**

Merafak Sembah  
Menjunjung Kasih Dan Setinggi-Tinggi Tahniah

Sempena  
**Sambutan Ulang Tahun Hari Keputeraan Rasmi  
Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku**

Pada 23 Mac 2021 Bersamaan 9 Syaaban 1442 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya  
Yang Berdatang Sembah



# Sovereignty of the Johor govt

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH  
farhaan@thestar.com.my

THIS year is very special for Johor as 2021 marks the 126th anniversary of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895. This constitutional set laid the foundation that shaped Johor into what it is today.

The idea of having the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895 came from Almarhum Sultan Sir Abu Bakar Ibni Almarhum Temenggong Seri Maharaja Tun Daeng Ibrahim, who was also known as the "Father of Modern Johor".

According to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities senior lecturer Associate Prof Dr Kassim Thukiman, it was Sultan Abu Bakar's unique upbringing that influenced the creation of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor.

"Sultan Abu Bakar received his education at an English school in Singapore, where he mingled with many Europeans. This broadened his mindset, especially in matters pertaining to the administrative style of a government.

"When he succeeded the throne as the Johor Ruler, Sultan Abu Bakar received advice from about 17 advisers on how to create a modern and efficient government system," he added.

Prof Kassim said that on April 14, 1895, Sultan Abu Bakar enacted the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor, which contains various clauses pertaining to the Johor government's administration.

He described Sultan Abu Bakar as an intelligent Ruler who wanted to have an administrative system that was efficient, organised and followed guidelines.

Prof Kassim stressed that the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895



A view of the Bangunan Sultan Ismail which houses the state assembly hall in Kota Iskandar, Johor. The Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895 has always emphasised democracy as part of the government's administrative system. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

was a modern written constitution which contained some 64 clauses, all pertaining to how the government functioned.

"At the end of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895, Sultan Abu Bakar had written that there should not be any changes to it unless there were amendments to fulfil the role of the constitution itself.

"To me, Sultan Abu Bakar was a futuristic and a visionary leader who wanted to develop Johor based on the constitution," he added.

Prof Kassim also noted that the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor is the earliest written set of rules in the modern

age. In 1911, Terengganu followed suit by establishing its own Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan.

He said other states in the country also created their own set of constitutions, especially after the second World War.

Prof Kassim added that Sultan Abu Bakar created a sultanate ruling system based on democracy in the state by having a Cabinet system, which helps advisers to play their respective roles in supporting the administrative side.

"This administrative system is inclusive because everyone, from the menteri besar and ex-officio to the state secretary and legal adviser, plays a role to support it.

"As an example, the education system in Johor started in 1902 and was further strengthened by the need for religious education," he said.

He pointed out that one of the clauses of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri 1895 was Islam as the official religion and the role of a sovereign Sultan in an administrative system.

"The Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor contained many clauses pertaining to the position of a Sultan and the appointment of a Permaisuri or Sultanah, and the administrative ways of council members and their respective authority.

"This includes having the menteri besar report to the Sultan to make sure that all of the policies are for the rakyat's well-being, religious affairs and international relations as Sultan Abu Bakar was well known throughout the world," he said.

Prof Kassim added that the impact of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895 lasted long after the country gained its independence in 1957 and would continue to do so in the future.

"The Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor 1895 showed the sovereignty of the Johor government and sultanate.

"From Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar to Almarhum Sultan Sir Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar to Almarhum Sultan Ismail Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ismail to the present Johor Ruler, Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, the constitution has and will always be upheld," he said.

Prof Kassim urged Bangsa Johor, especially the younger generation, to understand and accept that the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Johor was part of their identity and to respect its crucial role in advancing the state.

## Daulat Tuanku

Mengadap

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# Daulat Tuanku



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Vidyananthan visiting the Batu Pahat Hospital to check on the Covid-19 status there.



Vidyananthan visiting a Covid-19 assessment centre at the Bukit Indah Health Clinic in Johor Baru. With him is state health director Datuk Dr Aman Rabu (centre).

# Encouraging people to vaccinate

BY NELSON BENJAMIN  
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IT has been over a year since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the state. Despite the many challenges and adversities, the state government along with its frontliners have been doing their best to bring the pandemic under control in Johor.

The state's focus now is to ensure that more than two million people out of the state's three-million population are vaccinated under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme.

The programme started on March 1 and is divided into three phases. It is expected to continue until February 2022.

Johor Health and Environment Committee chairman R. Vidyananthan said the first phase kicked off with the vaccination of 40,000 front line personnel statewide, which would continue until April.

"In the first phase, we will have 62 vaccination centres statewide. For the second phase, we are still compiling data of people including the disabled and elderly," Vidyananthan said.

He added that so far, there have been no adverse reactions in those who had been vaccinated.

Vidyananthan stressed that he too had taken his first dose and was upbeat about taking his next shot later this month.

Johor received its first batch of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine on Feb 21.

"I urge the public not to worry and to register for the immunisation programme, which can be done through the MySejahtera app or at [vaksincovid.gov.my](http://vaksincovid.gov.my).

"Registration can also be done at government or private health facilities as well as through government outreach programmes for those in rural areas," he added.

On the Covid-19 situation in Johor, Vidyananthan said that so far, the state had recorded more than 39,086 cases with 103 deaths as of March 14.

Asked how the frontliners, especially medical personnel, in Johor had been coping since the first outbreak started in January 2020, he said they had gone through many trying situations to ensure that all measures to manage Covid-19 in the state were continuously implemented, including having



Vidyananthan visiting Hospital Sultanah Aminah in Johor Baru to check on the Covid-19 situation.

their leave frozen.

"Despite these challenges, their perseverance and determination has contributed to the successful effort in prevention and control measures as well as patient care," he said.

He admitted that the prolonged pandemic situation had taken a toll on the mental health of frontliners in terms of increased anxiety and work-related stress.

He said results from mental health screening of frontliners using the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale showed that there was an overall mild or moderate scale of mental health problems.

"However, the Johor Health Department has a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Team in place to support these frontliners via counselling and therapy activities," he added.

Vidyananthan said that while the virus had also infected several healthcare workers, they did not contract it while managing Covid-19 patients but rather through social transmission such as family gatherings and other social activities.

Asked how Johor managed to keep its case numbers low during the initial stages of the infection only to have them spike out of control

later on, he said the state had experienced three waves of Covid-19 so far.

He added that the first and second wave comprised 762 cases that were mainly contributed by import cases and the infamous Sri Petaling cluster, which spread throughout the whole country via family and social events.

He stressed that as for the third wave, which involved 35,195 cases, more than 50% of the transmissions were contributed by industries.

"These cases were mainly detected through self-screening by employers or mandatory screening done by the Social Security Organisation (Sosco)," he said.

He added that the balance of the cases under the third wave were contributed by those attending social events such as family gathering, wedding receptions and religious activities.

Vidyananthan said most of these were related to poor compliance to Covid-19 standard operating procedure (SOPs), reflecting complacency among the general public in ensuring implementation of new norms.

"We also had several clusters involving institutions such as prisons, correctional facilities, govern-

ment agencies as well as old folks homes," he noted.

"With every case reported, the district health office is expected to immediately trace all close contacts for investigation and quarantine.

"This is a very labourious and time-consuming undertaking which is at times made more difficult due to poor cooperation from certain groups," he added.

Asked what contributed to the huge spike under the industries cluster, Vidyananthan said it was due to poor conditions at the hostels or residences.

"Overcrowding, confined space and poor sanitation contributed to the spread of Covid-19 cases among the workers.

"We need continuous enforcement by the Johor Department of Labour and the Department of Occupational Safety and Health to ensure that employers comply with the rules and regulations for centralised living quarters.

"Apart from that, the Johor Health Department has engaged with both agencies to ensure that employers have a business continuity plan and provide a designated quarantine station for their workers in case positive cases are detected," he added.

Asked about the biggest challenge for frontliners now, Vidyananthan said it was getting the public to comply with all the advice and SOPs outlined for the prevention and control of Covid-19.

"The circulation of fake news regarding Covid-19 in Johor could also hinder the smooth implementation of prevention and control here. However, such fake news are quickly addressed by our team at the State Health Department," he added.

Asked if the worse was now over thanks to the arrival of the vaccine, Vidyananthan reminded the people not to be complacent.

"The public must continue practising the new norms, including wearing face masks, maintaining physical distancing at all times and avoiding the 3Cs (confined spaces, crowded places and closed conversation).

"Our objective is to achieve herd immunity or mass protection by ensuring that at least 70% of the Johor population is vaccinated by next year," Vidyananthan said.

He added that he had faced many challenges since he took over the health portfolio last year, but remained optimistic that Johor would be able to weather the Covid-19 storm soon.

# Daulat Tuanku



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**Yang Berhormat Setiausaha Kerajaan Johor**  
**Ketua-Ketua Jabatan Negeri, Persekutuan dan Daerah di Negeri Johor**  
**Serta seluruh Warga Kerja Perkhidmatan Awam Negeri Johor**

# Warm wishes for a beloved Ruler

Johoreans from all over the state extend their wishes to Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar on the occasion of Tuanku's birthday today.

By YEE XIANG YUN



“What I admire most about Tuanku is that he has no airs about him. I managed to shake Tuanku's hand a few years ago when he was eating at a nasi briyani restaurant. Tuanku was so cool about it and treated me like a friend.”

**Raihan Rahman, 31**  
Businessman



“I like Sultan Ibrahim's business sense and savviness in bringing in more investments into the state to help Johor prosper. We as Johoreans will benefit from the boost in the economy.”

**Veronica Indira, 37**  
Customer service specialist



“Not every state has a sultan and I am thankful for ours as Sultan Ibrahim is a caring leader and makes me feel safe in my beloved state. Daulat Tuanku.”

**Paul Sia Yong Sin, 17**  
Student



“In 2019, we brought our then 11-year-old son to the Chinese New Year Carnival in Johor Jaya, where Sultan Ibrahim was the guest of honour. My husband and I had to prop our son above the crowd so he could shake Tuanku's hand. He was so happy.”

**Yong Chan Chin, 48**  
Business owner



“Tuanku is a people-centric leader who always looks ahead to ensure that the Bangsa Johor people of all backgrounds can live in peace and harmony and have a prosperous future. I wish Tuanku good health always.”

**Nurhuda Bakar, 26**  
Civil servant



“I usually hear about the Sultan's good deeds on television. It gives me great comfort as a single mother of three that we have a strong Ruler like Sultan Ibrahim who is always looking out for his subjects in various aspects, from welfare to education.”

**Alawiya Hamidi, 55**  
Restaurant owner



“I appreciate Sultan Ibrahim's humble and relaxed nature as Tuanku is able to eat and drink at normal coffee shops and engage with the public, even though Tuanku is a sultan.”

**Hong Chee Seng, 52**  
School uniform shop owner



“I usually tune into the Johor royal family's news via Facebook and I feel proud to have a sultan who not only loves and cares for his subjects, but also displays a strong ability to manage and lead the state.”

**Lizfiana Samerra Anak Tony, 17**  
Student from Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Temun



“I was lucky enough to work indirectly with Tuanku for the Kembara Mahkota Johor expedition since 2010. I can feel that Tuanku really humanises his subjects by the way he respects and values them. Tuanku truly is a one-of-a-kind leader.”

**Mirza Muhammad, 46**  
Community development volunteer



“The royal family headed by Sultan Ibrahim sets a good example by advocating various aspects such as helping cancer patients, creating awareness on animal cruelty and putting Johor on the map with the state football team's success.”

**A. Nishyanthi Anbalahan, 30**  
Pharmacy assistant



# Daulat Tuanku



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# Making Mersing clean for all

By **REMAR NORDIN**  
metro@thestar.com.my

THE Mersing District Council (MDM) has been fortifying its environmental awareness campaign for both tourists and locals.

MDM president Norazmi Amir Hamzah said this comes after Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Almarhum Sultan Iskandar's decree on ensuring that the cleanliness of the district is well kept as Mersing is one of the top tourist destinations in the state.

"Sultan Ibrahim is very particular when it comes to environmental issues, and he always goes to the beaches near the city centre to personally check on their cleanliness level.

"His Majesty also likes to conduct random inspections around Mersing, so we at the district council are always prepared to accompany him to the places he wishes to monitor," Norazmi said when met at his office here on March 11.

He added that MDM has always worked closely with the relevant agencies, including SWM Environment, Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp), the district office as well as the Irrigation and Drainage Department in maintaining cleanliness and managing waste.

"Our focus now is on increasing the level of awareness for visitors who come to Mersing as well as the locals.

"Sultan Ibrahim has also personally advised me to double our efforts in enforcement and closely

monitor our area, especially on long weekends or public holidays when visitor traffic is high," he said.

Norazmi said enforcement patrols are done every day, adding that it does not only focus on environment patrol but other offences as well.

"We are working together with SWM Environment to spread awareness to the public.

"Punitive action will only be taken as a last resort," he said, adding that a person found to be littering can be charged under the anti-litter by-law.

According to Norazmi, among the beaches where His Majesty conducts checks are Pantai Bandar Mersing, near Taman Rekreasi Mersing, towards Dataran Kembara and up until Pantai Air Papan aside from Pulau Mawar.

"Spreading awareness to the public is important as every litter of rubbish that is not put into the rubbish can end up in the ocean," he added.

Meanwhile, Mersing Tourism Association secretary Ahmad Firdaus Shaik Omar said spreading awareness of environmental cleanliness was one of the association's main focuses.

"It's like what Sultan Ibrahim has said on his Facebook page – Mersing is one of the international icons of the state, and it is up to us to make sure that the environment is well protected.

"The people of Mersing are well aware of His Majesty's concerns for the environment.



Students and teachers from Maktab Rendah Sains Mara Mersing conducting a beach clean-up activity at Pantai Bandar Mersing.

"We hope that we, together with members of the public can fulfil His Majesty's wishes in making sure that Mersing remains a top tourism product in the state," Ahmad Firdaus added.

In December last year, Sultan Ibrahim through his official Facebook page expressed his disappointment over the attitude of some people in Mersing for failing to keep the district clean.

Sultan Ibrahim added that Mersing does not only attract visitors from abroad but is also a district that is rich in natural beauty.

The Ruler stressed that if such an attitude continued, it would also have a negative impact on public health.



A family collecting rubbish at a beach in Mersing.

## Daulat Tuanku

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# World-class football stadium

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH  
farhaan@thestar.com.my

THE world-class Sultan Ibrahim Stadium, home of the seven-time Malaysian Super League champions, the Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) Football Club, has become an iconic building not only in the state but also throughout the country.

The state-of-the-art football stadium, named after Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, was completed in January last year and officially opened its gates to the club and football fans on Feb 22, 2020.

Located within JDT Sports City in Iskandar Puteri, the stadium, which cost more than RM200mil to build, has a 35,000-seat capacity.

It recently gained global recognition after beating 19 other stadiums in the world to be voted as the Stadium Of The Year 2020 in a poll by Polish-based website StadiumDB.com.

Each person was entitled to cast one vote, selecting their top five venues (giving them five, four, three, two and one point respectively). According to a post on the Southern Tigers Facebook page, the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium garnered 64,260 points.

It finished way ahead of the Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, which garnered 23,390 points, and the Ahmed bin Ali Stadium in Qatar, which will be hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022, with 22,341 points.

According to StadiumDB.com,



The Sultan Ibrahim Stadium in Iskandar Puteri was voted as the Stadium Of The Year 2020 in a poll by Polish-based website StadiumDB.com.

of the 21,821 votes cast for the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium, over half came from South-East Asia.

"That is where the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium made the biggest waves last year, becoming the top football stadium, the first one built without a running track in Malaysia and for a club that is rising to international prominence," it said.

Other stadiums in the competition included the Education City Stadium in Qatar; Corum Sehir Stadyumu in Turkey; Batumi Stadium in Georgia; Sofi Stadium in the United States; Gursel Aksel Stadyumu in Turkey; Bloomfield

Stadium in Israel; and Xi'an OSC Stadium in China.

Johor tourism, youth and sports committee chairman Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi said he was especially proud of the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium's achievement in being chosen as the Stadium Of The Year 2020.

"We do not just have a world-class stadium, but also a world-class football team in Johor.

"The track record speaks for itself and this is due to the leadership of Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail ibni Sultan Ibrahim, who has put JDT in a class of its

own," he added.

The JDT-owned Sultan Ibrahim Stadium sits on 28ha of land that also houses the club's headquarters.

Plans for an adjacent state-of-the-art training centre for all JDT teams, from senior to Under-12, are also in the pipeline.

The Sultan Ibrahim Stadium has eight specially themed elegant corporate boxes to suit various hospitality needs.

It is the first football-only stadium with natural grass in Malaysia where the pitch is laid with Zeon Zoysia grass and has a drainage

system that prevents water logging.

The stadium also comes with modern LED spotlights and multi-coloured and multi-rhythm building lights.

During its grand opening, thousands of JDT fans and invited guests were entertained by British singer and *X Factor* winner Leona Lewis and local singers Ayai and Hakim, as well as a magnificent display of fireworks.

JDT also lifted the 2020 Charity Shield and picked up their seventh Malaysian Super League title in a row at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium last year.

The club also clinched this season's 2021 Charity Shield after beating Kedah at the stadium where they have remain unbeaten.

Previously, JDT played its home matches for both local and regional football matches at the Larkin Stadium.

The Larkin Stadium, which was originally built in 1964, went through extensive renovations in 1991 as the state host of the Malaysian Games (Sukma) a year later.

It was also used for the FIFA under-20 World Cup tournament hosted in Malaysia.

Besides that, the Larkin Stadium was used by FIFA as a neutral venue for a World Cup playoff match between Japan and Iran for the 1998 tournament.

The stadium is now being used by the club's second team, JDT II, currently playing in the Malaysian Premier League.

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Pada 23 Mac 2021 Bersamaan 9 Syaaban 1442 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya  
Yang Berdatang Sembah

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# Helping youth share their talents

By VENESA DEVI  
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JOHOR youth are looking forward to experiencing the full benefits of the Tunku Mahkota Ismail Youth Centre (TMIYC), which is expected to be set up in each district state-wide.

The youth centre was initiated by Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail Ibni Sultan Ibrahim as part of his vision to strengthen youth development in the state.

Iskandar Malaysia Youth Committee representative Dylan Sih, 28, said it was a timely initiative that could do wonders to improve the development of youth in the state while also providing opportunities in areas such as entrepreneurship and career development.

"Many youth have been badly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and are unable to get jobs after graduating from university.

"There is an urgent need for youth to have a platform where they can uncover their fullest potential and be given better chances to strive post-pandemic.

"This youth centre has come at the right time and I believe it will assist many who are affected by the pandemic, especially in terms of getting the necessary training and networking space," he said.

Sih added that apart from being equipped with facilities that would help improve the quality of lives, the centre would also give youth a place to gather and share their interest and talents among peers.

"It is important for youth to have



A skatepark is among the 11 facilities available at TMIYC Johor Baru.

a conducive space for such discussions. I hope that the youth centre will also spur more community-based programmes that benefit both youth as well as the people around them," he said.

Muralist Iskandar Noor Rahim, 38, said the centre is a much-needed space that will help create a more rounded experience for the community as a whole.

"I have used some of the facilities at TMIYC Johor Baru. It is a unique space that has the potential to bring people with different passions and talents together.

"It gives the people of Johor, especially youth, a space to indulge in activities they are passionate about. This allows growth and a sense of community to develop organically among those who are able to make use of the centre," Iskandar said.

He added that with such an establishment in every district, more youth from outside Johor Baru would be able to nurture their talents and contribute more to the community.

Engineer P. Prakash, 26, said the facilities at the youth centres allow youth to have a more active lifestyle where they can indulge in other recreational activities.

"It gives us an escape from daily life and a safe place to take part in healthy activities such as mounting climbing and biking. It is hard to find a space that provides such facilities for free.

"It will also allow more people, especially youth, to take part in more community-oriented programmes and drive us to play a bigger role for the society," he said.

The first TMIYC in Hutan Bandar



Artist Iskandar Noor Rahim (left) painting a mural with other local talents at the TMIYC Johor Baru.

Johor Baru was officiated by Tunku Ismail on Dec 21 last year.

During its official launch, Tunku Ismail said TMIYC was the realisation of part of his vision to strengthen youth development.

"TMIYC Johor Baru's goal is to create a conducive space to enable Johor youth to unearth their talents for personal development. My wish is that the centre will be the focal point in fostering a sense of togetherness in the community, in line with the Bangsa Johor concept.

"TMIYC Johor Baru is the first youth centre and I have planned to open a youth centre in every Johor district. I hope the Johor youth will enjoy and utilise all the facilities at TMIYC entirely," he said.

TMIYC Johor Baru is located within 6.07ha of land in Hutan Bandar near the city centre, with

11 facilities that cater to youth.

Among the facilities available are the Pump Track, Canopy Walk, Youth Centre, Mountain Bike Trail, Chill Pods, Rock Yard, Parkour Park, Kiddo Ground and Skatepro.

On Dec 29, merely a week after the launch of the first TMIYC, Tunku Ismail officiated the groundbreaking ceremony of a second youth centre in the Muar district.

"TMIYC Muar will be equipped with various facilities for the benefit of youths and will be the focal point for personal development and group activities.

"In the future, the youth community in Muar and nearby districts will not need to travel far to enjoy facilities such as a fully synthetic football pitch, extreme sports venue, futsal courts and dormitories for short stays," he said.

## Daulat Tuanku

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*Nurturing Environments, Enriching Lives.*

**The Board of Directors, Management & Staff of  
Matrix Concepts Holdings Berhad (414615-U)**

# Ensuring well-maintained infrastructure

BY NELSON BENJAMIN  
nelson@thestar.com.my

EACH year, the Johor government allocates tens of millions of ringgit to ensure that the state's infrastructure and amenities, including roads and street lights, are properly maintained and in good working order.

Johor Public Works, Transportation and Infrastructure committee chairman Mohd Solihan Badri said this year alone, RM215mil had been allocated for the maintenance of state and federal roads.

"The overall budget for this year is still under review but RM65mil was approved for federal roads and RM150mil for state roads," he said.

Solihan added that last year, RM141mil was allocated for federal roads while RM188mil was allocated for state roads.

He also said one of his concerns was to ensure that damaged roads and those riddled with potholes were immediately patched up to ensure the safety of motorists, especially motorcyclists.

"While we have several major infrastructure projects underway in the state, we do not overlook basic infrastructure issues such as poor or faulty street lighting or potholes," he said, adding that this year, the Public Works Department (JKR) had allocated RM840,000 for street lighting along federal roads and RM1mil for state roads.

Solihan stressed that all maintenance of roads in the state was done via the Malaysian Road Records Information System (Marris), which covers federal, state, rural and roads under the jurisdiction of the local authorities.

He admitted that despite the funding, maintenance of thousands of kilometres of roads, especially due to Malaysia's unpredictable weather conditions, was not an easy task.

"I always remind the JKR district engineers and the road concessionaires of their responsibility to ensure that all potholes or damaged roads are repaired immediately.

"They need to work fast. I also want issues with regards to faulty street lights to be fixed immediately and this requires cooperation between JKR and the local councils," he said.

He added that JKR also has a memorandum of understanding to



Solihan showing the infrastructure projects in progress throughout Johor, mainly roads being constructed or upgraded. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

collaborate on such issues with the Johor Baru City Council and the Iskandar Puteri City Council.

A similar memorandum is underway with the Pasir Gudang City Council.

Solihan has his work cut out for him as he oversees more than 12 agencies, including those involved in transportation, airports, ports and highways in the state.

He stressed that Johor was experiencing exciting times, especially with many huge investments in the transportation sector.

Among the major projects are the double tracking project, the cross-border Rapid Transit System project with Singapore and the Bus Rapid Transit project, Solihan noted.

"Presently, all these projects worth billions of ringgit are progressing well," he said, adding that under the Johor transportation

plan, these different modes of transport would be integrated at JB Sentral, which would be the city's transportation hub.

He added that the state's public transport system was expected to grow in tandem with the state's economic growth and there would be a more efficient transportation system throughout the state in the coming years.

Currently, the state has the Bas Muafakat Johor (BMJ), a free public bus service introduced in 2016, Solihan said.

"Although foreigners are not allowed to use this service, the Johor Public Transport Corporation permits international students to use this service for a fee," Solihan said, adding that BMJ currently has a fleet of 69 buses servicing 61 routes involving 16 local authorities statewide.

"Since its launch in April 2016

until January 2021, its ridership was 9,373,948. The ridership has been increasing every year.

"In 2018, the ridership was 6,234,279 and increased to 8,136,291 in 2019.

"Despite the Covid 19 pandemic, the ridership in 2020 increased at a slightly slower rate to 9,306,335," he said.

Following requests from local residents, the state government planned to add 10 more BMJ routes this year, he added.

Solihan stressed that PAJ would also restructure all BMJ lines to ensure that the service routes were more accessible and connected to the state's other public transport systems.

When asked how he has been coping with the many tasks at hand since being appointed as a state executive councillor a year ago, Solihan said he always strives to

give his best in everything he does.

"I have worked more than a dozen types of jobs in my career, including working as a journalist for about 13 years with two Malay dailies.

"I like challenges and over the past year, we have made progress, including taking over the Kukup ferry jetty which was problematic previously, signing a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that 40% of construction work for RTS goes to local contractors valued at about RM800mil and getting additional funds to upgrade certain stretches along the Pasir Gudang Highway for RM10mil," he added.

Solihan said most of the major projects he oversees would take some years to be fully completed but once they were ready, they would certainly spur Johor's development.



The Bas Muafakat Johor service comprises a fleet of 69 buses servicing 61 routes involving 16 local authorities in Johor.



The launch of the Rapid Transit System Link (RTS) between Johor Baru and Singapore has brought much excitement as many people have been waiting for the project for more than a decade. — NUR AISYAH MAZALAN/The Star



# Daulat Tuanku



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**Ranhill Utilities Berhad** 201401014973 (1091059-K)  
**Ranhill Capital Sdn. Bhd.** 201401034295 (1110393-P)  
**Ranhill SAJ Sdn. Bhd.** 199901001818 (476718-H)  
**Ranhill Water Services Sdn. Bhd.** 200501004811 (681858-H)  
**Ranhill Water Technologies Sdn. Bhd.** 199401017329 (303007-T)  
**Ranhill Powertron Sdn. Bhd.** 199501001148 (330342-K)  
**Ranhill Powertron II Sdn. Bhd.** 199501025099 (354304-U)  
**Ranhill Power O&M Sdn. Bhd.** 199701002432 (417928-T)  
**Ranhill Power O&M II Sdn. Bhd.** 199501025101 (354306-D)



Government buildings at Kota Iskandar in Iskandar Puteri, the administrative centre of the Johor administration. The state government has a crucial role to play in persuading international investors to relocate their operations to Iskandar Malaysia.

# Expanding investment opportunities

By ZAZALI MUSA  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

JOHOR is in a good position and has the right ecosystem to attract more multinationals (MNCs) from all over the world to relocate their operations to Iskandar Malaysia.

Johor South SME adviser Teh Kee Sin (*pic*) says the Johor state government and Iskandar Regional Development Authority (Irda) need to work faster to attract new investors.

He cites Johor Baru's proximity to Singapore as an added advantage in attracting MNCs and investors from all over the world to relocate their operations to Iskandar Malaysia.

"By investing in the economic growth corridor, they have Singapore as an international trade and financial centre and enjoy competitive cost in Malaysia," says Teh.

He says many MNCs and China-based manufacturing companies are contemplating moving part of or even their entire operations to countries in South-East Asia.

"Asean countries want to attract the MNCs and Chinese manufacturers; Johor should not miss the boat," adds Teh.

He says Johor and Irda must be more aggressive and proactive in attracting investors as other countries are aggressively courting MNCs.

He says Johor should look at attracting new technology industries such as fintech, telecommunications, renewable energy, green technology, information technology, data centres and e-commerce.

"These will further strengthen and develop Johor's position as a preferred investment destination in the country," says Teh.

Iskandar Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Md Salikon Sarpin says Johor has established itself in the electronics and electrical manufacturing activ-



Teh says Johor and Irda must be more aggressive and proactive in attracting investors.

ities over the years and now is the time to bring it to the next level.

"By moving up the value chain, Johor can attract more capital intensive and high-technology investments to the state," he says.

Salikon adds that Irda must continue to demonstrate how attractive Iskandar Malaysia is and remain as a preferred investment destination regardless of the economic situation.

He says having good infrastructure, be it in terms of telecommunications, road and highway networks, uninterrupted utility supplies, Internet connectivity and a ready pool of skilled and talented workforce, is important to attract investors.

"These are all the ingredients that have made Iskandar Malaysia attractive to potential investors and will likely remain so in the years to come," says Salikon.

He adds this is definitely not an easy task in an ever-changing global economy, but Iskandar Malaysia has proven that is able to sail through economic challenges since its inception on Nov 4, 2006.



Johor Baru's close proximity to Singapore gives it an added advantage in attracting MNCs and investors from all over the world. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Therefore, more efforts are needed to continue attracting new investments to develop Iskandar Malaysia, he concluded.

According to Irda statistics, Iskandar Malaysia attracted RM17bil investment in 2020, less than the average RM30bil it could draw in previous years, due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Irda expects the pandemic to impact investment into the economic growth corridor, projecting an estimation of RM15bil to RM17bil for 2021.

Johor Indian Business Organisation president P. Sivakumar says there is an urgent need for the state government to boost efforts to strengthen Johor's economy by attracting more investors and offering incentives to encourage

local businesses to be more competitive.

He says the influx of local and foreign investors will not only create job opportunities but will also benefit Johor-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Sivakumar says the Johor and Federal governments should continue supporting SMEs, including giving them incentives to help expand their operations.

"SMEs are still the heartbeat of the state economy and play a major role in spurring economic development," he says.

Sivakumar says if Johor's direction is towards a knowledge-based economy, then it has to be complemented with educated and skilled human resources or human capital.

He says with local businesses in both the manufacturing and service sectors moving up the value chain, they need to pay higher salaries in order to be competitive.

"Although Singapore is still the main attraction for local jobseekers, Johor needs to find and train the right people by subsidising training for employees," Sivakumar adds.

He says the country's education policy must be reviewed urgently to include skills development in the syllabus if Malaysia wants to become a high-income nation.

Sivakumar is optimistic that Johor will be able to attract high capital and technology investments as the state has emerged as the leading investment destination in Malaysia over the years.

# Daulat Tuanku



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Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (902884V)



The RTS Link between Johor Baru and Singapore is expected to be up and running by 2026. — NUR AISYAH MAZALAN/The Star



Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong (right) handing over a replica of the Rapid Transit System (RTS) train model to Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar (left) during an audience held at Istana Flintstones in Mersing, Johor on Dec 30, 2020. — Pic courtesy of Royal Press Office.

# Boosting Johor's transportation

By ZAZALI MUSA  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

JOHOR will benefit immensely in terms of economic development when the three major transportation networks begin operating within the next few years.

The networks are the Rapid Transit Link (RTS Link) connecting Johor Baru and Singapore, the Gemas-Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project (EDTP) and the Iskandar Malaysia Bus Rapid Transit (IMBRT).

KGV International Property Consultants (M) Sdn Bhd director Samuel Tan Wee Cheng says the RTS Link will be the main choice for future transportation between Johor Baru and Singapore.

He says the project connecting Johor Baru and Singapore will bring long-term benefits to the southern part of Johor.

"Malaysia, in particular Johor and Singapore, can look forward to better connectivity and accessibility with the project," says Tan.

He adds that the Iskandar Malaysia economic region will benefit the most from the project due to its close proximity to the republic.

Tan says apart from the manufacturing, property and retail sectors, other economic segments which will benefit from the RTS Link include hospitality, tourism, medical, food and beverage, entertainment and education.

He says the project linking Johor Baru and Singapore is also good for thousands of Malaysians and Singaporeans using the Causeway to commute daily between the two points.

Tan says the project will take the pressure off the Johor Causeway as traffic is heavy there, especially during the peak hours and public holidays.

"This has resulted in economic losses and opportunising costs as investors are deterred from investing in Iskandar Malaysia," he says.

The RM10bil RTS Link connects Bukit Chagar in Johor Baru to Woodlands in Singapore, serving about 10,000 passengers per hour. It is targeted to be up and running by 2026.

Meanwhile, Iskandar Regional Development Authority (Irda) chief executive Datuk Ismail Ibrahim says the population of Iskandar Malaysia is estimated to swell to three million people by 2025.

He says this represents an increase of 57% from 1.8 million people in 2013.

The population density is expected to be 1,400 people per sq km, which is considered relatively low



The winning design of the Bukit Chagar station of the RTS Link dubbed 'The Integration of Two'.



Tan says the RTS Link will be the main choice for future transportation between Johor Baru and Singapore.

compared to the Klang Valley and Singapore, which currently have 6,800 and 7,800 people per sq km respectively.

Ismail says vehicle ownership is expected to increase from 500 vehicles per 1,000 persons presently, to more than 800 vehicles per 1,000 persons come 2025.

"On that note, Iskandar Malaysia requires a public transport system which is cost efficient and commiserates with the demand," he says.

Ismail says with this demand rate, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is sufficient as it provides a service that is modern, convenient



Ismail says Iskandar Malaysia requires a public transport system which is cost efficient and commiserates with the demand.

and modern, and differs from the regular bus services currently serving Iskandar Malaysia.

Ismail says the network has dedicated lanes, coupled with the Intelligent Traffic System (to provide a smooth and seamless journey), automated and cashless ticketing and doorstep-to-destination network reach and connectivity.

"The IMBRT is expected to be the preferred option for the way people in Iskandar Malaysia travel," he says.

Ismail says although IMBRT will be the first comprehensive BRT in Malaysia, it is already in use in



Wong Boon Lang says the Gemas-Johor Baru EDTP will help to spur development in secondary towns and rural areas in the state.

more than 170 cities worldwide such as Bogota, Columbia, Jakarta, Indonesia and major cities in Europe such as Istanbul, Turkey.

He adds that collectively, the BRT network around the world serves more than 34 million passengers daily with a network extending over 5,000km.

"The objective of the IMBRT is to reduce traffic congestion by attracting the public to switch to using public transport and minimise utilisation of their private vehicles," says Ismail.

Johor Real Estate and Housing Developers Association (Rehda)

branch chairman Wong Boon Lang says the Gemas-Johor Baru EDTP will help to spur development in secondary towns and rural areas in the state.

He says the project, which is slated to be completed by October 2022, could eventually bring investments to areas outside Iskandar Malaysia.

"The central part of Johor is likely to benefit from the Gemas-Johor Baru EDTP," says Wong.

He says once it is operational, residents living in towns and areas along the route will be able to commute daily to Johor Baru for work.

Wong adds that property buyers might also be persuaded to buy residential properties in towns along the routes as the prices are likely to be much lower compared with those in Johor Baru.

He says industries may be encouraged to relocate to towns along the railroad such as Segamat, Kluang and Kulai given that the prices in greater Johor Baru are relatively high.

Eleven existing stations between Gemas and Johor Baru will be upgraded as part of the EDTP, apart from the upgrading of the 192km stretch of the track.

A new railway station will also be built near the Senai International Airport to complement upcoming residential and industrial developments in the area.

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 (201247-A)

# A helping hand to those in need

By ZAZALI MUSA  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

CONSISTENT with its responsibility and mission of *Membina & Membela*, Johor Corporation (JCorp) and its Group of Companies together with Yayasan Johor Corporation – a foundation under JCorp advocating its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) philosophy – has partnered with the Tunku Laksamana Johor Cancer Foundation (TLJCF) through the Everywhere Classroom initiative.

With this targeted initiative, 50 units of laptops have been contributed to Johoreans, specifically young cancer patients, allowing them to stay connected while undergoing their treatment.

With technology at their fingertips, recipients will be able to utilise these new laptops to keep abreast of their studies and for personal use.

This initiative was inspired by His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Almarhum Sultan Iskandar's ongoing efforts to enhance Bangsa Johor.

JCorp president and chief executive Datuk Syed Mohamed Syed Ibrahim said, "In conjunction with the Sultan of Johor's 63rd birthday this year, we were enthused to continue His Majesty's efforts and ensure that those in need are provided with the necessary tools to allow them to continue with their education.

"We hope that these young cancer patients undergoing treatment are now able to stay connected, whether for education or personal needs, and will benefit from this via the Everyday Classroom initiative."

"The laptops are equipped with age-appropriate software to support the individual needs of the recipients," he added.

"Due to the pandemic, the past year has changed the landscape of how classes are conducted.

"Now more than ever, we hope that these laptops help to lift the patients' spirits as they go through this challenging period."



Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah Binti Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah, Permaisuri Johor, chairperson of the Tunku Laksamana Johor Cancer Foundation, visiting a young cancer patient at the Paediatric Palliative Care unit in Hospital Sultan Ismail in Johor Baru in November 2019. – Photo courtesy of JCorp

Since 2016, JCorp and its Group of Companies have supported TLJCF via various initiatives, with contributions in excess of RM1.3mil.

These include the Laksamana Charity Run, Laksamana Trophy Charity Golf Tournament, World Cancer Day celebration, Buka Puasa charity event and The Caring Home by Pizza Hut at the Hematology Ward in Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Baru.

In addition to this, JCorp through the JCorp Prihatin fund has contributed close to RM32mil towards efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020.

This includes the supply of 20 respiratory ventilator machines and personal protective

equipment to Hospital Sultanah Aminah, thermometer supply to various enforcement agencies and cash aid to those affected by the global pandemic.

■ For enquiries, call the Corporate Communication Department at 07-219 2692 or email commccd@jcorp.com.my

## About Johor Corporation

JCorp was incorporated through the Johor State Economic Development Corporation Enactment in 1968 and was later amended in 1995 as the principal development institution to drive through the

growth of Johor's economy.

JCorp is focused in achieving our mission in the creation and distribution of wealth. We operate in four core sectors, namely Agribusiness, Wellness & Healthcare, Food & Restaurant and Real Estate & Infrastructure through our flagship companies Kulim (M) Bhd, KPJ Healthcare Bhd, QSR Brands (M) Holdings Bhd and Johor Land Bhd respectively.

The consideration of Environmental, Social and Governance risks and opportunities in our investment processes and decision-making is consistent with our responsibility and mission of *Membina & Membela*.

Bandar UDA Utama development is surrounded and integrated with Taman Perling, Taman Nusa Bestari, Taman Tan Sri Yacob and Taman Sutera Utama with complete facilities and necessities for a residential township.



With its strategic location, Neuvo Centro centre shop lots at Bandar UDA Utama offers buyers many attractive sales incentives for a limited time.

# Nation building through urbanisation

By ZAZALI MUSA  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

THE Urban Development Authority (UDA) was established by the Malaysian government on Nov 12, 1971, to advance the nation's planned development for both commercial and residential purposes.

UDA is a government-linked company (GLC) that is fully owned by the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MoF Inc) and falls under the purview of the Ministry of Entrepreneurial Development (MEDAC).

For over five decades, UDA has contributed towards nation building by advancing urbanisation throughout the country, staying committed towards expanding the participation of Malaysian entrepreneurs in the business eco-system. UDA's property development projects aim to build competitively priced quality premises for all income

groups of the masses.

Today, UDA has more than 50 property projects, seven townships, three shopping malls, two Urban Transformation Centres, two bus terminals, five hotels and resorts, and is managing approximately two million sq ft of assets.

UDA has been instrumental in Johor since the development of its first township Bandar Baru UDA in 1976, with a record of 470ha.

UDA has developed 311ha area of the township and it now comfortably accommodates more than 5,300 residential units, 2,120 low-cost houses and 100 shophouses.

The township is a display of UDA's strength in transforming land into focal points of economic growth and subsequently creating new businesses and employment opportunities for the community.

Bandar Baru UDA is also home to Angsana JB Mall, the landmark for a local shopping

experience and the flagship shopping complex for Angsana Malls by UDA.

UDA is currently in the midst of developing another township, Bandar UDA Utama, which will offer four exclusive projects: Neuvo Centro (shop office project) and double-storey terraces called Pisonia Ville, Areca Terrace and Rosa Terraces.

These upcoming developments will be additions to UDA's success stories in Bandar Baru UDA, Pusat Bandar Tampoi and UDA Business Centre townships in Johor Baru. Bandar UDA Utama offers suitable commercial and residential properties starting from RM600,000 for Neuvo Centro and Pisonia Ville.

The uniqueness of Rosa Terraces and Areca Terrace are expected to further entice customers with its strategic location. All projects come with multiple benefits such as low deposits, free legal-related documents

and spacious design.

Bandar UDA Utama has already made its mark after being named the Best Landed Development (Southern) by *Property Insight* at the 2019 Prestigious Developer Awards.

The Amazing Getaway campaign by UDA Property running from March to the end of April will see new purchasers of our residential and commercial property in Johor walk away with a holiday package worth RM4,000, giving new owners a chance to experience a retreat at AnCasa Hotels and Resorts.

Choose to experience the warmth of AnCasa Hotel Kuala Lumpur, AnCasa Residences Port Dickson or AnCasa Royale Pekan, Pahang. Golfers may also visit Kuala Terengganu Resort as part of the package.

■ For more details, call the Sales and Marketing line at 011-1722 6120.

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**DULI YANG MAHA MULIA**  
**SULTAN IBRAHIM IBNI ALMARHUM SULTAN ISKANDAR**  
 SULTAN YANG DIPERTUAN BAGI NEGERI DAN JAJAHAN TAKLUK JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM

Merafak Sembah  
 Menjunjung Kasih Dan Setinggi-Tinggi Tahniah

Sempena  
**Sambutan Ulang Tahun Hari Keputeraan Rasmi**  
**Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku**

Pada 23 Mac 2021 Bersamaan 9 Syaaban 1442 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya  
 Yang Berdatang Sembah

Projek Berprestij oleh Kumpulan Genting

  
**GENTING**  
 PLANTATIONS

  
**GENTING**  
 PROPERTY

GENTING 优美城  
**Indahpura**  
KULAI JOHOR

GENTING 旺金城  
**Pura Kencana**  
BATU PAHAT JOHOR

# Growing from strength to strength

By ZAZALI MUSA  
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JOHOR has always been special for Mah Sing Group Bhd (Mah Sing). The state is one of the earliest property hotspots where Mah Sing set its footprint when the Group ventured into property development.

Having built its presence in Johor since the year 2000, Mah Sing currently has a total of seven projects in the state.

To date, the Group has launched over 14,000 units of properties in Johor with a total gross development value (GDV) of approximately RM6.2bil.

This reflects Mah Sing's confidence and long-term investment in Johor, which is set to be an economic development powerhouse in Malaysia.

The Group will have more to offer in the future – a remaining land bank of 1,226 acres (455.67ha) with remaining GDV and unbilled sales of approximately RM4.96bil in Johor as of Dec 31, 2020.

Being one of the leading property developers in Malaysia, Mah Sing has been steadfast in promoting home ownership in Johor by offering affordable houses, especially in Pasir Gudang, where Mah Sing's largest township by acreage, Meridin East, is strategically located.

Focusing on providing affordable landed homes, the Group has transformed Meridin East into a garden lake township that promotes a healthy lifestyle along with its

abundance of facilities and lush greenery, away from the hustle and bustle of the city yet well connected with major highways.

Meridin East is expected to be developed over the next 12 to 15 years, and is estimated to accommodate a 50,000-strong population, addressing the housing needs of the surrounding communities and in turn attracting more investments into Pasir Gudang.

To further enhance the lives of the surrounding communities of Meridin East, Mah Sing has also invested in local infrastructure development.

The Group has successfully carried out road works to widen the nearby Jalan Kong Kong, and is currently building a connecting road from the Senai-Desaru Expressway into Jalan Kong Kong for the ease and convenience of road users.

Mah Sing first expanded in Johor in the year 2000 with its maiden residential township in Sri Pulai Perdana, Skudai.

The launch of the township was a historical moment for Mah Sing and the property market as the Group was the first developer to introduce the gated and guarded concept for link homes with grand entrance statements, a concept that was unheard of at the time in Iskandar Malaysia.

Throughout the years, Mah Sing has grown from strength to strength and stood alongside Johoreans – and together witnessed the rapid progression of Johor.

Aside from participating in



An artist's impression of the Meridin East township which consists of residential and commercial units with an estimated population of 50,000 when it's fully developed. – Photo courtesy of Mah Sing Group Bhd

Johor's economic growth, Mah Sing together with its strategic corporate responsibility partner, Mah Sing Foundation, are also committed to helping local NGOs through charity activities and disaster relief initiatives.

It has contributed over RM2mil to various organisations in Johor to date.

All these are part of the Group's continuous efforts to develop together with Johor and the local community, paving the way towards becoming a developed state and country.



Corporate Social Responsibility Day – Beach cleaning at Desaru beach in Kota Tinggi, Johor, on Nov 2, 2019. – Photo courtesy of Mah Sing Group Bhd

## Paragon of quality living

By ZAZALI MUSA  
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THE Johor Baru-headquartered Joland Group of Companies (Joland Group) has diversified its business since venturing into property development in the early 1990s.

Over the years, the Group has developed a range of high-rise residential projects, commercial projects (hotel, shop offices, retail mall) and industrial projects (industrial park).

Joland Group is committed to consistently delivering excellent real estate properties and value-added services to its buyers and investors. It aims not just to meet but also to exceed their expectations.

As part of its aggressive plan to grow the "PARAGON" brand, which simply means "a model of excellence", and to elevate its brand to a greater height in the years to come, the Group has embraced more challenges and further diversified into the education sector.

Paragon Private and International School which is located in Plentong, Johor, started its operation in 2017 as a joint venture between Joland Group and Kuopacific Group.

The school was started with the aim of moulding leaders for tomorrow.

In September that same year, the Group crossed an important



Joland Group has diversified its businesses and developed a range of residential, commercial and industrial projects in Johor, while Paragon Globe is currently involved in commercial and Industrial projects to drive industrialisation and job creation at Pekan Nenas Industrial Park.

milestone when one of its member companies, Paragon Adventure Sdn Bhd, acquired 51% of Paragon Globe Bhd (Paragon Globe), a public-listed company on the Bursa Malaysia Main Market.

The rebranding and recalibration of Paragon Globe's business direction commenced thereafter with the diversification into property development and construction.

Currently, Paragon Globe is involved in commercial and industrial projects to drive industrialisation and job creation at Pekan Nenas Industrial Park.

Its Pekan Sentral project has helped rejuvenate the town and bring in new commercial elements for the residents of Pekan Nenas

and Pontian district.

"Paragon Globe has at least two major projects planned, while Joland Group is expected to launch its first mixed development project by the end of the year," says Paragon Globe executive chairman and Joland Group managing director Datuk Sri Edwin Tan Pei Seng.

"The mixed development project is strategically located in Taman Suria, Johor Bahru, and faces the Tebrau Highway.

"We intend to build a commercial project featuring new lifestyle brands and residential components for modern living," he adds.

Another project in the pipeline for Paragon Globe is the 31.1-acre (12.58ha) commercial land within

the Integrated Sustainable Living (ISL) township located in Iskandar Puteri, Johor Bahru, that the Group acquired in 2019 for RM60.96mil.

Joland Group aspires to build healthcare expertise as the country prepares for the ageing population over the next two decades.

On that note, Paragon Globe will develop a private hospital in Sepang, Selangor, which will begin construction this year and is slated for completion in 2023.

Besides the private hospital in Sepang, Joland Group has plans to build another hospital in Ulu Tiram, Johor, to cater for quality healthcare in the state.

"To us, venturing into the healthcare business has always been in the back of our mind. In Johor, we

did some market studies earlier and decided that the fundamental shift in demographic would lead to greater demand for healthcare services," says Tan.

"We initiated the regulatory and planning work first for the Ulu Tiram project and later for another site in Sepang."

As the Group expands its business portfolios and launches new projects, it remains committed to upholding its business principles and delivering homes and spaces with premier quality and liveability to its customers, investors and business partners.

■ For more details, visit the Group's website at [www.jolandgroup.com.my](http://www.jolandgroup.com.my) and [www.pgbgroup.com.my](http://www.pgbgroup.com.my)



Paragon Globe executive chairman and Joland Group managing director Datuk Sri Edwin Tan Pei Seng.