Star Special

THE STAR, WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 2026

Celebrating a beloved Ruler

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir marks his 78th birthday today.

State thrives under wise leadership

Tuanku Muhriz delivering his address at the state-level Maulidur Rasul celebration at the Seremban City Council field on Sept 5, last year. — Bernama

The Negri Sembilan royal family posing for a photograph during last year's Aidiladha celebrations, capturing a moment of tradition and togetherness. — Photo from Tunku Ali Redhauddin's Instagram

UNITY, harmony and mutual respect. These values which form the foundational pillars for a stable, progressive and peaceful society are often repeated by Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir whenever addressing his audience, defining both his reign and his relationship with his subjects.

Whether addressing politicians during the opening of the Negri Sembilan state legislative assembly, or Rotarians at a tea party, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan who turns 78 today never fails to remind people of the power of unity, harmony and mutual respect, particularly in a multicultural nation like Malaysia.

The Ruler's active participation in state-level celebrations, such as National Day, Maulidur Rasul, festive open houses and cultural festivals like Pesta Bola Ngoca – a village football game traditionally played in muddy paddy fields – as well as international events like Expo 2025 Osaka, drives home the message loud and clear: progress is strongest when unity is practised.

During his Hari Raya Aidilfitri address in March last year, the Ruler made a heartfelt call for the need to preserve unity, urging the rakyat to cherish the nation's peace and stability by strengthening the spirit of brotherhood and shared humanity.

Tuanku Muhriz reminded the public that peace and harmony are sustained by prioritising human values and helping one another, drawing inspiration from Prophet Muhammad's example of sincerity, compassion, care and fairness towards neighbours and the wider community, transcending religious boundaries.

The Ruler also urged the public to strengthen bonds through forgiveness, show care and kindness by helping those in need, respect the rule of law, and avoid divisive politics during last year's Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations.

This call for a united society was reiterated during the state-level Maal Hijrah festivities, where Tuanku Muhriz highlighted the Prophet's example of championing mutual respect, celebrating diversity and upholding the dignity and rights of every individual, regardless of background.

Tuanku Muhriz (centre) and Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud (second from right) joined parade participants at the state-level Maulidur Rasul celebration last September. — Bernama

"Islam is a faith rooted in peace, compassion and the spirit of brotherhood. Through tolerance and understanding, the Prophet Muhammad successfully united Muslim and non-Muslim communities, laying the foundations for peace," the Ruler said.

While expressing his utmost support for initiatives to uphold Islam, the Ruler stressed the importance of strengthening religious institutions and ensuring effective administration of Islamic affairs in the state.

Religious matters, Tuanku Muhriz said, must be referred to religious authorities, as individual or group interpretations could lead to confusion, tension and conflict within the community.

Concluding his message, the Ruler expressed confidence in the state leadership's ability to uphold unity, placing harmony at the heart of governance. This reflects the Ruler's consistent call for collective responsibility.

For Tuanku Muhriz, unity is not merely an ideal, but a shared duty to be carried out with commitment, integrity and purpose.

"While Islam holds a special position in this country, its honour must be upheld without denying fair and just treatment towards practitioners of other religions," Tuanku Muhriz said.

Speaking at the Rotary Club of Nilai Central's Unity High Tea late last year, the Ruler stated that sustainable development was impossible without unity, adding that progress could not be collectively achieved without mutual understanding.

Tuanku Muhriz noted with delight the mingling of communities from different ethnicities and religions at the event. The Ruler said that although Negri Sembilan is known for its unique customs and culture, what makes the state special is the harmony among its people.

Continuing his address, the Ruler urged all citizens to continue nurturing the spirit of togetherness that has long been part of the nation's identity.

"Show our children that differences are not a reason to divide, but a strength to be celebrated.

"We must always remember that the prosperity of this state and nation does not lie solely in material wealth but in the strength of our relationships.

"When the people unite, we can face any challenge. Unity is the foundation of a nation," the Ruler said.

As Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), a tertiary institution established to strengthen the national identity and elevate Bahasa Melayu as a medium of instruction, Tuanku Muhriz constantly reminds Malaysians of the importance of mastering the national language.

However, the Ruler also highlighted the importance of equipping the younger generation with strong English communication skills to thrive globally while remaining rooted in Malaysian values.

Stressing that proficiency in English neither diminished national identity nor replaced mother tongues, the Ruler said it instead enhanced the ability to participate confidently on the global stage while remaining grounded in Malaysian values.

"Without neglecting the development of our national language, I encourage our schools, educators and parents to continue nurturing a love for the English language.

"Let us create learning environments where children feel confident to speak, inquire and express themselves," Tuanku Muhriz said.

These words carry weight because the Ruler walks the talk and leads by example. His presence at events is never merely ceremonial.

The Ruler also constantly champions initiatives that advance the state and enhance the well-being of its people.

From economic milestones to educational initiatives, healthcare, culture, heritage and community welfare, the Ruler's messages demonstrate care and a genuine concern for every citizen.

His speeches, imbued with wisdom and warmth, also reinforce the values of integrity and shared responsibility.

While the Ruler is known for his affable nature and his ability to connect with ordinary citizens, from the halls of power down to the streets, Tuanku Muhriz is all business when it comes to justice and will not mince his words.

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Daulat Tuanku

SEMOGA ALLAH MEMBERKATI PEMERINTAHAN KEBAWAH DULI TUANKU

DYMM YANG DI-PERTUAN BESAR NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS TUANKU MUHRIZ IBNI ALMARHUM TUANKU MUNAWIR

D.K., D.M.N., D.K. (Perak), D.K. (Perlis), D.K. (Selangor), D.K. (Kedah),
D.K. (Kelantan), D.K. (Johor), D.K. (Terengganu), D.K.Y.R., P.P.T.

Merafak Sembah & Mempersembahkan Setinggi-Tinggi Ucapan Tahniah
Sempena Hari Keputeraan Ke-78

pada

14 Januari 2026 (24 Rejab 1447H)

SEMBAH TAKZIM DARIPADA

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Tuanku Muhriz delivering his address at the 53rd UKM Convocation Ceremony in November last year, commending the hard work and success of the graduates. — Bernama

Adding warmth to the Festival of Lights, Tuanku Muhriz and Tuanku Aishah Rohani (third and fourth from left, respectively) graced the state-level Deepavali Open House at the Taman Seremban Jaya Public Hall last November. Negri Sembilan Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun (second from left) was also present at the vibrant celebrations. — Bernama

Driving progress and development to benefit all

FROM PAGE 2

Tuanku Muhriz inspecting the Main Guard of Honour parade by the 15th Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment, Senawang Camp, during the Negri Sembilan National Day celebration held opposite the Seremban City Council field on Aug 31, last year. — Bernama

In November, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar called for a swift response to objections raised over the appointment of a new member to the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), stressing the need to protect judicial independence.

Speaking at the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Negri Sembilan Bar, Tuanku Muhriz, who holds an LLB (Hons) degree from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University), stressed that as the apex of the administration of justice, the judiciary must remain independent of external pressures.

"To ensure this, the process of the appointment of judges must be insulated from the influence of the executive arm of the government. I have, on prior occasions, spoken of the urgent need to reform the JAC."

Continuing his speech, Tuanku Muhriz also cautioned lawyers against allowing the pursuit of commerce to overshadow the pursuit of justice.

"Integrity cannot be legislated. It cannot be enforced by committees or coaxed by regulation. Integrity must live within the conscience of each and every lawyer."

The Ruler reminded lawyers that when they stood before the Court, they carried more than a client's file.

"You bear the honour of your profession, the dignity of the Bar, and the moral expectations of society. Honesty, candour and ethical conduct are the true currency of your calling. Guard them jealously."

The Ruler also gives praise where it is due. Reflecting on the state's economic achievements in his royal address at the opening of the state legislative assembly last April, the Ruler commended the state's achievements, highlighting that the state had achieved a record-breaking revenue collection of RM636.17mil in 2024, exceeding the target of RM520mil.

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar also spotlighted the transformation of a RM46.9mil deficit into an RM83.07mil surplus and emphasised the importance of prudent financial management and ongoing initiatives such as the state's Madani Financial Management Plan, which aims to increase state revenue to RM1bil by 2030.

Touching on the state's status as a key investment destination, the Ruler said in 2024, approved investments (foreign and domestic) totalled RM7.25bil, generating over 4,600 job opportunities in the state.

The Ruler cited a new initiative, Negri Sembilan Fast Lane (N9 Fast Lane), which aims to accelerate approval processes and provide more efficient facilities for investors and entrepreneurs undertaking projects here.

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar also said that the Malaysia Vision Valley 2.0 (MVV 2.0) continued to serve as a key development driver, boosting economic growth and creating more job opportunities.

Highlighting the state's 311 mosques and 1,204 surau, Tuanku Muhriz proposed that heritage mosques could serve as tourist attractions to benefit local communities.

Looking ahead to Visit Negri Sembilan Year 2026, the Ruler also encouraged the promotion of coastal attractions, eco-tourism and the state's unique Adat Perpatih cultural heritage.

At the launch of Negri Sembilan Week at the Malaysia Pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka last September, the state Ruler said such platforms served as a powerful bridge in fostering understanding and encouraging collaboration.

The week-long exhibit showcased the state's culture, natural beauty and investment potential.

"Through this, we aim to share our aspirations and our commitment to sustainable development, to foster our strides in the advancement of technology and innovation for mutual prosperity among nations.

"Let this platform be a gateway for resources and opportunities, as well as to our culture, our people and our enduring values."

While highlighting the platform's role as a gateway for resources and opportunities, as well as to culture, people and enduring values, Tuanku Muhriz also shared a light-hearted moment with attendees, remarking that "Be assured that Negri Sembilan offers more than the very popular roti canai!"

Education and good governance are among matters that remain central to the Ruler's vision.

During UKM's 53rd convocation ceremony, Tuanku Muhriz applauded the university for nurturing leaders, professionals and scholars who made the nation proud.

The Ruler said he was proud that the university had taken initiatives to improve governance and integrity.

He also announced the establishment of the Royal Chair in Integrity and Good Governance at UKM's Faculty of Law, with Tun Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat as its inaugural Professor of Practice as well as a centre for good practices and governance at the university.

Health and welfare initiatives received special attention too, with the Ruler congratulating the Rotary Club of Senawang on the success of its "Gift of Sight" project, which has provided more than 359 cataract lenses to the B40 community since 2019.

Tuanku Muhriz lauded the club's upcoming Autism Awareness and CPR programmes, emphasising that early intervention and emergency preparedness save lives and strengthen communities.

From applauding healthcare and education professionals to recognising the contributions of volunteers and community leaders, Tuanku Muhriz reinforces the importance of accountability, responsibility and shared values.

As Negri Sembilan celebrates the birthday of its Ruler, these reflections are a testament to a leader deeply committed to his people, a state guided by harmony and progress and a community inspired to thrive together.

Daulat Tuanku

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY BLESS HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S REIGN

DYMM YANG DI-PERTUAN BESAR NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS
TUANKU MUHRIZ IBNI ALMARHUM TUANKU MUNAWIR

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Salutation And Heartiest Congratulations
On The Occasion Of His Royal Highness's 78th Birthday

on

14th January 2026 (24 Rejab 1447H)

With utmost sincerity from:

Executive Chairman,
Board of Directors, Management & Staff

YTL
SINCE 1955

YTL Corporation Berhad

Tuanku Aishah Rohani (centre), who is also the Chancellor of Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), posing with recipients of the Royal Education Award and special awards following the 23rd USIM Convocation Ceremony at Dewan Tuanku Canselor in November last year. Also present was USIM Pro-Chancellor Tunku Zain (fourth from left). — Bernama

Unity begins within every home

Tuanku Aishah Rohani at USIM's 23rd Convocation Ceremony at Dewan Tuanku Canselor in November last year. — Bernama

A STEADFAST advocate for strong moral foundations, Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir firmly believes that the home is the starting point for shaping values, nurturing faith and modelling good behaviour.

At the state-level Maal Hijrah celebrations in June, the state Ruler highlighted the important part parents play as role models in a child's formative years.

"In essence, Hijrah begins within each individual. A renewal of attitude grounded in noble and virtuous values is the foundation to building a more dignified society and prosperous nation," the Ruler said.

"This emphasis must also begin at home through religious upbringing, love and the exemplary conduct of parents," the Ruler said.

Those principles are not merely words, but values shaped by his own upbringing and family heritage, which he has passed down to his offspring.

Born on Jan 14, 1948 in the royal town of Seri Menanti, Tuanku Muhriz is the only son of Tuanku Munawir Tuanku Abdul Rahman, the ninth Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, and his consort Tuanku Durah Tunku Besar Burhanuddin.

The 11th Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan is also the grandson of Tuanku Abdul Rahman Tuanku Muhammad, Malaysia's first Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Tuanku Muhriz attended Tuanku Muhammad School in Kuala Pilah, Tunku Besar School in Tampin and King George V Secondary School in Seremban.

At age 12, the young prince was appointed Tunku Laxamana, the second-ranking prince among the four senior Putera Yang Empat.

A year later, he was appointed Tunku Besar Seri Menanti, the highest rank among the four princes, a title he held until ascending the throne as Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan on Oct 26, 2009.

As a teenager, Tuanku Muhriz pursued further studies in England at the prestigious Aldenham School, completing his O- and A-Levels.

There, he developed a love for music, playing the guitar and performing with a band called The Prince and the Paupers.

He later earned an LLB (Hons) in law from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University) excelling in his studies and sports, and laying the foundation for his lifelong commitment to justice, leadership and service.

In recognition of his contribution to public service and charitable work, Aberystwyth University conferred upon him an Honorary Fellowship in 2014.

On April 25, 1974, Tuanku Muhriz married Tunku Ampuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud.

The royal couple was blessed with three princes: Tunku Ali Redhauddin – currently Tunku Besar Seri Menanti, Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin and the late Tunku Alif Hussein Saifuddin Al-Amin.

The royals embody service before self. They continue to champion causes for the underprivileged and at-risk communities, supporting education, people with disabilities and youth development through various charitable initiatives, including Yayasan Munarah – a foundation established by the family after Tuanku Muhriz ascended the throne.

As Chancellor of Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Tuanku Aishah has helped transform the tertiary institution into a preferred choice for further studies, particularly among foreign students.

Tunku Ali, a graduate of Cambridge University and the Harvard Kennedy School, is a Pro-Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), founding trustee of non-profit Teach for Malaysia, president of wildlife NGO WWF-Malaysia and chairman of Yayasan Munarah.

Tunku Ali is also senior advisor to global equity firm TPG Capital and serves on the boards of several companies.

As chairman of Yayasan Munarah's board of trustees, Tunku Ali ensures that less privileged and deserving members of the community, particularly students, receive financial assistance regardless of race or religion.

The prince is also a Brigadier General and Regiment Commander in the Territorial Army of Malaysia.

His younger brother, Tunku Zain, an alumnus of the London School of Economics and Political Science, is a talented pianist and the royal patron of Euroasia Association of Performing Arts, which is dedicated to the education, development and promotion of the performing arts in Malaysia.

Tunku Zain is founding president and chairman of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) and Ideas Autism Centre. The latter supports initiatives for children with autism, particularly those from low-income families, focusing on early intervention, care and therapy.

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Daulat Tuanku

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY BLESS HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S REIGN

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TUANKU MUHRIZ IBNI ALMARHUM TUANKU MUNAWIR

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Salutation And Heartiest Congratulations
On The Occasion Of His Royal Highness's 78th Birthday

on

14th January 2026 (24 Rejab 1447H)

With utmost sincerity from:

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Daulat Tuanku

Salutations and Heartiest Congratulations

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May Allah The Almighty Bless His Royal Highness's Reign
On The Occasion Of His Royal Highness's 78th Birthday

on

14 January 2026 (24 Rejab 1447H)

With utmost sincerity from

THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS

YAYASAN NEGERI SEMBILAN

SYARIKAT AIR
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Daulat Tuanku

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY BLESS HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S REIGN

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Tunku Zain with author Mahani Zubedy at the book launch of *365 Quran – 2-Minute Daily Reflections* in Petaling Jaya, last December. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

Tuanku Muhriz signing the commemorative plaque at the launch of Hospital Picaso in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, last November. Witnessing the signing are (standing, from left) Hospital Picaso chairman Tunku Ali, medical director Datuk Dr Luqman Mazlan and clinical practice chairman Datuk Dr Loh Chit Sin. — MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

Yayasan Munarah chairman Tunku Ali (centre) posing with guests and children after a presentation ceremony at a resort in Seri Menanti, where he distributed back-to-school supplies to underprivileged students early last year under the Yayasan Munarah X SWM Kasih Back to School initiative.

A Ruler devoted to the well-being of the rakyat

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Tunku Zain is a Royal Fellow of UKM, and trustee of Yayasan Munarah, Yayasan Chow Kit and the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation.

Appointed Chancellor of UCSI University in May 2025, following his earlier tenure as the university's inaugural Pro-Chancellor, the prince is a steady guiding hand in shaping UCSI's development and long-term aspirations.

At his installation ceremony, Tunku Zain offered words of wisdom to students, sharing reflections from his visits to campus.

"It's always so good to come to campus to see what the students are doing in all different disciplines, whether it's music, architecture, engineering or all the other sciences.

"Great to see also that the academics are working so hard to produce excellent graduates who are able to contribute to society, the economy and the communities here."

Reiterating his commitment to the university's mission, the prince underscored the importance of resilience and preparedness in an increasingly complex world, offering reassurance to students.

"Your future is bright, there's a bit of uncertainty in the world. But hopefully with the skills and discipline you've acquired here at UCSI University, you'll be well equipped to face these challenges and you'll be prepared to deal with any unexpected things that may happen as you pursue either your careers or the next stage of your life."

Besides scholarly and musical pursuits, the prince also enjoys tennis and squash, and promotes sports development as president of the Negri Sembilan Squash Association.

Throughout his reign, and with his equally dedicated family by his side, Tuanku Muhriz has remained devoted to education, healthcare and the well-being of the rakyat.

His progressive leadership, combined with a strong respect for tradition, culture and human values, has earned him the admiration of his subjects.

Daulat Tuanku!

Tuanku Muhriz (seated) taking a closer look at the robotic surgical system at the launch of Hospital Picaso last November. — MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

Daulat Tuanku

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY BLESS HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S REIGN

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With utmost sincerity from:

ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS OF MALAYSIA

Heritage trails highlight culture

Built on 4.5ha of land at a cost of over RM100mil, Masjid Sri Sendayan features artwork and architectural influences from countries such as Egypt, Turkiye, Dubai, Morocco and China. — SARBAN SINGH/The Star

Daulat Tuanku

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With utmost sincerity from:

The General Committee, Management & Members of

ROYAL SUNGEI UJONG CLUB

THE Visit Negri Sembilan Year 2026 (TMNS2026) is set to bolster tourist arrivals to the state with a record 25 million visitors expected to throng popular tourism destinations ranging from its gorgeous coasts and beaches, eco-tourism and eco-adventure as well as cultural and heritage spots.

To ensure the programme, last held in 1999, is a resounding success, the state government, in collaboration with industry players, has been carrying out more structured and strategic promotions, while developing more competitive, high-impact products to attract both local and foreign tourists.

Various initiatives have been and are being implemented, including promotions through exhibitions and sales missions, the use of digital platforms, collaborations with travel agents, and the organisation of familiarisation trips to showcase the state's tourism products and destinations.

Negri Sembilan tourism, arts and culture committee chairman Nicole Tan Lee Koon said that, to ensure the success of TMNS2026, the state government has, among other measures, formulated and implemented several strategic initiatives to improve tourism infrastructure throughout the state.

"Among these were improvements to infrastructure and basic facilities at key destinations such as Teluk Kemang beach in the resort town of Port Dickson and Ulu Bendul Rimba Eco Park in Kuala Pilah, including the upgrading of toilets, surau, car parks, tourist-friendly signage and regular maintenance.

"In addition, tourism sites such as historical complexes, recreational parks and beach areas are also well maintained, with the Seremban R&R serving as a 'gateway' for the promotion of local tourism products," she said.

Under the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-25), the state government spent RM31.4mil to build, upgrade, maintain and promote tourism products identified as having high potential to attract tourists and generate economic impact for local communities.

The state government has also begun implementing integrated and sustainable tourism development through high-impact projects such as Seremban Sentral, Pedas Wet World, Arena Seremban and the Port Dickson Waterfront, emphasising a balance between economic progress, environmental preservation and community well-being to ensure the state's tourism sector develops sustainably and inclusively.

"The state government remains committed to strengthening tourism infrastructure and facilities to ensure the state's tourism sector remains competitive, sustainable and of high quality.

"This integrated approach is expected to provide the best experience to every visitor and strengthen Negri Sembilan's image as a major tourism destination ahead of TMNS2026," she said.

Tan said the tourism sector in Negri Sembilan has shown steady and encouraging growth in recent years.

Following the post-Covid period, tourist arrivals reached 15.3 million in 2023, rising to 18.3 million the following year.

Tourist arrivals in 2025 were also believed to have breached the 20 million mark, driven by sustained promotional efforts and the development of more competitive, experience-based tourism products. International arrivals are also expected to increase further this year. The state welcomed 340,372 foreign tourists in 2023, rising to 450,707 the following year.

In the first nine months of 2025, 362,049 foreign tourists visited the state, compared with 344,027 during the same period in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of 5.2%.

"To maximise the economic spillover from the tourism sector, the state government will adopt a more holistic strategic approach, including strengthening value-chain linkages between tourism and related sectors such as trade, services, culture, and micro, small and medium enterprises.

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Daulat Tuanku

MAY ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY BLESS HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S REIGN

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With utmost sincerity from:

ECOWORLD
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(Left) Tan releasing turtles into the sea at the Glory Beach Resort Turtle Hatchery and Release Centre in Port Dickson. Her support for the conservation project highlights the state's ongoing efforts to incorporate eco-tourism into its development plans. (Right) Tan (fourth from right) promoting TMNS2026 at the launch of the Long Yi N9 Cultural and Dragon Dance Festival in Nilai.

State now one of country's key tourism destinations

> FROM PAGE 12

Tan (centre) taking a stroll along Lorong Seni which has been recognised by the *Malaysia Book of Records* as the longest art alley in the country.

Tan (third from right) with some of the participants at the Miss Orient Tourism Global Gala Night, which featured a national costume competition celebrating culture, beauty and unity.

"At the same time, both existing and emerging destinations will be further optimised through product enhancement, supporting infrastructure, and more focused and targeted promotion," she said, adding that this would further support the long-term objective of positioning Negri Sembilan as a leading and sustainable tourism destination in Malaysia.

Citing an example, she said tourists visiting Kuala Pilah can stay at Seri Menanti Resort or local homestays, visit Istana Seri Menanti in the royal town, enjoy views of the rice fields and dine in Terachi, learn to cook and savour the popular goat head curry at Gunung Pasir, experience making gula enau (palm sugar) in Terachi, taste the traditional kuih sopang dessert in Ulu Muar, explore the 2.8km Gua Batu Maloi – the longest granite cave in Malaysia – and indulge in the famous apam while visiting the state's smallest and oldest petrol station in Johol.

Tan said that, apart from its traditional tourism offerings, the state government has been implementing additional programmes to attract tourists in preparation for TMNS2026.

These included the NS Fest, held from Dec 20 to 31 at Dataran Nilai, which attracted 1.5 million visitors, compared with 1.2 million in 2024.

The event, which also provided a platform to stimulate the local economy, generated almost RM8mil in sales.

"We also have the Ngoca festival in Kuala Pilah which attracted some 30,000 tourists last year (2025) as well as the country's biggest snow theme park, SnowLim Wonderland which also received recognition from the *Malaysia Book of Records*.

"Another attraction is the Lorong Seni, which has been recognised by the *Malaysia Book of Records* as the longest art alley in the country," she said, adding that the project, which features more than 50 murals, cost around RM2.5mil to build.

Tan said efforts have also been made to organise weekend heritage trails, allowing visitors to explore 20 interesting sites in the city, including Istana Hinggap, the Minangkabau-style state legislative assembly building, the state and Jamek mosques, and other non-Muslim places of worship over a century old along Jalan Yam Tuan.

Visitors can also enjoy the Lake Gardens, Tuanku Ja'afar Royal Gallery, Seremban Square, and colonial and heritage buildings such as the old state secretary's office – also known as the "White House" – King George Secondary School, the country's second-oldest rubber tree, and the recently opened Pasar Karat Benteng Walk.

She said the Negri Sembilan Tourism Board has also collaborated with Tourism Malaysia to engage influencers in promoting the state's culture, heritage and tourism products through digital campaigns, creative content and social media activities, with the aim of attracting both domestic and international tourists.

Tan said that, to leverage technology, the authorities have also introduced digital initiatives, interactive QR codes, Fun-Map signage and tourism portals to further promote the state's tourism products.

Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing also visited the state for three days in September to explore some of its tourism destinations.

These included the Army Museum, the Ornamental Fish Centre and D' Pelandok Best Homestay (all in Port Dickson), as well as Lorong Seni Seremban, Snowlim Wonderland, San Kau Tong Temple, and Sri Sendayan Mosque.

The visits were part of preparations for both Visit Malaysia 2026 and TMNS2026.

"The minister also held a meeting with the Mentri Besar to discuss strategic cooperation between his ministry and the state to strengthen tourism development, attract more domestic and international tourists and formulate a high-impact Calendar of Events (COE) to ensure the success of TMNS2026," she said.

Tan said the ministry had also channelled about RM10.4mil to the state in the first 10 months of last year (2025) to improve tourism infrastructure at key locations in the state to ensure the comfort and safety of visitors.

The amount, she said, was the highest among all states.

Tan said the minister's official visit had also created opportunities for stronger cooperation between the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) and TMNS2026 secretariats.

"In addition, the plan also involves organising international-class events to attract more foreign tourists, developing more comprehensive and tourist-friendly special tourism packages and improving the quality of services and hospitality among local tourism industry players.

"These measures are hoped to strengthen Negri Sembilan's tourism ecosystem and increase the state's competitiveness as a preferred tourist destination in Malaysia," she said.

Tan said that, to provide more options for local and international tourists and increase the income of homestay operators, the state government has introduced an integrated tourism package combining homestay accommodation with eco-tourism activities, community experiences and cultural heritage.

"Under the programme, tourists stay with host families who are homestay operators, many of whom own traditional houses, experience the daily lifestyle of Malaysian society and take part in community-based tourism activities such as folk sports, cultural events, music and festivals, as well as learn dance and cooking," she said, adding that the development of homestays has been strengthened as a competitive, quality tourism product that provides direct economic benefits to the local community.

Negri Sembilan currently has nine homestay clusters registered under the Tourism, Arts and Culture ministry.

"Homestays are also promoted using digital platforms and marketing through social media, travel agents and participation in exhibition and sales missions at the national and international levels.

"The operators are also provided with training and guidance to improve the quality of service and guest experience," she said, adding that tour packages could include homestay experiences as one of the main destinations for tourists.

Tan said that, based on data from the Department of Statistics, Negri Sembilan ranked eighth among Malaysia's 13 states and three federal territories in terms of domestic visitor numbers.

This, she said, indicates that the state is now one of the country's key tourism destinations. In terms of ranking, Negri Sembilan moved up one place, from ninth in 2023 to eighth in 2024.

Daulat Tuanku

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