

# History of an esteemed institution

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MANY existing palace traditions and royal customs have a long history that can be traced as far back as the Melaka Sultanate.

Although the Melaka Sultanate is not considered the oldest Sultanate, as the Kedah Sultanate was founded around the 13th century, it has played a significant historical role in shaping the country's monarchy system.

The Melaka Sultanate has also played a role in establishing and strengthening many of the present sultanates, according to the Istana Negara website.

Of the nine existing sultanates, only the Perak Sultanate has a direct link to the Melaka Sultanate as it was established from the Melaka Sultanate before it fell to the Portuguese in 1511.

The Kedah Sultanate, which once enjoyed the protection of the Melaka Sultanate, possesses royal regalia including nobat instruments presented by the Melaka Sultanate, based on historical records.

The Selangor Sultanate, although founded by the Bugis in the 18th century, was given recognition by the Perak Sultanate, which had direct links to the rulers of Melaka. Other sultanates such as Johor, Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu emerged after the lineage of the Melaka Sultanate died out.

They had filled the void left by the Melaka Sultanate after it fell to the Portuguese and continued the Melaka Sultanate's legacy.



A view of the Istana Raja Melaka. The Melaka Sultanate played a role in establishing and strengthening many of the present sultanates.

The same holds true for Negri Sembilan, whose Rulers hailed from Sumatera. Thereafter, the British intervened in the Malay states starting with the Pangkor Treaty in 1874 and ending with the British agreement with Johor in 1914.

The position of the Malay Rulers as the sovereign Rulers remained unchanged. This was the position of the Rulers according to the law, even though in reality their independence or sovereignty might not have been absolute.

The present form of constitutional monarchy in Malaysia dates from 1957, when the Federation of Malaya gained independence.

The post of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, also known as the Supreme Head or the King, was established in 1957, having initially been proposed by the Reid Commission as the drafter of the Constitution of

the Federation of Malaya.

The proposal for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong post was made following the objection to the establishment of the Malayan Union, which was seen as an attempt by certain quarters to abolish the Malay royal institution.

In August 1957, after selecting the Yang di-Pertuan Agong title instead of Yang di-Pertuan Besar which was proposed earlier, the Conference of Rulers convened to elect the first one to ascend the throne for the first time.

Based on the seniority of the longest reigning period, the late Sultan of Johor Major-General Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Abu Bakar, who was appointed as Sultan in 1895, was the longest reigning Sultan, but later rejected the appointment due to his old age.

The second in line in the succes-



Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad from Negeri Sembilan, who ascended to the throne in 1933, was appointed as the first Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

sion was Sultan Sir Abu Bakar Ri'ayatuddin Al-Muadzam Shah Almarhum Sultan Abdullah Al-Mutassim Billah Shah of Pahang who ruled in 1932, but he failed to get a sufficient number of votes from fellow Rulers to be appointed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The third longest reigning Ruler was Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad from Negeri Sembilan, who ascended the throne in 1933 and was later appointed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of the Federation of Malaya.

Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah was officially installed as the 16th Yang di-Pertuan Agong in a majestic ceremony steeped in royal custom

and tradition at Istana Negara on July 30, 2019.

According to the Federal Constitution, as the nation's head of state, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong plays a role in the three branches of government, namely executive, legislative and judiciary.

Article 39 of the Constitution stipulates that the executive authority of the Federation shall be vested in the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and exercisable by the King himself or the Cabinet or any minister or any other person authorised by Parliament.

Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim was quoted in Bernama as saying that he was confident that Sultan Abdullah would carry out all of his duties as stipulated under the constitution.

Sultan Abdullah's leadership qualities would come to the fore in cementing the institution of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and constitutional monarchy, added Rais.

Pointing to the fact that the term Yang di-Pertuan Agong is mentioned more than 450 times in the Constitution, he said this alone reflected the crucial role played by the institution in the administration of the nation, as well as ensuring the well-being of the people.

Sultan Abdullah's election as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong created history in the system of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy practised by this country.

This is because the decision pertaining to the election of the Pahang Ruler was made barely a week after he was proclaimed Sultan of Pahang on Jan 15, 2019.