



(Left) Former Johor state assemblyman Mohamad Dol Mad presenting a cheque to Sultan Ibrahim as Tengku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail Ibrahim looks on during the Kembara Mahkota at Dewan Renggam at Simpang Renggam recently. (Top) Sultan Ibrahim watching his youngest son Tunku Abu Bakar stirring a pot of bubur lambuk while his consort Raja Zarith Sofia Sultan Idris Shah and Kampung Tengah village chief Rashid Alias (in pink baju Melayu) looks on.

Sultan Ibrahim pleased with pace of development

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can expect more rain but do not know when. I also want the drainage in flood-prone areas to be improved, including replacing the cement ones with U-shaped concrete drains, which will help improve the flow of water.

I also hope that people will not throw rubbish into the drains, which can clog them. Maybe Johoreans can revive old Johor traditions including building their homes on stilts, especially in flood-prone areas.

Since becoming ruler, how does Tuanku view the development taking place in the state? Are there any areas especially with regard to development or policies that Tuanku is concerned about?

We are living in exciting times. There is more development in Johor in the past three years compared with 20 years ago.

I think the development taking place is faster than expected and the government will need to double the speed especially with regard to upgrading the infrastructure.

Now with all the sudden mushrooming of industries, we need to increase our water and power supplies. Johor is now in a position to determine what type of development or investment that it wants. So far, I feel that the development in Johor is balanced.

Now that Johor Baru is up for a facelift under the Johor Baru Transformation programme, including reopening of Sungai Segget, what is Tuanku's opinion on this issue?

Previously, when someone mentioned Johor

Baru, the only thing that came to mind was how smelly Sungai Segget is. I want to prove that this river can be the cleanest river in the country. I'm confident that this can be done.

With the upgrading of the Central Business District (CBD), Johor Baru will be a beautiful town in future. I also want all the old buildings preserved and gazetted as heritage sites. This is the right time for Johor Baru, especially with improvements to the CBD and Istana Garden. I want the glory of Johor to return.

Tuanku, are there plans to reopen Istana Garden in Johor Baru to the public?

Istana Garden is now under renovation and will in future be known as the Johor Royal Botanical Gardens. This will be similar to Singapore's botanical gardens.

I do not want to see greenery alone but also flowers. I want people to come and study and conduct research here.

There will be a ticketing counter in future as I want them to be self-reliant as millions were spent previously to maintain the garden.

We cannot expect the money to come from the government coffers all the time. I expect the place to be redeveloped by 2014. I also want the famous crops of Johor, including pepper and gambier, along with endangered species, to be planted within this area.

Tuanku, is it true that historical sites such as the Johor Zoo and even SK Convent in Jalan Yahya Awal will have to move to new sites? What do you think about this?

I will prefer the zoo to be relocated for it to be part of Istana Garden as all these are Sultanate property. If that does not happen, I



Sultan Ibrahim waving to the cheering crowd in Yong Peng town during the 13th edition of Kembara Mahkota held on April 14, 2012.

want the present zoo to be turned into a petting zoo without camels, elephants or tigers.

I know children love to go there during weekends but the zoo must be run properly. I have issued a stern warning to the zoo management to buck up as I have found discrepancies.

They know I am watching them closely and I have seen improvements but more has to be done. I want feedback from the public, like ideas and recommendations. They can e-mail my private secretary at jaba@johor.gov.my.

As for SK Convent Infant Jesus in Jalan Yahya Awal, I do not want it to be relocated from its present site. It is a heritage building and should not be demolished. I have not been told about the move except for what I have seen in the papers. The school, along with the statue, was given by my great-grandfather Sultan Ibrahim.

On the state's upcoming oil and gas development in Penggerang, there are quite a number of people who are unhappy with

the relocation as they are worried about their lives and livelihood. What do you think?

Penggerang is well protected from any tsunami, is sheltered and also has deep water. The people of Penggerang are lucky, as the development of these projects will improve their standard of living.

This will also bring about better schools and their children will have better jobs in future as Petronas is also investing in training for the locals in the petrochemical industry.

As Sultan, even I, too, have sacrificed by allowing the building of the Eastern Dispersal Link (EDL) right in front of my palace. I want my people to open their eyes. These developments will be good for the people, their families and the state.

I do not want them to scare away investors. I expect all the problems to be ironed out soon as the compensation package is good, as besides getting cash, the people also get free land and a house.

Ruler with a vision and mission

By NELSON BENJAMIN
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TODAY marks the 54th birthday of Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

In conjunction with his birthday celebrations, Sultan Ibrahim, in an exclusive interview at Istana Pasir Pelangi, spoke candidly during a question and answer session. The ruler spoke on an array of topics not just about Johor but also national issues.

This year, Tuanku's birthday celebrations will be held in Muar. Why did Tuanku pick Muar and what is the significance of this district compared to the other districts in Johor?

I want to revive some old Malay royal traditions dating as far back as 1895. My great-great grandfather Sultan Abu Bakar held the celebrations in Muar when he ascended the throne.

Muar is also strategic due to its close proximity to the coast, which is easily accessible by boat. I'm repeating history after 117 years, as Muar has the facilities to cater for the celebrations.

I'm also reviving some traditions, including raising of the ceremonial flag onto a 30m-high flagpole to mark the beginning of the celebrations at Dataran Tanjung Emas in Muar and which began on Nov 19.

Another reason is the renovation works taking place at Istana Besar in Johor Baru, which is underway for the coronation ceremony on May 5, 2014.

What will be the highlight of your birthday celebrations in Muar?

I will proclaim Bandar Maharani as the royal town. I think it is about time Johor has one. This will be a recognition of Muar as Johor has never had a royal town unlike other states including Pekan in Pahang or Kuala Kangsar in Perak. Besides that, there will also be many water activities including an international jet ski competition, floats procession, a public tea party for more than 40,000 people and fireworks display.

The celebrations are expected to go on for four to five days. Even one of the two bridges in Muar will



Sultan Ibrahim meeting the rakyat who had gathered at Istana Pasir Pelangi in Johor Baru to show their love and support for him.

be closed during the festivals as I want it to be like Sydney Harbour in Australia where people can watch the celebrations without much obstruction. Anyway, traffic will not be affected as all will be diverted to the other bridge.

What is Tuanku's message to the people of Johor in conjunction with Tuanku's birthday celebrations?

I want my people to be always united, regardless of race or religion. I do not want anyone to be split by certain individuals with selfish motives.

Nowadays, even neighbours do not talk to each other due to misunderstandings and I do not want that to happen in Johor.

In the royal family, our family motto has always been "Concord is a blessing". I also want my people

to be hardworking and not depend on handouts from the government. Overall, I feel there is still a lot of improvement to be done for Johor.

What are your hopes for Muar?

I see a lot of potential for this place. Look at how the river in Bangkok is a bustling hive of activity. I want the same for Muar as our river is better.

During my birthday, I have invited foreign investors and developers to be my guests and to see for themselves the potential in this area, especially in terms of tourism.

The Muar river stretches quite far, as one can travel a whole day before reaching Segamat. It also stretches all the way to Pahang and Negri Sembilan.

Johor has been strict with giving out awards during the ruler's

birthday. Will Tuanku continue this practice?

Yes, I will be stricter than my late father. I want to see what their service is to the state as well as to the people.

As for government servants, one will not automatically get a Pingat Ibrahim Sultan (PIS) medal just because one has served 20 years or is 45 years old.

All the awards will be vetted by me, my son Tunku Mahkota and the Johor Council of Royal Court. Besides conferring the awards during the celebrations in Muar, I will also give them out during my visits to the various districts as there is no time frame. This will also give me an opportunity to meet my rakyat.

During the recent floods in Batu Pahat, Klang and Muar, Tuanku personally toured the areas

affected by flood with the Johor mentri besar. How did Tuanku find everything?

I was pleased with the state's preparations when handling flood victims. In Johor, we have a good standard operating procedure (SOP) for floods every year and the government is well prepared, especially in terms of food distribution and logistics.

I personally visited the relief centres in Batu Pahat and checked the kitchen to ensure the quality of food served. I was also informed that there were adequate blankets and mattresses.

Anyway, I want my rakyat in flood-prone areas to be always ready as the worst is not over yet. I was informed by the Drainage and Irrigation Department (JPS) that we

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Daulat Tuanku

Mengadap




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

Merafak Sembah
Menjunjung Kasih Dan Setinggi Tinggi Tahniah

Sempena

**Ulang Tahun Hari Keputeraan
Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku
Pada 22 November 2012
bersama 8 Muharram 1434 Hijrah**

Dengan Segala Hormat Takzimnya
Yang Berdatang Sembah



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