Star Special

THE STAR, SATURDAY 11 JULY 2026

TYT PENANG BIRTHDAY

Many happy returns

The governor of Penang, Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ramli Ngah Talib, celebrates his official birthday today.

(Left) Ramli returning a salute during a ceremonial parade, accompanied by his wife Toh Puan Raja Noora Ashikin Raja Abdullah. (Right) Ramli handing out duit raya to children at a Hari Raya gathering. – All photos courtesy of Unit Komunikasi Korporat Pejabat Yang di-Pertua Negeri Pulau Pinang

Seeds of change start at home

(Above) Ramli showcasing a fresh harvest of rambutans at his Seri Mutiara orchard, captured alongside his custom-modified vehicle; and (left) pausing to pluck fresh fruits during one of his cycling trips around the state.

By IMRAN HILMY
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PENANG'S Yang di-Pertua Negeri, Tun Ramli Ngah Talib, does not merely speak about caring for the environment; he spends time tending his own garden and fruit trees, noting that the simple act of nurturing plants has shaped the way he views life and nature.

An avid gardener, Ramli said tending plants has taught him lessons that extend far beyond the garden.

"Gardening teaches patience. You cannot plant something today and expect it to flourish tomorrow. You have to care for it consistently, understand its needs and give it time to grow.

"It also teaches responsibility. These are values that are just as important in caring for the environment as they are in life itself," he said.

Drawing on his gardening experience, Ramli said resilience comes from diversity and balance.

"A thriving garden depends on the relationship between soil, water, plants, insects and the wider environment.

"The same is true of our planet. Everything is interconnected, and the loss of one part can have consequences far beyond what we immediately see," he said.

Ramli said conservation and sustainability should not be seen only as government policies or large-scale initiatives; instead, they should become part of everyday culture and habits.

He said environmental stewardship begins at home, where parents play an important role in nurturing children's appreciation of nature.

"I grew up in a family that had a deep respect for nature, so spending time outdoors has always been a natural part of my life.

"From an early age, I learned that nature is not something separate from us. It is part of our daily lives and we have a responsibility to care for it," he said.

Reflecting on his childhood, Ramli recalled how ulam, fresh vegetables and fruits harvested from the land around his family home were staples on the dining table.

Quoting the Malay proverb "berbudi kepada tanah, lambat-laun mendapat hasilnya" (care for the land and in time, it will reward you), he said the saying continues to guide his outlook on conservation and responsible development.

He believes a child's appreciation for nature is shaped first by what they experience at home rather than what they are told.

"When children grow up appreciating trees, gardens, clean surroundings and the value of natural resources, that awareness becomes part of their character.

"Eventually, those values extend beyond the home and contribute to a society that is more conscious of its responsibility towards the environment," he said.

Ramli added that preserving biodiversity is not merely an environmental issue but also a human responsibility.

Every species, however big or small, plays a role in maintaining healthy ecosystems that support fertile soil, clean water, pollination, food security and climate resilience.

Biodiversity has also contributed greatly to scientific discoveries, including advances in medicine and research.

Ramli called for environmental education to be strengthened in schools and families through activities such as gardening, tree planting, recycling and visits to forests, wetlands and other natural ecosystems.

"There is a profound difference between learning the definition of biodiversity and experiencing it first-hand.

"A child who plants a seed, cares for it and watches it grow learns patience and responsibility in a way that no textbook alone can teach.

"Schools, families and communities must work together to ensure environmental stewardship becomes a way of life for future generations," he said.

If there is one environmental cause he hopes to champion, Ramli said it would be nurturing a generation that not only understands environmental issues but feels a deep responsibility towards nature.

"I want to see a generation that respects the land, the water and every form of life that shares this world with us.

"I would like every child in Penang to grow up with a meaningful connection to the natural world, to plant a tree, tend a garden, understand the journey of food from soil to table, walk through a forest and recognise that a river is more than just water flowing to the sea.

"Only by experiencing nature first-hand can we truly appreciate its value and understand why it deserves our protection," he added.

Heartiest Congratulations

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YANG DI-PERTUA NEGERI OF THE STATE OF PENANG

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ON
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Balancing growth with nature

(From left) Ramli sharing a warm moment with children and well-wishers during a gathering; and taking a closer look at a goat during a state programme. – Photos courtesy of Unit Komunikasi Korporat Pejabat Yang di-Pertua Negeri Pulau Pinang

By IMRAN HILMY
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PENANG'S head of state, Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ramli Ngah Talib, has praised efforts under the Mutiara Line LRT project to integrate environmental protection into infrastructure development, saying the approach should become the benchmark for future projects in the state.

He said the commitment to plant more than 6,700 new trees to replace about 2,100 trees affected by the project, along with the transplanting and monitoring of selected mature trees, demonstrates that development can proceed without compromising nature.

"Such measures reflect an important principle – that development should not proceed with indifference towards nature, but with a conscious responsibility to minimise ecological loss and, wherever possible, to restore and enhance the environment.

"I hope this approach will continue to be strengthened and serve as a standard for future development projects," Ramli said.

The Star reported in May that more than 6,700 trees would be planted along the 23.7km Mutiara Line corridor. While about 2,100 existing trees would have to be removed, they would not be felled indiscriminately.

Ramli said Penang has shown that economic growth and the preservation of its natural and cultural heritage are not mutually exclusive.

"The real question is not whether Penang should continue to develop, but what kind of development it should pursue.

"A truly developed society must be judged not only by its buildings, roads and investments, but also by the quality of life it provides, the health of its natural environment and its ability to preserve the heritage and identity that make it unique," he said.

He noted that the state has charted its direction through the Penang2030 vision and the Penang Green Agenda 2030.

He also expressed hope that the framework, due by 2027, would be implemented with clear targets and strong cooperation.

Ramli described forests, hills, rivers, coastlines and marine ecosystems as part of Penang's "natural infrastructure", adding that they play an important role in protecting water resources, reducing erosion, strengthening biodiversity and improving climate resilience.

He called for greater investment in sustainable urban planning, efficient public transport, ecosystem restoration and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, while stressing that parks and green spaces should be regarded as essential public assets.

"We must nurture young people who understand that caring for the environment is not an occasional campaign, but a way of life," he explained.

"The values we instil in each generation will endure far beyond our own lifetimes.

"If we can raise young people who love the land, respect the balance of nature and understand their duty as its custodians, they will continue to protect Penang long after we are gone."

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