

StarSpecial

THE STAR, THURSDAY 23 MARCH 2023

DAULAT TUANKU



Many happy returns, Your Majesty

Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum
Sultan Iskandar celebrates his 65th birthday today.



Sultan Ibrahim cooking mutton briyani for the local community during his visit to Sungai Balang in Muar, in August last year, where he was briefed on the use of new technology for padi planting. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page



Sultan Ibrahim officiating the 2023 Chingay Festival in Johor Baru in February. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Amiable and warm-hearted Ruler

BY NELSON BENJAMIN
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JOHOR Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar was on a private trip to Turkiye and the Middle East since mid-February when news about the devastating floods in Johor broke out in early March. The Ruler cut his trip short and returned to Johor to personally visit those affected.

Even when Sultan Ibrahim was still abroad, he was in constant contact with the state government and directed his Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ) to provide aid since the beginning of the floods.

The March 1 floods – the third major one to hit the state since 2006 – has affected more than 70,000 people in all 10 districts. Even now, the floodwaters have yet to fully recede.

Over the years, the Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation has provided more than RM170mil in aid to the people, including providing 103,000 tents in anticipation of floods in Johor and the other states.

Sultan Ibrahim and Johor Permaisuri Raja Zarith Sofiah Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah have always paid close attention to the people's welfare and provided assistance to countless Johoreans who faced hardships during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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.

According to Royal Press Office chief press officer Ravi Nambiar, Sultan Ibrahim has always been concerned about the welfare of his rakyat and regularly provides assistance to the poor and those affected by disasters such as storms and fires.

"Sultan Ibrahim has even rebuilt the houses of some of those in dire need. His Majesty helps everyone regardless of race and religion," he said, adding that during the recent floods, Sultan Ibrahim's presence at the temporary relief centres brought much cheer to the people sheltering there.

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



Sultan Ibrahim greeting people during the state-level Thaipusam celebration at the Arulmigu Sri Balasubramaniam temple in Skudai in February. Also present was Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

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 also 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 the Klang Valley.

The Sultan 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, Almarhum 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 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 with over 1.1 million Facebook followers mainly from Johor, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

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.



The Johor Ruler distributing aid to flood victims at a temporary relief centre with Tunku Panglima Johor Tunku Abdul Rahman (left). — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

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SULTAN YANG DIPERTUAN BAGI NEGERI DAN JAJAHAN TAKLUK JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM**

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Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku**

Pada 23 Mac 2023 Bersamaan 1 Ramadan 1444 Hijrah

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Yang Berdatang Sembah

Daripada

**Pengerusi Eksekutif,
Lembaga Pengarah, Pengurusan & Kakitangan.**



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Sultan Ibrahim and Raja Zarith Sofiah with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his wife Ho Ching during their majesties' visit to the island republic in July last year. The Singapore Botanic Gardens presented a special orchid species named after the royal couple – Ibrahim Zarith – in honour of the visit. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page



The Johor Ruler decreed during the opening of the second term of the 15th Johor state assembly sitting that all mosques and surau that want to hold any religious talks must first obtain permission from the Johor Islamic Religious Council. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

Dedicated to the state and rakyat

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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 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.

Last year, Sultan Ibrahim led a delegation to Singapore to meet with top leaders. Besides meeting with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and senior leaders, Sultan Ibrahim also made a courtesy call on Singapore President Halimah Yacob.

Ravi said one of the highlights of the visit was the conferment of an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Sultan Ibrahim by Halimah, who is the Chancellor of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The award was in recognition of Sultan Ibrahim's steadfast and fervent efforts to strengthen Johor-Singapore cross-border relations.

His Majesty's late father, Almarhum Sultan Iskandar Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ismail, was similarly honoured by NUS in 2007.

The Singapore Botanic Gardens also presented a special orchid species named after the royal couple – Ibrahim Zarith – in honour of the visit. The orchid is Singapore's national flower.

During the three-day visit, Sultan Ibrahim also toured the Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link construction site in Woodlands, where His Majesty was briefed on the project's progress.

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 Elizabeth Taylor.

On interacting with his subjects, the Ruler is clearly happy with the Kembara Mahkota Johor programme, which started in 2001. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme has not been held since 2020 but is expected to restart in June this 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.

His Majesty 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. Sultan Ibrahim 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.



Singapore's Transport Minister S. Iswaran (second from left) briefing Sultan Ibrahim about the Rapid Transit System link during his visit to the island republic in July last year. Present was Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi (right, in green shirt).



Sultan Ibrahim and Raja Zarith Sofiah with the rest of the Johor royal family during a Hari Raya Aidiladha celebration in July last year. — Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page

His Majesty received his formal education at Sekolah Temenggong Abdul Rahman (1) before leaving for Trinity Grammar School in Australia. Later on, His Majesty travelled to the United States to pursue his studies in law and diplomacy.

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

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

Sultan Ibrahim also received military training in the United States at Fort Benning, Georgia, and later

at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. His Majesty was appointed deputy commander of the Johor Military Force upon completing his military training overseas.

Sultan Ibrahim has trained and served in the Air Force and Navy, and is a qualified green beret commando in Malaysia and the United States. The Ruler 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, Sultan Ibrahim 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.

Source: Royal Press Office (RPO)

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By ZAZALI MUSA
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JOHOR is poised to benefit immensely from the Gemas-Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project (GJBEDTP), which is expected to be completed by mid-2023.

KGV International Property Consultants (M) Sdn Bhd director Samuel Tan Wee Cheng said the multi-billion ringgit project is slated to be the catalyst for the economic and social sector along its path.

"It will create economic spillover and bring developments to other districts in Johor," he said, adding that the project would benefit towns with stations as it would carry passengers and cargo.

The stations are Segamat, Genuang, Tenang, Labis, Bekok, Paloh, Chamek, Kluang, Mengkibol, Renggam, Layang-Layang, Kulai, Senai, Kempas Baru and JB Sentral.

"The property sector is one of the sectors that is going to gain from the GJBEDTP," Tan said.

He noted that house buyers, especially first-timers, might look at buying properties in places like Kluang and Layang-Layang, which would likely be more affordable to them than those in Iskandar Malaysia.

Tan added that those staying in larger towns like Johor Baru and Singapore may opt to travel daily to their own homes.

"Developers will take advantage of this by developing affordable houses along the corridors of the track," he said.

As these towns were developed to accommodate a limited population size, he said the existing infrastructures may not be sufficient to support an increased population.

There must be more upgrading

Rail-ly great for commuters



The construction of the Gemas-Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project in Kulai, Johor, which is expected to be completed by mid-2023. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

or construction of new infrastructures and utilities to meet the impending needs, he added.

"One way to solve this conundrum is by ensuring that employment opportunities are created in these towns," said Tan.

He said people need not to travel from afar as they could reside and work in the same towns and factories could be relocated to create more job opportunities.

"We foresee increases in land and houses arising from the project," added Tan.

Johor Real Estate Housing Developers Association chairman Wong Boon Lang said secondary towns in northern Johor could see growing economic prospects.

"It will bring development to other districts in the state in years to come to benefit the people," he said, adding that the project could also attract investors to invest in other districts and not only focus on Johor Baru and Iskandar Malaysia.



Wong says secondary towns in northern Johor could see more economic prospects. — ZAZALI MUSA/The Star

He said the state government could rely on the district's capacity to develop key economic activities and take them to the next level.

Wong said once the GJBEDTP was up and running, it could cut travelling time between Kuala Lumpur and Johor Baru from



Tan says the GJBEDTP will create economic spillover and bring developments to other districts in Johor. — ZAZALI MUSA/The Star

seven hours to less than four hours.

He said as the double-track line across Malaysia from Padang Besar at the Thai border all the way to Johor Baru adjacent to Singapore, it could attract more domestic visitors from other states to Johor.

"Segamat, Kluang, Layang-Layang, Renggam and Paloh have their own attractions and we can promote tourism in these towns," said Wong.

He added that the project could also encourage locals from other towns or districts working in Johor Baru to consider living in their respective homes in the districts and commute daily to work.

"This will boost the local economy as the money earned will be spent in their hometowns," said Wong.

The construction of the double-track electric rail line from Gemas, Negri Sembilan, to Johor Baru is the final component of the Electrified Double-Tracking project.

The estimated cost of the 192km stretch of tracks from Gemas to Johor Baru is RM8.9bil. Once completed, trains can cover the KL Sentral-JB Sentral route in three hours and 30 minutes at a speed of 140 kph.

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PETROLIUM NASIONAL BERHAD (PETRONAS) (20076-K)



PETRONAS

Proving his mettle as Johor MB

THIS month marks Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi's (pic) one-year anniversary as Johor's 19th Menteri Besar. The 44-year-old spoke passionately to **NELSON BENJAMIN** about an array of issues including his relationship with Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, his government's achievements and his plans to make Johor a developed state by 2030.

You have known the Johor Ruler since your time as a state assemblyman in 2018. How would you describe your relationship with His Majesty then and now, especially since you took over as Johor Menteri Besar?

During my time as a state assemblyman and state executive councillor, I did not get to spend much time with His Majesty, especially when we had to limit our interactions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since my appointment as Menteri Besar, I meet him at least once a week before our state executive council (exco) meeting. But if there are other programmes, we may meet two or three times a week.

I see His Majesty as a very disciplined, meticulous and firm Ruler. His Majesty is also caring and compassionate when it comes to his subjects, which is one of the main reasons they love him. Personally, I have learnt a lot from Tuanku in the last year.

The Johor Ruler is passionate about the state's development. During your regular meetings, do you all discuss state affairs? How was your recent trip with Tuanku to Singapore?

Being a young leader, I have a lot to learn. Tuanku has always been kind to me and made it easy for me to communicate with him. Tuanku always advises me on how to steer the state forward, especially when it comes to development and looking after Johoreans.

When I accompanied Tuanku to Singapore late last year, I could see that the Singaporean leaders had utmost respect for him. Tuanku certainly plays an important role in ensuring that Johor and Singapore have a strong relationship.

Since taking over as Menteri Besar, what has been your focus or key areas? What is your vision for Johor in the next five years?

The vision is to make Johor a developed state by the year 2030. I have set out the guidelines and pillars to achieve this vision, which is also in line with Tuanku's vision to propel the state forward.

The six pillars are good governance, economic development, social safety net, facilities and basic needs, safety, cleanliness and the environment and lastly about Johor's youth. I have been focusing on these six pillars during my first 100 days in office as Menteri Besar. My executive councillors and I are committed towards realising these pillars as they are not merely a grand vision. We have detailed steps on how to achieve them in a timely and realistic manner.

On implementation, I am pleased to report that last year, Johor recorded the highest investment figure flow into the country at a staggering RM70.6bil. We are also charting a lower unemployment rate – one of the lowest in Malaysia.

We are also progressing with Johor Bersih through weekly programmes with the community, government-linked companies



Onn Hafiz (second from left) braving floodwaters to visit a relief centre at a school in Johor earlier this month.

and the general public to ensure Johor's cleanliness.

I am also happy that in terms of sports and youth, we emerged as the champion in the Malaysia Games (Sukma) last year. Things are panning out well for Johor and I hope to continue to strive for excellence in the coming years.

On youth and sports, we have been doing well as it is our Tengku Mahkota Johor's initiative to get youths involved in the state's progress. When it comes to the youths, it's under the leadership of TMJ. Some of our success stories include Southern volunteers and Tengku Mahkota Ismail Youth Centre.

All of this is a continuous effort. I am not the kind of Menteri Besar who just attends one programme and is done with it. There is a need for continuity. You must do things that have a long-term impact on the state and its people.

This month will be your one-year anniversary as Menteri Besar. Are there any initiatives or projects that deserve a shoutout?

We are living in exciting times in Johor and I am certain there will be much more good news to come. It has only been one year but with our strong foundation, I am certain Johor will benefit further.

The recent announcement on flood mitigation projects and a higher budget for floods is a big win for Johor. The floods have caused widespread damage, but the Prime Minister's announcements about resolving flood issues in Johor is a key point and the state government will continue to work closely with the Federal Government on this issue.

Our deputy prime minister also agreed to increase the number of lanes for Mbikes at the Johor Causeway to ease congestion. We are also thankful for the expansion of highways, especially the North-South Expressway from Yong Peng to Johor Baru, and the widening of the Senai-Desaru highway. These are all building blocks to make sure Johor continues to progress as it is strategically located.

From my recent conversations with ministers from Singapore, they all see Johor as a strategic partner for both countries to create a win-win situation. Johor has to capitalise on that relationship as well.

The recent Federal Budget was very favourable to Johor, with many projects announced for the state. Is enhancing relations with the Federal Government an important strategy for Johor?

Yes, that is definitely very impor-



tant for Johor. Politics aside, I think the leadership at the federal and state level must be close because at the end of the day, we have to ensure this relationship benefits the people. That is key and the Prime Minister's recent announcement on having a special financial zone in Johor is another big win for us. It will spur development in Iskandar Malaysia and help the local property market.

I must also thank Tuanku for his blessing and assistance so that Johor could have a better relationship with the Federal Government. Tuanku is very hands on when it comes to Johor's development.

In past state assembly sittings, Tuanku has pointed out things Johor needs such as better highways and generating more income. It is always about putting the people first.

Johor is rapidly becoming a regional economic powerhouse. How is the state government pushing for this agenda and what are your plans to take Johor to the next level?

In terms of boosting our economy in Johor, I think investors' confidence is very important. Our executive councillors and I have been engaging the relevant stakeholders to convince them that Johor is the place to invest.

Johor has the potential, especially with its international ports and world-class facilities in terms of infrastructure and connectivity. We also have ample land and manpower. I want investors to know that Johor is open for business.

It is also important that we are focused. I have set up the details for the six pillars and we have to follow through in terms of implementation. I am not saying everything is perfect, but we are putting in effort to address issues like potholes in Pasir Gudang and poor Internet coverage in some places.

We are also constantly ensuring that the Johor Fast Lane is up to the mark for investors. It cuts out all the red tape for investors in terms of reducing the bureaucracies and approving licenses more quickly. At the same time, we want to ensure everything is done legally.

I tell investors that Johor's key points are that we have political stability, government support not just from agencies but also from me, and a strategic location.

In the first six months of 2022, Johor attracted about RM60bil. That figure rose to RM70.6bil by year end. Is there a target for this year and the next?

Obviously, we will want to achieve the same or if possible, even higher, figures. It is a tough task but I think it can be done if we are focused. My state executive councillor for investment, Lee Ting Han, is working hard with help from the Malaysian Investment Development Authority and Invest Johor.

We have the recipe for success. Now, we need to get investors to come to Johor. We are also engaging with some big potential investors from Europe, China and Singapore to invest in manufacturing, petrochemicals and data centres.

Since taking office, you have been doing spot checks. How have those been? In our last interview, you said a lot of people were going down to the bottom and doing their own checks. Is there consistency in this?

Yes, my state executive councillors are also doing it and the idea is to produce results. For example, at the Bangunan Sultan Iskandar Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex in Johor Baru, there were about 1,200 work orders pending when I first took office.

Most of those jobs have since been completed and there are only about 100 pending jobs now. Most of the escalators and elevators have been fixed too.

Our free shuttle buses operated by Johor Public Transport has also increased the number of services, especially to major hospitals like Sultanah Aminah and Sultan Ismail.

One thing we need to continuously work on is our weekly Johor Bersih programme. We have not fully achieved results for this yet as we need to keep going down to the ground to get it done.

Our rivers need to be cleaned up. We cannot run from doing these things because climate change is real. If we do not look

after our state in terms of cleanliness and reducing carbon emission and pollution, we will pay a heavy price. So, I think this green deal for Johor is very important.

We observed how Singapore did it during my recent trip there. The Singapore River was once worse than Johor's but over a period of 10 years, they managed to clean it up and it is now one of the cleanest rivers in the world. So, I think we need to learn from those who have successfully done it.

We need to take the best practices and adopt them in Johor. Our rivers are polluted due to a combination of squatter elements and public attitude. The society needs to be "retuned" in order to instil the importance of maintaining cleanliness.

With regards to climate change, a holistic approach is needed to resolve this issue. At the state level, we want to champion this issue in a more serious manner.

You are a media-savvy Menteri Besar who uses social media to engage with the people. Even during your spot checks, you engage with the people to get their feedback. How has this been effective?

I have been able to get a lot of feedback via social media and I enjoy going down to the ground to engage with the people. Listening from others or reading reports is one thing, but having firsthand experience on the ground and seeing it can be eye-opening.

There is also a lot more empathy for people's suffering when you go down to the ground. When federal ministers came to Johor, including the Prime Minister or the Home Minister, I spoke from the heart because I see what is happening on the ground.

I also get a lot of information from social media. When they share comments and talk about issues affecting them, I appreciate it as it gives me an opportunity to resolve the issue.

The rising cost of living is a major problem in all developed cities around the world and Johor Baru is no different. Is the state government coming up with any initiatives to address this?

Yes. As I said earlier, Johor has an advantage with its huge land bank. Making the state a food bank and ensuring food security is vital. Focusing on agriculture will help to reduce cost as producing more can help reduce the price and result in savings for the consumers.

By collaborating with the Federal Government, we can increase agriculture production for Johor and reduce the cost. For short-term measures, there are a few things we will announce soon to help our people get through the year.

Addressing the rising cost of living is something that is close to my heart. I understand that people are suffering and we need to do something to help them. For the flood victims, the Prime Minister's moratorium announcement was timely along with the RM1,000 cash aid.

As for the state, we are giving RM300 and helping with the post-flood situation. We have also sent our Southern volunteers to the ground in collaboration with other GLCs and volunteer organisations to help the people.

Watch the video of the interview [TheStarTV.com](https://www.thestar.com)



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YAB DATUK ONN HAFIZ BIN GHAZI

Menteri Besar Johor dan Isteri
serta

Kepimpinan Kerajaan Negeri dan Rakyat Johor Darul Ta'zim

By VENESA DEVI
venesa@thestar.com.my

MORE than 220,000 employment opportunities have been created by the Johor Corporation (JCorp) and some RM90bil worth of foreign and domestic investments attracted in line with the corporation living up to its "Membina" (wealth creation) mission.

In tandem with this, JCorp has developed in excess of 35,000 residential and commercial units, and established seven KPJ hospitals in Johor alone.

JCorp's agribusiness manages 60,339ha of plantations, 23 oil palm estates, five palm oil mills and five biogas plants.

As the principal development institution for Johor, JCorp plays a crucial role as an agent of change for Johor, propelling the state's growth.

Just three years into the launch of the JCorp 3.0 Reinvention plan, the corporation has managed to redefine the way it operates.

Today, it is reaping the rewards of its unusual business approach, which is driven by its mission and purpose of creation – "Membina dan Membela" (wealth creation and wealth distribution).

JCorp's role in Membela is focused on the betterment of livelihoods, state and nation, while also ensuring social and economic inclusion.

A clear demonstration of this is the delivery of more than 3,000 units of affordable housing or Rumah Impian Bangsa Johor, developed by Johor Land Berhad (JLand) on 20.76ha of land to fulfil the vision of Johor Ruler Sultan Johor Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar in ensuring that each and every Johorean owns

Propelling Johor's growth



JCorp has delivered over 3,000 units of Rumah Impian Bangsa Johor developed by Johor Land Berhad to fulfil Sultan Ibrahim's vision and aspirations for the state.

their own home in strategic locations at affordable prices.

The Membela impact is amplified via its contribution to the tune of over RM170mil in dividends to the Johor state government from 1989 to 2021.

JCorp is dedicated to the construction of affordable homes and the improvement of human capital development.

Simultaneously, it works to ensure that people have access to and can continue to protect their communities' natural, social and cultural assets.

JCorp's commitment to community upliftment further supports this as evidenced by its business

title of over RM132mil since 2012, almost RM50mil manfaat wakaf distributed through Waqaf An-Nur and over RM100mil channelled towards sports development through Johor Darul Ta'zim FC since 2011.

As a pillar of social responsibility, JCorp has provided care for over 1.8 million patients through Klinik Waqaf An-Nur.

The corporation is also motivated by its vision of becoming a highly admired institution, particularly for its financial success and exemplary Environmental, Social and Governance practices.

This is evident in its inclusive hiring of over 350 special needs



JCorp has demonstrated its commitment to social responsibility by providing care to more than 1.8 million patients through Klinik Waqaf An-Nur.

employees as part of KFC's Community Care Stores.

On top of that, more than 342 schools and libraries also benefited from JCorp's two community outreach programmes, Projek Tuisyen and Books for Asia.

With regards to nurturing new talent, JCorp has funded the education of 83 new graduates through its Education Sponsorship Programme and the professional development of 44 new accountants through its Chartered Accountancy Programme.

JCorp has also taken steps to ensure the health of the environment, including a decrease in net carbon emissions and the exploration

of renewable energy sources such as biogas.

Moreover, JCorp has a zero-burning policy and all of its facilities generate green energy and practise strict waste management.

With an eye toward the future, an understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and armed with the responsibility to uphold its mission of Membina dan Membela, JCorp is better prepared than ever to seize the boundless opportunities that digitalisation brings.

JCorp will move forward to leverage Johor's established advantages based on the trifecta of economic growth, high quality of life and environmental responsibility.

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 2023 Bersamaan 1 Ramadan 1444 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya
Yang Berdatang Sembah

Lembaga Pengarah, Pihak Pengurusan dan Warga Kerja



Malaysia Marine and Heavy Engineering Holdings Berhad (MHB)

Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

**DULI YANG MAHA MULIA
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The people always come first, no matter what

By **REMAR NORDIN**
remar.nordin@thestar.com.my

THOUGH it happened about a year ago, the memory of a fire that burned down their shop was still fresh in the minds of the tenants in Jalan Sungai Tiram, Felda Ulu Tebrau, Johor Baru.

One of the victims, Noorhafizah Mohd Yusof, said she woke up to a phone call from her mother-in-law at 5.30am, informing her that her shop had been engulfed in flames.

"I still remember the date. It was March 25, the first time I had received such shocking news since we started our nasi ambeng and mee rebus business here back in 2006.

"I remember thinking, how would we be able to survive? This business was the only source of income for me and my husband," Noorhafizah said when met at her shop.

The 43-year-old mother of five added that she had lost about RM30,000 worth of store equipment and inventory due to the fire.

However, Noorhafizah's worries were eased upon seeing Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar come down to meet with all the victims himself and promise to bear all the costs to renovate the destroyed shops.

"We were lost for words. I cannot thank His Majesty enough for all the help that he provided for me, my family and the rest of the victims," she said, adding that she was able to earn back what had been lost during the fire.

Sharing the same feeling of gratitude is bicycle shop owner Alfian Yusof, 41, who said his business was not something that could be valued with money.

"The shop was entrusted to me by my father-in-law, who passed away in January last year, two months before the fire occurred.

"All of my family savings were also stored in the shop, so I was really left with nothing after that incident.

"Having His Majesty personally come here and save us was a huge and meaningful gesture. Only Allah can repay his kindness," Alfian said, adding that the victims were also given food aid.

The father of four also shared that he was impressed that the shop was able to be rebuilt within a month.

"There were volunteers working here day and night. It was touching to see other people willing to go that far for us," he said.

In an unrelated case, single mother S. Poongkodi, 55, said her 17-year wait to return to her house in Kelapa Sawit, Kulai, finally ended when the land was awarded to her and her old home was fully

renovated by the Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ).

"After my husband passed away in February 2006, there was a land status dispute on the house, so I decided to leave it and stay with my mother, who lives nearby.

"At the same time, I appealed to the Kulai Land Office to have the house and land returned to me as it was my first house with my husband and two children.

"When it was finally approved, YSIJ also came and offered to renovate the old house for us," Poongkodi said, adding that it felt like a dream come true when she finally got the house key in January this year.

Poongkodi, who works as a bus driver and flower seller, said YSIJ's aid had helped her a lot by providing shelter for her to take care of her small family.

"I can earn around RM100 a week besides the monthly Social Security Organisation I have received following my husband's passing, which is enough for me and my kids to survive.

"I pray that Sultan Ibrahim will have a long and prosperous life so that he can continue to help those in need like me," Poongkodi said.

Also getting their house renovated is 68-year-old Tan Lai Ho, who lives with his elder brother Tan Lai Shiang, 70, from Kampung Perigi Acheh, Pasir Gudang.

According to Lai Ho, their families have lived in the village since before Malaysia and Singapore split in 1965.

"The house belonged to my late grandfather and has been eaten away by time and termites.

"One day, one of the roofs was blown away by the wind. I decided to go up and repair it but ended up falling from the roof.

"My brother could not help as he is partially blind due to glaucoma," he said.

Lai Ho, the fourth of seven siblings, shared that his eldest brother and several other family members are in Singapore and have not been able to meet with them ever since the pandemic hit.

The duo used to work as fishermen in the village before quitting due to old age.

"Now I work for both of us as a part-time helper at a temple in Johor Baru. I can earn about RM500 a month, but RM300 is spent on buying eye medicine for my brother," he said, adding that his vision is also getting blurry.

"I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart to His Majesty for his kindness towards me and my brother. This is something I will remember for the rest of my life," he added.

YSIJ board of trustees member Datuk Avinderjit Singh said YSIJ is



Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar (in yellow) together with Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ) board of trustees member Datuk Avinderjit Singh (in grey) looking at some of the daily appliances worth more than RM700,000 that are donated to the flood victims in the state. — Photo by the Royal Press Office



Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ) board of trustees member Datuk Avinderjit Singh (second from left) handing over an aid to flood victims in Mersing during the flood incident that occurred in January this year. — Photo by the Royal Press Office

a charity foundation established by Sultan Ibrahim in 2016 with the aim of helping those in need.

"Our vision is to become a catalyst for the improvement of the standard of living and well-being of the people in Johor.

"Our mission is to strive to support, assist and provide facilities and assistance to communities in need and those who are eligible for aid and relief across the state.

"We also act as a coordinator, liaison and facilitator for the development and offer of Rumah Impian Bangsa Johor (RIBJ), as well as the distribution and delivery of aid to those who are eligible and in need," he said.

Currently, there are four RIBJ projects under YSIJ located in Bandar Dato' Onn and Bandar Baru Majidee in Johor Baru, Taman Mutiara Gading in Batu Pahat and Mukim Chaah in Segamat, Avinderjit added.

Medical equipments and vaccines were also contributed by YSIJ during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, assisting the health authorities in mitigating the impact of the disease throughout the nation.

"We also handed out food baskets worth RM6.7mil to 72,495 families from 2020 until January this year.

"As for housing renovation aid, we contributed RM915,761 to 31 houses from 2021 until January this year," he said.

"In total, YSIJ splashed a sum of over RM100mil in the form of cash and in-kind contribution," he added.

YSIJ also welcomed any individuals and corporate bodies who wishes to join the noble cause and contribute can do so via the Yayasan Sultan Ibrahim Johor RHB Bank account at 25107600004430.



Mejar Cina Datuk David Wong Khong Soon (third from left) handing over food aid to flood victims in Kota Tinggi under the Sultan Ibrahim Johor Foundation (YSIJ).



Poongkodi cleaning her new house in Kelapa Sawit, Kulai. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

DULI YANG MAHA MULIA
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 SULTAN YANG DIPERTUAN BAGI NEGERI DAN JAJAHAN TAKLUK JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM

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

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Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya
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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

Happy birthday to a beloved Ruler

Johoreans from all 10 districts in the state extend their warm wishes to Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar on His Majesty's birthday today.



"Johoreans are very lucky to have a Ruler who is always quick to help when we face difficulties, such as during the floods. His Majesty is also a very open-minded Ruler who never looks at race or religion and treats everyone equally."

N. Ilamaran, 57
Temple president, Kluang



"Sultan Ibrahim is a caring and compassionate Ruler who always puts the needs of the people first. I hope to meet His Majesty some day and maybe take photos with him. I hope our Ruler always stays happy and healthy."

Tan Fook Gong, 57
Businessman, Tangkak

"Wishing His Majesty a long and blessed life. I highly appreciate the generosity Sultan Ibrahim has shown the people and I am proud to be a Johorean."



Tan Tian Wet, 42
Contractor, Segamat



"As a proud Johorean, I would like to wish a warm birthday to Sultan Ibrahim, who leads by example by promoting moderation, unity and diversity."

Myra Arrissya Mohamad
Nizam, 21
Student, Pontian



"Sultan Ibrahim is kind and caring to his subjects. May His Majesty and the rest of the royal family be blessed with good health, happiness and longevity."

Tan Lee Lee, 62
Retiree, Batu Pahat



"I have had the honour of chatting with the Sultan during tourism programmes in Mersing. His Majesty has also visited the islands here many times to give aid and is well loved by the islanders."

Ahmad Firdaus Shaik Omar, 41
Tour operator, Mersing

"I hope our Ruler knows the people of Johor love him and wish him good health."



Ndana Ruba'i, 25
Business owner, Muar



"I met His Majesty at Kembara Mahkota Johor 10 years ago – the Ruler was friendly and humble. I wish Tuanku a long, blissful life."

Rosli Amat Buhari, 50
Carpet cleaner, Kota Tinggi



"I still remember Sultan Ibrahim's visit to our school in 1992. His Majesty was kind to all the students and even checked on our school's marching performance. I wish His Majesty a happy birthday and good health."

N. Asha Dewi, 42
Tutor, Johor Baru



"I met Sultan Ibrahim in 2016 when he visited my stall and spent time making his own thosai. Sultan Ibrahim is humble and easy to approach. I hope His Majesty has a wonderful birthday and even better years ahead."

R. Janaki, 40, Trader, Kulai

Daulat Tuanku



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Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (902884V)
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Spreading unity and togetherness

By YEE XIANG YUN
xiangyun@thestar.com.my

JOHOR'S Unity Ambassador programme has attracted the attention of the Melaka government with its efforts to appoint and train youths to spread the spirit of unity.

Johor health and unity committee chairman Ling Tian Soon said when executive councillors from the Melaka government visited Johor recently, they expressed interest to adopt the initiative.

"Since launching the programme last year, 160 youths aged 18 to 25 have been appointed as Johor Unity Ambassadors and trained to spread the spirit of togetherness and resolving community conflicts.

"They are also given funds to organise their own programmes to engage with the communities.

"The Melaka government is in talks with us to adopt our training module and implement a similar programme in their state," he said, adding that Johor was the first state to carry out such an initiative.

The training module, Ling said, was drawn up by the state Unity Department together with a mix of academicians, ex-government officials and social workers who share related experience in unity and community matters.

In the Johor Budget 2023 announced by Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi, the state government allocated RM500,000 to fund the programme's second year.

"We have seen positive results from the programme where more youths are participating in commu-



Ling (fourth from left) with the Johor Unity Ambassadors during one of their training workshops.

nity activities as well as government-organised events.

"The unity ambassadors have also been actively carrying out community programmes of their choice such as tuition classes, setting up reading and study corners and agricultural programmes.

"They are mostly youths from public and private learning institutions and non-governmental organisations, so they are free to plan their programmes according to their interests or tertiary education courses," he explained.

Ling also said the state government planned to further strengthen the programme this year by opening the application to appoint another batch of unity ambassadors in the coming weeks.

Ling, who is also Yong Peng assemblyman, said such efforts were to uphold the Bangsa Johor concept espoused by Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Almarhum

Sultan Iskandar, who always emphasised inter-faith values of tolerance, unity and understanding.

"By practising what he preaches, he has shown the people that Bangsa Johor is more than a slogan. He is always one of the first to speak out about racial and religious diversity to stop an issue from spiralling.

"For example, there was a recent fatwa prohibiting Muslims from taking part in other religious rituals, which many had taken out of context. Sultan Ibrahim was quick to reaffirm the Bangsa Johor concept and explained that under the fatwa, Muslims could still attend festive events of other faiths.

"Sultan Ibrahim also set a good example when he attended the state-level Thaipusam luncheon and Chingay procession to show that Muslims can attend such functions, they just cannot participate



Johor Unity Ambassadors are given the freedom and allocation to hold community programmes of their choice such as this agricultural programme conducted with the Taman Kota Jaya A Kawasan Rukun Tetangga in Kota Tinggi.



Since launching the programme last year, 160 youths aged 18 until 25 have been appointed as Johor Unity Ambassadors to spread the spirit of togetherness.

in the religious rites," he added.

To support the Ruler's call, a harmony committee is being set up this month, chaired by Ling himself.

"I insisted on having the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taosim (MCCBCHST) be part of the committee as the voice of non-Islam religions.

"Having this committee, which includes government agencies, will promote better relations among the people and prevent misunderstand-

ings due to ignorance," Ling said.

Johor MCCBCHST chairman R. Karupiah said the council also held monthly meet-ups to discuss current issues concerning the people.

"We also attend meetings with relevant government agencies to address any issues that may arise, and hold exchanges with representatives from the Johor Islamic Religious Department," he said, adding that MCCBCHST was open to engaging with any organisation to promote harmony and peace.

Daulat Tuanku

Mengadap

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REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY



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Mengadap

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Creating an investor-friendly city

By REMAR NORDIN
remar.nordin@thestar.com.my

FOUR municipal councils in southern Johor are teaming together to strengthen their position under the Greater Johor Bahru (JB) agenda, which will feature streamlined management, public safety and security, and a sustainable and liveable city in the future.

Johor Baru mayor datuk Mohd Noorazam Osman said the local councils involved are the Johor Baru City Council (MBJB), Iskandar Puteri City Council (MBIP), Pasir Gudang City Council (MBPG) and Kulai Municipal Council (MPKu).

"Johor Baru has vast potential to be greater because we already have good transportation facilities in place such as Senai International Airport (in Kulai); two ports, namely Pasir Gudang and Tanjung Pelepas (in Iskandar Puteri); and in the middle, we have JB Sentral and the incoming RTS (in Johor Baru).

"The economic facilities are already there so we, the four local councils, wanted to work together. If we look at the combination of revenue between these four, it would easily be over RM1bil, which is either the same as or more than what the state government makes.

"If we can pull our resources together and use this RM1bil, we could create a more efficient city, enable savings and avoid overlap and double handling of work," he explained.

Mohd Noorazam said the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (Irda) also plays an important role as it represents both the state and Federal governments and could help establish what the council wants for Greater JB.

"Irda is one of the leading federal agencies looking over these four local councils, so if we can justify what we want such as flood mitigation projects and public transportation, Irda can bring up our plea to the Federal Government for the budget," he said, adding that the Prime Minister and Johor Menteri Besar are co-chairmen of Irda.

The Greater JB agenda is similar to what has been introduced at the West Midlands Combined Authority in the United Kingdom, where 18 local authorities have come together to create the Greater West Midlands initiative, he added.

"They also have Greater London, which was formed by 33 local governments, so this might be the best example for us to move forward.

"Johor Baru is located right across Singapore City so if we want to be on par with them, we should start right now. It is a long-term agenda, but we have to start somewhere," he added.

The Greater JB agenda focuses on 10 initiatives, which include the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), smart cities, green initiatives and a low-carbon society, besides simplifying and standardising the procedures, charges and parking system between all four local councils.

"We should also have a single online payment system. At the moment we have the Johor Pay app, which we can still improve and develop into a super app that connects all four local councils.

"There is a need for understanding between the state government, local councils and Irda to look into how we can improve Johor Baru because there are things outside our jurisdiction," he added.

The end goal is to create a Johor Baru that is investor-friendly and a



The Greater JB agenda is also in line with the Maju Johor 2030 agenda, which aims to turn Johor into a developed state by 2030. — Photo from Johor Baru City Council



Pasir Gudang City Council (MBPG) mayor Datuk Asman Shah Abd Rahman



Kulai Municipal Council (MPKu) president Mohd Fahmi Salam



Johor Baru City Council (MBJB) mayor Datuk Mohd Noorazam Osman



Iskandar Puteri City Council (MBIP) mayor Datuk Mohd Haffiz Ahmad

liveable city that has uniformity on all levels of management, he said.

Mohd Noorazam shared that MBJB is in talks with the private sector to open up the reclaimed land at Pantai Lido as a public carpark that could accommodate over 3,000 vehicles at one time.

"Then, we could open up spaces for food trucks and other amenities so that it would be a nice place for city folk to hang out or escape from their busy schedules," he added.

Meanwhile, Iskandar Puteri mayor Datuk Mohd Haffiz Ahmad said there are 10 pillars or tasks divided between the four local councils, with MBIP being given the job of overseeing the implementation of a low-carbon society and sustainability of the environment.

"MBJB is the main coordinator for all pillars besides infrastructure, while MBPG is in charge of smart city integration and food security initiatives as well as being the secretariat. MPKu is more focused on digital investment and the air gateway for Johor.

"Currently, we are preparing to introduce the Iskandar Puteri Climate Action Plan 2030 to replace the current Low Carbon Society Action Plan 2025 and become a guideline for the other three local councils when conducting their low carbon initiatives.

"Under the plan, each council will have its own core focus to be

monitored by the Low Carbon Society Committee.

"MBIP will be in charge of incentives and community participation; MBJB on renewable and efficient energy technology; MBPG on carbon credit and green incentives for industry; and MPKu on carbon sinks and green buildings," he said.

Mohd Haffiz added that the council has approved RM500,000 to fund 31 community projects that are in line with a low-carbon society and sustainability of the environment, besides ensuring that every new development will have green initiatives with their planning permission.

"We also plan to work with the private sector to place more electric vehicle charging stations in the council areas, as we are also one of the gateways for Singaporeans to come via the Second Link.

"We cannot afford to be left behind and must adapt to the evolution of technology. Two years ago, it would have taken about a day for an electric vehicle to be fully charged. Today, it would only take about eight hours or less," he said, adding that the Greater JB agenda would bring about positive change for Johor.

Pasir Gudang mayor Datuk Asman Shah Abd Rahman said each of the four local councils will have a command centre to oversee the implementation of artificial intelligence-enabled closed-circuit

television, smart traffic lights, lighting and parking systems.

"All of the systems are currently being tested on-site and we should be able to see some of the implementation starting this year.

"Each command centre will be linked to one another, which will provide the authorities and government agencies with any information needed as it can detect any suspicious movements and even potholes," he said.

The idea came after the council's working visit to Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) last year to get input on how the system works and its potential for improvement, he added.

As for the food security agenda, Asman said MBPG has started opening up more community farms in residential areas by providing them with free training and consultation and planting seeds.

"We have worked with Universiti Putra Malaysia in providing training to our staff in the seed planting process, harvesting and creating compost fertilisers so that they can share it with other members of the public," he said, adding that this initiative will be expanded to the three other councils.

Kulai council president Mohd Fahmi Salam said MPKu is planning to look into the current investors it has in its area and provide help in terms of how the companies can expand their businesses.

"MPKu previously introduced the Kulai Fast Lane concept, a one-stop centre that handles all applications by investors to set up operations by cutting red tape, easing applications and speeding up the approval process.

"The Johor government has also expanded the concept to other local councils and rebranded it as Johor Fast Lane. This has actually gathered a lot of positive responses from investors who are looking at investing in South-East Asia; Kulai has become their top choice compared to other countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore.

"But this advantage will eventually be implemented by other countries as well, so that is why we need to continue to improve our ways and be close to our investors in providing all their needs," he said, adding that Kulai currently has two important investment areas, namely Sedenak Tech Park and Senai International Airport.

Mohd Fahmi added that helping investors expand their businesses does not mean they are urged to compete with one another, but rather complement each other so that it could open up more job opportunities for the locals.

"Not only will this bring in more income to the government, but local Johoreans and those living in Kulai can gain more income and the local council could also provide better amenities in the area," he added.

Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

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Matrix Concepts Holdings Berhad 199601042262 (414615-U)

Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

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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 2023 Bersamaan 1 Ramadan 1444 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya

Yang Berdatang Sembah



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Ranhill Utilities Berhad

201401014973 (1091059-K)

Ranhill (Formerly known as Ranhill Holdings Berhad)

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 II O&M Sdn Bhd 199501025101 (354306-D)

Ranhill Bersekutu Sdn Bhd 198101006302 (72416-T)

Ranhill Worley Sdn Bhd 199501031145 (360351-A)

Attracting more investors to Johor

By ZAZALI MUSA
metro@thestar.com.my

JOHOR remains attractive to domestic and foreign investors amid the post-Covid-19 uncertainties and challenges in global economic growth.

State Investment, Trade and Consumer Affairs committee chairman Lee Ting Han said many foreign investors have expressed their interest to invest in Johor.

"In fact, we have been hosting several foreign companies visiting Johor since the opening of the country's international border on May 1, 2022," he said.

Lee said though it was still premature to reveal their names, the companies had shown strong interest to invest in Johor.

He said over the years, the state had always ranked as the top destination in Malaysia when it comes to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

Lee said Johor attracted the most FDI in the country with RM70.6bil last year compared with RM6.8bil and RM7bil in 2020 and 2021.

"The FDI figures were lower in 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic," he said.

For the record, Selangor came in second position with RM60.1bil worth of investments last year, followed by Sarawak (RM28.2bil), Kuala Lumpur (RM25bil) and Penang (RM16.3bil).

Lee said the ongoing trade war between China and the United



Johor Baru's close proximity with Singapore is an added advantage to attract foreign direct investments to Johor due to the republic's position as an international trade and financial centre. — ZAZALI MUSA/The Star

States was a blessing in disguise for countries in the region.

He said many multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in China were looking to relocate their operations to Asean countries, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

"Johor has the right ecosystem to attract them due to our close proximity with Singapore," added Lee.

He said the state had identified electronics and electrical, pharma-

ceutical and health and oil and gas activities as the sectors which may help boost Johor's economic growth.

Lim said the state's political stability, good infrastructure such as ports and road systems, as well as utilities were also among the factors attracting investors to Johor.

Johor South SME association adviser Teh Kee Sin urged the state government to act fast to attract MNCs from China to relocate their operations to Johor.

"Our close proximity with Singapore is an added advantage for us to attract these companies due to Singapore's position as an international financial and trade centre," he said.

Teh said Johor Baru and Singapore give them the best of both worlds as they could set up their operation activities in Iskandar Malaysia and have their headquarters in the republic.

He added that Iskandar Malaysia



Teh says Singapore offers good opportunities for Johor to attract Singapore-based SMEs to relocate their operations to Iskandar Malaysia. — ZAZALI MUSA/The Star

would benefit the most as Malaysia's first economic growth corridor, launched in November 2006, was the most successful in the country.

"It is becoming more challenging for Johor to attract domestic and foreign investors post-pandemic as other states are also actively pursuing the matter," said Teh.

He said the introduction of the fast lane concept introduced by the state government would help ease doing business and reduce bureaucratic processes.

Teh said Johor also needed more semi-skilled and semi-skilled workers to cater to the needs of investors planning to invest in the state.

By YEE XIANG YUN
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Melting pot of fresh innovation

MEDINI, home to reputable international brands like DHL Express, Ernst and Young and Raffles University, is shaping up to be a melting pot of Johor's innovation.

Along with Deluxe Games from Japan, these companies occupy 15,979.3sq m across three major office spaces Medini 6, 7 and 9, says Iskandar Investment Bhd (IIB) president and chief executive officer Datuk Idzham Mohd Hashim.

"Under the ecosystem building initiative, IIB has created a centralised hub for entrepreneurs, academics, start-ups and corporations to create, collaborate and grow.

"This has made Medini a melting pot in attracting investors and large enterprises to source new ideas, investments and market-driven innovation for commercialisation.

"We are committed to developing the city into a thriving metropolis by growing the population, attracting investors and reinvigorating our master plan," he said.

Incorporated in 2006, IIB has been focused on delivering catalytic projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, said Idzham, adding that it has evolved into a strategic developer focused on driving the economic growth of Iskandar Puteri, where Medini is located.

As one of the largest integrated urban developments in Malaysia, IIB aims to develop Medini into a net zero carbon city centring on digitalisation, innovation and global business services with a dense, vibrant and thriving urban community, he added.

"Thus, it is vital to focus on building the ecosystem to ensure the companies situated in Medini are well-taken care of and facilitate their expansion so they will keep growing and flourishing," he said.



IIB organises initiatives to facilitate the growth of digital start-up players in Medini with the state government.

He also highlighted Common Ground Iskandar Puteri (CGIP), a contemporary-style co-working space at Medini 6 – the largest of its kind in Johor at 1,378sq m.

According to him, CGIP has over 25 global and local companies occupying 200 seats across its space, with each bringing something unique to the table.

Among them is Kestrl, an Islamic fintech company that serves its UK clientele. Its co-founder and chief operations officer Daeng Termizi said the company had humble beginnings, starting as a two-person operation before growing significantly since its inception in 2020.

"As a start-up, we place our key focus on building our product. Hence, we don't want to be bogged with office administrative stuff.

"CGIP is the right place to be because of the people here. We may come from varying industries, but we are all tech companies.

"We have the benefit of support from local agencies and networking," he said, adding that the environment in Medini suits the lifestyle needs of his young team, allowing them to live near their workplace and be surrounded by basic amenities and activities.

Daeng said this helps with his team's morale and allows him to retain and develop talents.

Another local start-up attracted to CGIP is RunCloud, a PHP cloud server management panel with active users across 110 countries that manages over half a million sites globally.

According to chief executive officer and co-founder Arif Tukiman, the company was recognised as the Web Panel of the Year in 2021 by W3Techs, a rare feat for a Malaysian tech company.

"Medini is a good place for start-ups to come, collaborate and reposition due to the support and sur-



IIB making Medini a home for the innovation and technology community to thrive.

rounding facilities such as CGIP, as well as support from IIB and state government agencies.

"Medini is actively attracting players to the region due to IIB's alignment with the 4th Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) and the tailored support for the digital economy such as the Blockchain Village @ Medini," said Arif.

In line with IR4.0, IIB opened its Drone Testing Site (DTS) in Medini last year, the first and one of the largest in Malaysia and South-East Asia.

Now, the Drone and Robotics Zone (DRZ) Iskandar aims to be a hub of drone and robotics, creating an experience-driven ecosystem that will become a growth engine, talent hub and technology leader for the country and Asia-Pacific region.

The DRZ consists of DTS 1 and DTS 2, spanning 10.1ha and 687ha respectively. DTS 1 caters to "visual

line of sight" flight tests while DTS 2 is for "beyond visual line of sight" flight tests, the first of its kind in the country. Both are recognised by the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry as a National Technology and Innovation Sandbox.

Since its inception, DRZ Iskandar has become the home of several companies like Garuda Robotics (M) Sdn Bhd, Alphaswift Industries Sdn Bhd, SG Akademi and Malaysia Sports Aviation Federation.

A company under the Finance Ministry, Malaysia Debt Ventures is now the funding partner of DRZ Iskandar, providing financing and mentoring services to high-growth sector companies.

"The Medini ecosystem has grown much since its recognition as Johor's digital hub in 2021. It is now coming together as a truly unique location for innovation in the Iskandar region and Malaysia," said Idzham.

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Kuok Brothers Sdn Bhd
 (1765-T)



Tanjung Bintang Sdn Bhd
 (152333-X)



Gunung Impian Development Sdn Bhd
 (211440-A)



Pandan Baru Sdn Bhd
 (321411-H)



Rawhide Sdn Bhd
 (201247-A)

Symbol of the height of Johor's sovereignty

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH
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THE Johor coat of arms is much more than a symbol; it is also a cornerstone for the state's accomplishments over the past century and will continue to inspire future achievements.

The coat of arms can be traced back over 100 years ago to the reign of Almarhum Sultan Sir Abu Bakar Ibn Almarhum Temenggong Daeng Ibrahim.

Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar, also known as the father of modern Johor, was a visionary and brought development into the state during his reign in the 1800s.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities senior lecturer Associate Professor Dr Datuk Kassim Thukiman said besides introducing the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Johor 1895, Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar also introduced the state's coat of arms.

"The Johor coat of arms was introduced in around 1886.

"It is a symbol of the height of Johor's sovereignty, an independent and sovereign kingdom," he told *The Star* in a special interview held in conjunction with current Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Almarhum Sultan Iskandar's official birthday celebration.



The Johor coat of arms displayed at (left) Kota Iskandar, the Johor government administrative centre in Iskandar Puteri, and (right) in front of the Johor Baru High Court complex. — THOMAS YONG/The Star

Kassim added that Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar was a diplomatic leader and had travelled to many foreign countries during his reign to forge relationships that would benefit Johor.

"His Majesty was inspired for Johor to have its own state of arms after one of his trips to Great Britain as His Majesty was a close friend of Queen Victoria.

"Through his vision, Johor became the country's first state to have its own coat of arms," he said.

The Johor coat of arms comprises a central shield, which has a crescent moon and a big star with four small stars at each corner of the shield.

It is topped by a crown and has

two tigers on each side facing one another as well as a line of Jawi text, which means "Kepada Allah Berserah" (To Allah we surrender), at the bottom.

Kassim, who is also a member of the Johor Royal Court Council, said each element of the design symbolised a feature of the state.

"The shield represents the sovereignty and security of an independent state. The four stars represent the four initial districts that were opened during the reign of Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar: Johor Baru, Endau-Mersing, Muar and Batu Pahat," he added.

When asked whether the two tigers represented mythological tigers Dengkis and Tepok, Kassim



said they represented dexterity and courage in the modern system of government and administration.

According to folklore, Dengkis and Tepok were two tigers roaming eastern Johor safeguarding the state from external evil influences.

Kassim said another unique feature of the Johor coat of arms is the presence of gambir and black pepper, which were the basis of Johor's economic progress between 1844 and 1917.

"Gambir and black pepper made Johor famous globally as the state was the main exporter for the two products to Europe back then.

"At the same time, the Sultanate of Johor recognised the contribu-

tion of Chinese in advancing Johor's economy. That is why there is a Chinese hall built next to Istana Besar in Johor Baru," he added.

Kassim also said the slogan "Kepada Allah Berserah" was found in Article 61 of the Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Johor 1895, which was used by Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar.

He added that there is an official motto of the Johor Sultanate – "Muafakat itu berkat" (Concorde is a blessing).

Kassim said it is important for youth in Bangsa Johor to appreciate the various dimensions of the state's history, including its coat of arms as a symbol of the sovereignty of the modern Johor sultanate.

He said it also describes Johor's current government and administration system.

"This government system includes the hierarchy of the Sultan's position on the throne, the heir (Tunku Mahkota Johor), the state executive councillors and government council meetings.

"In the administration of the state government, it is supported by the Johor Public Service or Johor Civil Service, which administers government departments and district offices.

"Another uniqueness of Johor is the existence of the Johor Military Force, which defends the security and sovereignty of Johor," he said.

Eyeing high-return, growth sectors

By ZAZALI MUSA
metro@thestar.com.my

THE country's first economic growth region, Iskandar Malaysia, has attracted strong interest from investors since its inception on Nov 8, 2006.

Iskandar Regional Development Authority (Irda) chief executive Datuk Dr Badrul Hisham Kassim shares about its achievements. Despite its success story, there will be challenges soon due to uncertainties in global economic growth.

What are the challenges in attracting domestic and foreign investors post-pandemic as the country's economy slowly recovers from a three-year slowdown brought about by Covid-19?

Externally, a major challenge would be the growing interest in investment destinations such as Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, all of which have a larger population and a growing middle-income segment. This relates to them having a bigger market and talent pool.

Regarding the talent pool, the reopening of our borders with Singapore and renewed investment interests in and outside Iskandar Malaysia are "pulling away" our talent to seek better opportunities outside the region. It has become a challenge to offer potential investors enough suitable talents to support their investments.

With remote working and flexible working hours becoming increasingly popular, many talents have turned to gig businesses instead of wanting to be employed in traditional industries or companies. This can also be a talent supply issue to potential investors.

What have you learned since the region's inception? Do you think Iskandar Malaysia has

achieved its goals under the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP2006-2025) to become a metropolis of international standing?

Throughout 17 years of development and the journey towards becoming a strong, sustainable metropolis of international standing, we have learnt the importance of:

a) Having a strong and comprehensive development plan as a base, benchmark and guidance for a holistic development. This helps us to be resilient and stay focused on our targets and roles despite the challenges throughout the years.

However, the projects and programmes under the plan are regularly reviewed to ensure that we can adapt to global and market changes and new trends.

b) Frequent engagement with key stakeholders from the government and private sectors as well as the community to gain their understanding, support and involvement, and to get them to drive projects and programmes contributing to the growth.

c) Creating the right ecosystem for development and for businesses and people to thrive. This is where Irda acts as a planner and facilitator to create various frameworks and guidelines and facilitate the implementations.

Social development and economic prosperity are two of Iskandar Malaysia's main priorities, with the other one being environmental preservation. So, we have been driving and organising countless initiatives and projects towards achieving the above since 2007.

As for achieving our targets, from the investment side, I am confident that we can achieve the RM383bil target despite the pandemic and its effect on the investments coming into Iskandar Malaysia.

In 2019, Iskandar Malaysia achieved a 19.7% reduction of



Badrul Hisham says Iskandar Malaysia is confident about realising its aim to be a metropolis of international standing.

carbon intensity using 2010 as the base year.

Through scientific measurements, we now target to achieve a 70% reduction of carbon intensity by 2030. We believe this is achievable looking at the positive transformation happening at the policy level led by the Federal government, and the introduction and adoption of ESG (environment, social and governance) practices among the private sector players.

Between 2020 and 2022, over 6,000 people in Iskandar Malaysia benefited from socio-economic recovery programmes in the form of grants, reskilling and upskilling and capacity building. Since 2006, a total of 1.03 million jobs have been created in the region.

We are also happy to see that some key infrastructure projects that will help Iskandar Malaysia achieve its vision are being implemented such as the Sungai Segget Rejuvenation project and the Sungai Pulai bridge.

More projects are to come such



The rejuvenated Sungai Segget in downtown Johor Baru city.

as the Johor Baru-Singapore Rapid Transit System Link (RTS Link), Gemas-Johor Baru Electrified Double-Tracking Project, Iskandar Rapid Transit and EDL-Tebrau Highway upgrading project.

We would like to thank our many partners from the government and private sectors, and the community for driving and supporting these projects and programmes. It is through this continuous partnership that we can build the Iskandar Malaysia we envision for the benefit of all parties.

What many may not know is that these projects are not only about improving connectivity and enhancing the quality of life, but would also help Iskandar Malaysia achieve our green agenda and environment target, for example through reduction of carbon emission and water quality.

So far, it looks like we are on track to achieve our vision of becoming a strong and sustainable metropolis of international standing.

What is the total cumulative committed investments in Iskandar Malaysia from 2006 until Dec 31, 2022? Do you think the

RM383bil target by 2025 is achievable taking into account the global economic challenges and worldwide recession as forecast by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in a year or two?

From 2006 to September 2022, the cumulative committed investment in Iskandar Malaysia was RM375.70bil. We believe we will be able to achieve the target despite the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on the investments coming into Iskandar Malaysia.

This is based on rejuvenated interest in Asean countries among global investors with Johor being the top investment state in Malaysia having attracted RM70.6bil in 2022, according to the Malaysia Investment Development Authority.

Some of the recent investments in Iskandar Malaysia that have contributed to this include Insulet Corporation, YTL Data Centre Holdings Pte Ltd, Chindata Group, GDS Holdings Ltd and Wywin Technology Services Sdn Bhd.

Moving forward, Irda will focus on investments in high-return and growth industries based on the expected incoming investment analysis.

Daulat Tuanku



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**Tan Sri Dato' Sri Leong Hoy Kum (Pengasas dan Pengarah Urusan Kumpulan)
Ahli Lembaga Pengarah
Pengurusan dan Kakitangan**

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Reinvent Spaces. Enhance Life.

Winds of change in local sports

By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH
farhaan@thestar.com.my

OVER the last decade, Johor has made a strong claim to become Malaysia's sporting powerhouse with the performance of its athletes at both national and international sporting events.

Such proud achievements can be traced back to the Johor royal family's important role in bringing winds of change to the local sports scene.

The sporting revolution was started by Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail Ibni Sultan Ibrahim, who formed the Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) football club back in 2013.

The club, also known as the Southern Tigers, keeps creating record after record and has won everything in its path, from the junior team to the senior squad.

Among the titles JDT has won are nine straight Malaysian Super League titles, three Malaysia Cups, two FA Cups and eight Charity Shields.

In 2015, JDT also became the first South-East Asian football club to win the AFC Cup. Last year, they progressed to the knockout stages of the AFC Champions League – the first time a football club from Malaysia had ever done so.

Tunku Ismail's consort, Che' Puan Besar Khaleeda Bustamam, who is the patron of the Johor Netball Association, inspired Johor Jewels to lift the Netball Super League title last year.

The Johor flag also flew high in the motorsport world in 2022 with Tunku Panglima Johor Tunku Abdul Rahman Ibni Sultan Ibrahim clinching the GT World Challenge Asia GT3 Pro-Am Driver's Championship with his partner Nick Foster.

Their team, Triple Eight Race Engineering also triumphed in the overall GT3 Teams Championships following the conclusion of the final round of racing at the Okayama Circuit in Japan.

Tunku Putera Johor Tunku Abu Bakar Ibni Sultan Ibrahim also capped a fine debut season, clinching fifth spot in the GT3 Pro-Am Drivers standings alongside his partner Jazeman Jaafar.

Johor can also boast of having world-class athletes who have performed at the highest level in their respective discipline such as cyclist Mohd Shah Firdaus Sahrom, who competed and won the bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in the keirin event.

Other such athletes include national weightlifter Mohamad Aniq Kasdan, who won the gold medal in the 55kg category with a total lift of 249kg (snatch 107kg, clean and jerk 142kg) in the Commonwealth Games.

Johor can also be proud of national boxer Muhamad Farkhan Haron, who hails from Johor Baru, where he is undefeated in 12 bouts and took back his World Boxing Council Asia Cruiserweight belt in December last year.

2022 was also the year Johor emerged as champion of the Malaysia Games (Sukma) for the first time by winning 77 gold, 52, silver and 43 bronze medals.

Besides having high-performance athletes, the state has also played host to international sporting events such as the Sultan of Johor Cup (SOJ), which has attracted top hockey teams from around the world since its inception in 2011.

Johor Hockey Association president Datuk Manjit Majid Abdullah



Mohamad Aniq (left) receiving a mock cheque from Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar in Labis last year. Mohamad Aniq won the gold medal in weightlifting in the Commonwealth Games 2022. – Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page



Tunku Abdul Rahman (left) clinched the GT World Challenge Asia GT3 Pro-Am Driver's Championship last year. Tunku Abu Bakar also capped a fine debut season, clinching fifth spot in the GT3 Pro-Am Drivers standings. – Photo from Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page



JDT football players celebrating their FA Cup victory at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium last year. The Southern Tigers clinched every major honour during the Malaysian football season in 2022. – Photo from the Johor Southern Tigers' Facebook page



Che' Puan Besar Khaleeda Bustamam (back row, sixth from right) celebrating with Johor Jewels players after they won the Netball Super League title last year. – Photo from the Johor Jewels' Instagram page

said the tournament was the only under-21 international invitational sanctioned by the International Hockey Federation.

"The tournament has a strong following not only among locals who always fill up the Taman Daya hockey stadium in Johor Baru, but also at the international level.

"We are thinking of increasing the number of participating countries for this year's SOJ from six to eight as we been getting many requests from various teams that want to enter the tournament.

"This is because the Junior Hockey World Cup will be held in Kuala Lumpur later this year and the SOJ would be a good warm-up

tournament for these participating teams," he added.

Manjit also said that since holding the SOJ, the standard and quality of hockey among local players has also increase as they are able to see international hockey players in action.

"The SOJ has elevated the standard of hockey, especially among the younger local players, as they can now compete with their peers from the best hockey teams around the world," he added.

Johor Tennis Association president Nurizam Mohd Khalid said there was a revival for the sport in the state with many young talented players joining its academy.

"Currently, we have about 80 players between the ages of seven and 21 coming from every part of the state to train at the Johor Tennis Academy.

"Many assume that tennis is a sport for the wealthy, but people are now changing their tune about the game as many youngsters are joining our programme," he added.

Nurizam said the association's main focus is to develop future tennis players who can bring glory to both Johor and Malaysia as a whole.

"The last time Johor won gold for tennis in Sukma was in the late 80s. However, our players have done really well in national youth

tournaments in various age categories and it is only a matter of time before we can have top tennis players," he added.

Meanwhile, state youth, sports, entrepreneur, cooperatives development and human resources committee chairman Mohd Hairi Mad Shah thanked all sports associations in Johor for contributing to the state's great sporting achievements.

He added that there were currently 39 sporting associations under the Johor Sports Council, which started grading programmes on each of these associations in 2021.

"The function and role of these associations is not just the establishment; their responsibility is huge.

"They are the determiners of whether the sport they are leading will progress or not. Whatever they do and decide will mirror the performance of Johor's athletes," he said.

Mohd Hairi added that Johor was the only state that carried out grading on all sports associations to ensure they were systematically managed and remained competitive.

He said last year, through grading, only six associations qualified to get financial grants but for 2023, many sporting associations had shown improvements by having more events, programmes and participation.

"For this year, a total of 16 Johor sports associations have qualified for financial grants between RM50,000 and RM100,000 following the grading," he said.

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GENTING
 PLANTATIONS


GENTING
 PROPERTY

GENTING 优美城
Indahpura
KUALA JOHORE

GENTING 旺金城
Pura Kencana
BATU PAHAT, JOHOR



The late Hariyati (second from left) with Sultan Ibrahim, Permaisuri Johor Raja Zarith Sofiah Binti Almarhum Sultan Idris Shah and Tunku Ismail.



Nabila showing a collection of photos of Sultan Ibrahim with her family over the years.

Serving up feasts fit for royals

By **VENESA DEVI**
venesa@thestar.com.my

FOR close to two decades, the late Hariyati Pungot was a loyal private chef for Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, serving traditional Malay food each time the Sultan visited Muar.

Hariyati's daughter, Nabila Ruba'i, said it all began in 2003 when the Sultan, who was then the Tengku Mahkota Johor, visited her late mother's shop in Jalan Maharani.

"His Majesty tried some of her dishes, including her famous satay. "She asked for his consent to name the satay 'Satay Maharani' since the shop is located in Jalan Maharani and Muar is known as Bandar Maharani.

"The Sultan agreed and ever since then, the dish has been known as 'Satay Maharani'.

"The Sultan also requested that my mother prepare his meals each time he visited Muar, which my mother accepted in delight. It was a great honour for her," Nabila told *The Star* in an interview.

She said each time the Sultan visited Muar, her mother would be summoned to prepare meals for him.

"She cooked food for his breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner and supper. Sometimes, the Sultan would drop by the shop to enjoy his meals but usually, the food would be sent to his kitchen at Istana Muar.

"Despite his position, His Majesty has never talked down to people and prefers simple kampung dishes instead of fancy meals.

"According to my mother, his favourites are asam rebus nenas (pineapple in hot sour soup), sotong masak hitam (squid cooked in black ink), prawn sambal and sambal belacan. We would prepare the dishes at my mother's shop before delivering them to Istana Muar," Nabila said.

She noted that at times, the Sultan would personally write down the dishes he wanted on a sheet of paper and pass it to Hariyati.

"Sometimes, we would also receive requests to prepare some dishes or satay to be sent to the Sultan when he was in Johor Baru," she said, adding that her mother's shop had relocated to Jalan Temenggong Ahmad in 2017.

She noted that apart from Sultan Ibrahim, other members of the Johor royal family also frequented her mother's shop, including Tunku Temenggong Johor Tunku Idris Iskandar Ibni Sultan Ibrahim, Tunku Panglima Johor Tunku Abdul Rahman Ibni Sultan Ibrahim and Tunku Putera Johor Tunku Abu Bakar Ibni Sultan Ibrahim.

"All three of them are just like their father – down to earth and very polite," she said.

Nabila, who used to work as a lecturer in a private college, said her mother passed away in 2020.

"About three years before her passing, I had decided to leave my job in Negri Sembilan to help her out at the shop as she was suffering from knee pains.

"I was able to learn the ropes from her, including how to cook dishes based on her recipes and manage the shop.

"She passed away suddenly in August 2020 after experiencing some breathing difficulties and chest pains. All of my siblings have since returned to Muar to manage her shop together," she said.

Hariyati single-handedly raised her five children after the untimely death of her husband, Ruba'i Kenot, due to an accident in 1998.

"I was eight years old at the time while my youngest sibling was only four months old. It took almost a year for my mother to get over the death of the love of her life, but she slowly picked herself up and worked hard to raise us.

"She started a small business providing breakfast and later opened her own restaurant at Jalan Maharani in 2000," Nabila said, adding that her mother was a strong woman.

She said Sultan Ibrahim and his



Nabila and her worker Mohd Faisal Yunos making Satay Maharani.



family also sent their condolences following Hariyati's death.

"Although my mother has passed, the Sultan continues to have his meals prepared by us from time to time.

"We hope to carry on her legacy and continue to serve our customers, including the royal family, dishes based on the recipes she passed down to us," Nabila said.

Meanwhile, for 63-year-old Ismail Ibrahim, a brief encounter with Sultan Ibrahim about six years ago turned out to be a moment he will remember for the rest of his life.

Ismail, who sells a traditional Bugis dish called burasak with his wife Saedah Nurong in Pekan Nenas, Pontian, said he never expected the visit from the Sultan.

"It was during the fasting month and I had set up a stall at a Ramadan bazaar in Pekan Nenas. The Sultan was visiting the area



(Left) For Ismail, a brief encounter with Sultan Ibrahim six years ago turned out to be a moment he will never forget; the burasak sold at Ismail's shop in Pekan Nenas.

and made a pit stop at the bazaar.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see him up close for the first time. I was very nervous but that feeling faded away as I spoke with him. Sultan Ibrahim is so humble and easy to talk to," Ismail said.

He added that the Sultan bought some of his burasak and chatted with him for a few minutes before making his way to other stalls.

"He was at my stall for a few minutes and bought some of my burasak. He even told me that burasak is one of his favourite dishes.

"It was such an honour for me because not only did I get the opportunity to meet the Sultan, but I was also able to serve him my dish. I really hope he enjoyed it," he said.

Ismail explained that burasak is a traditional Bugis food that is a cross between lemang and ketupat. It is made of rice cooked with

coconut milk and wrapped in a cylindrical banana leaf pouch.

"It is a must-have for the Bugis during Hari Raya Aidilfitri. Before opening up the shop, my wife used to take orders and make the dish from home during Hari Raya.

"We later decided to open the restaurant so that people can enjoy the food at any time of the year and not just during Hari Raya," he said.

Ismail added that burasak is usually paired with ikan parang masak rebus (boiled wolf herring fish), asam pedas and rendang.

"But you can actually pair it with anything you like. The special thing about burasak is its coconut rice taste.

"I hope that the Sultan will visit my shop in the future to taste some of my other dishes. All the dishes we serve are traditional Bugis food passed down from generation to generation," he said.

Daulat Tuanku



Mengadap

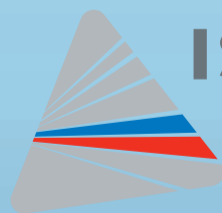
**DULI YANG MAHA MULIA
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Merafak Sembah
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Sempena
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Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku**

Pada 23 Mac 2023 Bersamaan 1 Ramadan 1444 Hijrah

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya
Yang Berdatang Sembah



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