

# StarSpecial

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DAULAT TUANKU



## Many happy returns

Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Muhawir celebrates his 75th birthday today.



# Advocate for justice and fair play

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A COUNTRY united in the spirit of togetherness is the foremost aim of Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir, who recently issued a clarion call for leaders to work together to put a stop to racial and religious extremism.

The Yang Di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, who celebrates his 75th birthday today, had also, for the umpteenth time, expressed hope that race or religion would never be used to instigate the people.

The state Ruler, who often lends his support to community causes, again drove home the importance of uniting all Malaysians regardless of their background for the country's future when chairing the 260th meeting of the Conference of Rulers in December.

Widely respected as someone who champions justice and fair play for all and one who has always been passionate about causes that benefit the rakyat, Tuanku Muhriz had stressed the need for the government to support and strengthen the principles of the Rukun Negara, which has been a bedrock for national unity all these years.

Tuanku Muhriz suggested that the Rukun Negara be declared during suitable events to prove that the government was serious about making the Rukun Negara's principles a guide for all Malaysians.

"I call upon the new government to strengthen and carry the Rukun Negara, which was declared by the fourth Yang di-Pertuan Agong in 1970.

"The spirit and values of the Rukun Negara must be the practice and faith of all Malaysians and not mere writing in reading materials," he said.

Although most who have had an audience with Tuanku Muhriz would describe him as soft-spoken, the Ruler does not mince words when it comes to duty and service.

Tuanku Muhriz's philosophy to always put the people first since he ascended the state throne in 2009 is why he is beloved by his subjects and held in high esteem by all others.

The Ruler also makes it a point to advise elected representatives to set aside personal interests and work together with integrity and accountability to honour the trust placed in them by the rakyat.

Whatever they do, the Ruler reminds them, the rakyat should come first.

When congratulating the newly appointed Prime Minister and other leaders post-GE15, Tuanku Muhriz reiterated that it was the responsibility of those who were elected, guided by the Rukun Negara, to lead the country forward.

"I congratulate those who have been elected in the 15th General Election and state elections. I also congratulate those who have been appointed as the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers," the Ruler said.

"These posts, with great responsibilities, are a big opportunity to lead the nation forward. I am of the view that this important role must be carried out guided by the tenets of the Rukun Negara."

Tuanku Muhriz even touched on the appointments of five members of the Judicial Appointments Commission and why they should not be made by the prime minister.



Tuanku Muhriz and his consort Tunku Ampuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud look on in amusement at a boy dressed up as a policeman during a state-level Deepavali open house held in Port Dickson.



Tuanku Muhriz meeting his subjects after performing prayers at Masjid Negeri in Seremban.

Tuanku Muhriz's remarks may have come on the heels of GE15, but the Ruler has always been unwavering in his insistence on fairness and integrity – principles he imbibed as a young law student at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University).

Graduating with an LLB (Hons) in 1970, the Ruler forged a successful career in the corporate world, all the time guided by his principles, values and love for the law.

In 2013, when he was conferred an honorary Doctorate of Laws by the University of Glamorgan, United Kingdom, Tuanku Muhriz spoke about how university life and the study of law helped shape his character and mould a logical mind.

"I never practised law and thus never applied the specifics of what I was taught.

"But more important than the specifics was that I was made aware of the high standards of legal principles and the very important overriding concepts, such as that of natural justice.

"The benefit of my three-year stay in Wales was to develop an understanding of these concepts, which guide one's behaviour by imbuing a sense of what is proper.

"These are values which must be upheld. Conducting oneself with integrity is especially important for those who hold high positions of authority and responsibility," the Ruler said.

A member of the Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur DiRaja in his younger years, Tuanku Muhriz is no stranger to selfless service and the issues faced by the less privileged members of society.

Tuanku Muhriz's call for action also helps lend a voice to



Tuanku Muhriz (wearing fedora) looking on at participants of the Pesta Bola Ngoca held at the Terachi Cultural Village in Kuala Pilah. Among the activities held are duck catching, sawah padi football, climbing up slippery poles, and gusti bantal.

the voiceless.

In his address at the Human Rights Day 2022 Forum last month, Tuanku Muhriz urged the government to review its policy in order to review its policy which denies children who are refugees or stateless access to formal education.

Saying that it would be a significant step for the country, he called for a review of the policy in order to break the generational cycle of poverty among refugees and stateless people.

"Government policy has denied children who are refugees or stateless access to formal education. This policy results in a generational cycle of poverty and destitution which imposes a burden on society.

"If these children are given access to education, they will eventually be able to fend for themselves and be independent of governmental assistance," he said.

Tuanku Muhriz also highlighted the work of civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that had assisted this group and transformed lives, citing Yayasan Chow Kit as an example.

The non-profit organisation operates a 24-hour crisis and drop-in centre providing meals, therapy, case management and educational programmes for at-risk children who live around Chow Kit in Kuala Lumpur.

"To date, the foundation has helped over 100 successful youths who were able to pursue tertiary education or become owners of business enterprises.

"This success is due to some relaxation of the government policy," he said.



# Putting the people first

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Tuanku Muhriz and Tuanku Aishah Rohani (front row, centre) posing for a group photo with some of the committee members of the Negri Sembilan Chinese Assembly Hall after visiting the Negri Sembilan Chinese Heritage Museum located inside the building.



Tuanku Aishah Rohani, who is USIM chancellor, and university pro-chancellor Tunku Ali Redhaudin chatting with graduates who excelled academically during its recent convocation ceremony. — Picture courtesy of USIM



Tuanku Muhriz and Tuanku Aishah Rohani viewing a special section at the state library which, among others, has information on the history and traditions of the Negri Sembilan royal family.



Tuanku Aishah Rohani and others looking on as Tuanku Muhriz receives a basic medical check-up after officiating an event organised by the Rotary Club at SJK(C) San Min in Seremban.





Tuanku Muhriz playing a game of squash with Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin (third from right) and two others.



Tunku Ali Redhaudin (second from left) launching the Teach For Malaysia 10th Anniversary Celebration in September 2022 with (from left) then education minister Dr Mohd Radzi Md Jidin, Teach For America CEO Wendy Kopp and Teach For Malaysia CEO Chan Soon Seng. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

**TUANKU** Muhriz Tuanku Munawir was born on this day in 1948 in the royal town of Seri Menanti to the ninth Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Munawir Tuanku Abdul Rahman, and Tuanku Durah Tuanku Besar Burhanuddin.

The grandson of the country's first Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Rahman Tuanku Muhammad, the Ruler spent his childhood in Negri Sembilan, where he attended Tuanku Muhammad School in Kuala Pilah, Tunku Besar School in Tampin and later King George V Secondary School in Seremban.

The prince assumed royal duties at a very young age, becoming Tunku Laxamana – second in rank among the Putera Yang Empat or four senior princes – when he was just 12 years old.

A year later, he was made Tunku Besar Seri Menanti, the most senior rank among the four princes, a title he carried for almost five decades until he ascended the throne as the 11th Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan on Oct 26, 2009.

Accepted into the prestigious Aldenham School in England, Tuanku Muhriz left his home state to finish his secondary schooling. The prince completed his O- and A-Levels at Aldenham School.

Tuanku Muhriz has fond memories of his years at Aldenham School, where he developed a passion for playing guitar – a skill he continued to hone back in Kuala Lumpur when he was much older.

At the school, Tuanku Muhriz, who counts jazz music, The Beatles and Cliff Richard as his favourites, led a band called The Prince and the Paupers.

After completing his secondary education, the Ruler enrolled in Aberystwyth University, where he read law and was a keen sportsman.

Located on the picturesque west coast of Wales, the university has a reputation for teaching excellence and counts His Majesty King Charles III as a former alumnus.

Tuanku Muhriz graduated with an LLB (Hons) in 1970 and returned home to Malaysia, where he had an illustrious corporate career that spanned the fields of banking, finance and advertising.

In 2014, Tuanku Muhriz was conferred an Honorary Fellowship by Aberystwyth University in recognition of his contributions to the public and private sectors and charitable initiatives.

On April 25, 1974, Tuanku Muhriz married Tunku Ampuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud, a Terengganu royal. The couple was blessed with three princes – Tunku Ali Redhaudin, Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin and Tunku Alif Hussein Saifuddin Al-Amin. Educational causes are among

## Royals with charity at heart



Armed with rubbish pickers, Tuanku Muhriz is accompanied by his sons Tunku Ali Redhaudin (red cap, right) and Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin (red cap, left) during a programme to clean up the main market in Seremban. — LEONG WENG ONN/The Star



(From left) TV personality Nurul Syuhaida Ariffin; Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin; Austrian Ambassador to Malaysia Andreas Launer; American actor and son of Tugu Negara designer Felix De Weldon, Daniel De Weldon; and Tunku Mohd Taufek Tunku Mansur, a member of Kedah royalty and grandnephew of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, acting as panellists at the Tugu Negara exhibition in November 2022. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

the royal family's topmost priorities. As Chancellor of Universiti Islam Malaysia (USIM), Tuanku Aishah has supported efforts to turn the tertiary institution into a popular choice for further studies, particularly for foreign students.

The Tunku Ampuan Besar of Negri Sembilan has also helped highlight challenges faced by people with special needs.

The royal couple's eldest prince Tunku Ali Redhaudin was born on April 26, 1977. The prince, who holds the title Tunku Besar Seri Menanti, completed his GCSE and A-Levels at Marlborough College in Wiltshire, England, and later attended Cambridge University, where he read History and Social and Political Science.

The prince lends his expertise to various organisations in many capacities. His roles include that of

independent chairman of global oil and gas services company Bumi Armada, independent non-executive chairman of Malaysian satellite television and IPTV provider Astro, and chairman of wildlife NGO WWF-Malaysia.

Following in his parents' footsteps, the prince actively contributes his time and effort to non-profit organisations including Teach For Malaysia, where he is a chairman and founding trustee, and Yayasan Munarah.

Yayasan Munarah, named in honour of Tuanku Muhriz's parents, was one of the first initiatives undertaken by the Negri Sembilan royal family after Tuanku Muhriz ascended the throne.

In his role as chairman of Yayasan Munarah's board of trustees, Tunku Ali continues to serve the less privileged by ensuring that

deserving members of the community receive financial aid, particularly for educational causes, regardless of race or religion. Since its launch, the foundation has contributed millions of ringgit in aid of the community.

The prince has completed a master's degree in Public Administration at Harvard Kennedy School, the public policy and public administration school of the prestigious Harvard University in the US, and is USIM's Pro-Chancellor.

His younger brother Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin was born on July 6, 1982, and was also educated at Marlborough College. Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin pursued his tertiary education at the London School of Economics and Political Science, graduating with an honours degree in Sociology and Government, and later with an

MSc in Comparative Politics.

Musically gifted, the young prince is an accomplished pianist and the patron of the Euroasia Association of Performing Arts, which is dedicated to the education, development and promotion of the performing arts in Malaysia.

The prince is also the founding president of think-tank the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) and sits on the board of a string of corporations and non-profits, including IDEAS Autism Centre, which focuses on early intervention, care and therapy for children with autism from low-income families.

Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin is a trustee of Yayasan Munarah, Yayasan Chow Kit and the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation, as well as the Pro-Chancellor of UCSI University and a Royal Fellow of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

He is also a newspaper columnist, a passionate orator and an avid sportsman who enjoys squash and tennis. As president of the Negri Sembilan Squash Association, Tunku Zain has been instrumental in developing the state's sporting talent.

The couple's youngest prince, Tunku Alif Hussein Saifuddin Al-Amin, was born on Sept 3, 1984. As the youngest son, the prince was doted on by his family until his passing on Jan 15, 2016.

The royal family continues to lend their support to raise awareness and provide opportunities to people with special needs – a cause close to their hearts.





Aminuddin, who is also Port Dickson MP, is all ears as a wheelchair-bound resident shares some of the problems faced by residents in the constituency.



Aminuddin trying his hand at making capati at a state-level Deepavali open house held in Port Dickson.

# Heading towards a digital economy

NEGRI SEMBILAN has launched a comprehensive five-year digital economy plan which will, among others, see the full digitalisation of state government services by 2027.

The Negri Sembilan Digital Economy Plan (PEDNS2027) also aims to increase digital literacy within the community as the state makes greater strides to embrace the digital economy.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun said the development of the digital economy in the state will be implemented through three approaches, namely government-driven digitalisation, an industry centred on digitisation and a community with a high level of digital literacy.

"The people need to be given the opportunity to improve their digital skills to ensure that digital inclusivity occurs systematically."

"Digital literacy in the community is important to enable us to better face developments in the field of digital economy that are changing the entire global economic landscape," he said when launching PEDNS2027.

The other main objective of the plan is to increase the per capita income of those living in the state to more than RM50,000 by 2027 compared to RM41,087 in 2020.

Aminuddin said the state authorities also plan to increase telecommunication coverage in the state to over 95% in the next five years.

PEDNS2027, he added, would incorporate strategies and action plans to help Negri Sembilan attain high-income state status by 2030 through the greater shift towards the digital economy.

"We have identified eight strategies and 14 initiatives to be implemented via PEDNS2027 and which will supplement the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint, 12th Malaysia and Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV2030)," he said.

Launched in 2019 by then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, SPV2030 is a commitment to make Malaysia a nation that can achieve sustainable growth along with fair and equitable distribution across income groups, ethnicities, regions and supply chains to provide a decent standard of living for all citizens by 2030.

Aminuddin said PEDNS2027 will be carried out in three phases, with the first stage to focus on increasing the number of digital users in all main sectors this year.

"Phase two will focus on digital transformation and achieving



Aminuddin (fourth from left) at the recent launch of the Negri Sembilan Digital Economy Plan (PEDNS2027) and the Negri Sembilan Development Plan 2021-2025 (RPNS).

greater inclusivity by 2025.

"The third phase will prioritise capacity building as we shift from the conventional economy to the digital economy throughout the state by 2027," he said, adding that improvements will be made to the plan from time to time to ensure that it remains relevant.

All stakeholders, he said, will have to accept and start adapting towards becoming a digital economy-based state to ensure they are not left behind as the world quickly moves towards digital technology.

"It is important that every individual has a good grasp of PEDNS2027 as it is the main reference for the formation of the digital economy ecosystem in Negri Sembilan by 2027," he noted.

Last December, Aminuddin's administration also launched the Negri Sembilan Development Plan 2021-2025 (RPNS) to reform and transform the state economy.

The plan also aims to complement efforts announced by the federal government under the 12th Malaysia Plan.

The RPNS framework is designed to be comprehensive and spur the local economy, make the most of local resources, reduce the gap in the quality of life of urban and rural residents, improve infrastructure and support facilities, enable greater access to technology and current world developments, and empower local human capital to improve productivity and state competitiveness.

"The three main themes are economic empowerment, the

people's prosperity and well-being, and environmental sustainability."

"We will do more to develop infrastructure, public facilities and ICT services and streamline public sector governance and delivery," Aminuddin said, adding that new strategies were needed to promote growth following the debilitating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

RPNS, he said will also be a catalyst for the development of Malaysia Vision Valley 2.0 (MVV2.0), whose areas of focus include the high value sector and opening up of new industrial areas, strengthening the SME chain, wellness tourism, skill-based education and research and specialised services.

MVV2.0 is a new growth area spanning 153,411ha across Seremban and Port Dickson that is aimed at complementing the development of Greater Kuala Lumpur and the National Corridor, located on the west-side of Negri Sembilan.

It will be divided into several parcels that will include a Tech Park (1,135ha), Smart County (3,518ha), Negri Sembilan Aerospace Valley (6,149ha) and an integrated maritime hub and waterfront corridor (2,488ha).

Aminuddin said the state Economic Planning Unit, in collaboration with research group UPM Consultancy & Services, had carried out a study to come up with an Input-Output Schedule to assist the state government in formulating evidence-based policies.

The objective is to have more targeted and productive interven-

tion policies for the people.

"We need to reduce inefficiencies in the use of resources as we step up efforts to spur growth of the domestic economy," Aminuddin said.

He said the Input-Output Schedule was widely used by international organisations and nations to evaluate economic, social and environment-related issues and help in the planning of policies related to industrial and international trade growth.

He claimed that Negri Sembilan was the first state in Malaysia to use the Input-Output Schedule, which showed its commitment to strengthening its economy for the people's benefit.

"Inclusion means that the benefits of economic growth are shared fairly by every segment of society."

"Also, a planning and development approach based on the 'one fits all' assumption does not always work at the state level or in smaller geographic areas," he said, adding that there has to be balanced development in both urban and rural areas and strengthening human capital development.

Environmental sustainability, he said, is a vital factor in development planning to ensure that natural resources can be maintained for the use of future generations.

All these initiatives will be realised through efforts to promote rural development, human capital, sustaining natural resources and improving the quality of public infrastructure, public amenities and the public delivery system.

In short, RPNS sets a strategic direction to achieve aspirations towards a progressive, prosperous and sustainable Negri Sembilan. And this can be realised by focusing on strengthening the foundation of the state's economic growth to be more inclusive and equitable.

"Progressive here refers to progress in stages to further strengthen the foundation of the state's economic growth to be more competitive and sustainable at the national and global levels."

"Prosperous means there has to be more equitable distribution of growth and wealth, which then translates into improving the quality of life across districts," he said.

"Meanwhile, sustainability here means the sustainable use of the state's natural treasures as well as the preservation of biodiversity for long-term benefits."

"The 2021-2025 document was prepared in a comprehensive manner via a scientific approach and evidence-based analysis."

"Specifically, the macroeconomic framework and policy intervention were prepared through quantitative and qualitative analysis."

This document was drafted through extensive engagement sessions with various stakeholders at the state level, including federal agencies, the private sector and non-governmental organisations.

To further spur the domestic economy, Aminuddin's government had also tabled a budget of RM550mil for 2023 against a forecast revenue of RM450mil.

Of the amount, RM130mil has been set aside for development. This is the third consecutive year his administration had tabled a deficit budget, but the state registered investments of over RM5bil yearly from 2019 to 2021.

The state registered its highest ever revenue of some RM556mil in 2019. Its revenue for 2022 totalled RM521mil which was also higher than the RM432mil forecast. The higher income also meant that the state budget for 2022 which was a deficit one when tabled, has become a surplus budget.

The RPNS will help realise the state government's vision to boost economic growth and development till 2025 and better the record of RM7.93bil in new investments it received in 2020.

The state's GDP is also forecast to grow at an average of 4.5% per annum in the coming years, against the average 2.6% from 2016 to 2020, if these initiatives are met.





Tuanku Muhriz was presented with a portrait of himself after opening an event organised by the Negri Sembilan division of the Pensioners Association of Malaysia.

## Passion for bettering the community

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Tuanku Muhriz said since 2017, the education ministry had registered 15 refugee learning centres as private education institutions, but much more needed to be done as there were some 40,000 refugee and asylum seeker children registered in Malaysia, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Ruler also emphasised the need for more initiatives to tackle poverty and issues faced by the hardcore poor and the homeless.

Urging the government to work closely with CSOs and NGOs and review some of its policies, Tuanku Muhriz said holistic and long-term solutions were required to overcome destitution and homelessness.

He said over the years, the government had done much to alleviate the lives of marginalised persons while CSOs and NGOs had filled the gaps to further improve the livelihood of this group on their own initiative.

Ensuring that everyone has equal access to good healthcare is another issue that is dear to Tuanku Muhriz, whose tireless efforts have earned him an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh (RCSEd).

The institution's highest award was presented to the Ruler by his support of healthcare in aid of impoverished communities in Malaysia and the advancement of surgery.

The Tuanku Muhriz Travelling

Fellowship in Rural Surgery – a strategic collaboration between RCSEd and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), of which Tuanku Muhriz is chancellor – was also named in the Ruler's honour.

Addressing the Human Rights Day 2022 forum, Tuanku Muhriz urged the relevant authorities to constantly review the accessibility of healthcare facilities for marginalised groups – a cause he strongly supports – for the betterment of the community.

Befitting his role as university chancellor, Tuanku Muhriz is passionate about education.

Speaking at UKM's 50th Convocation Ceremony in November, the Ruler advised graduates to prepare themselves physically and mentally as many were being laid off and job opportunities sometimes did not match one's skills and education level.

"As a fresh graduate, you will not only compete with each other but also with those who have experience to find employment.

"UKM has taken into account all the latest factors and changes in devising various initiatives to help graduates be better prepared when dealing with future challenges," he said, adding that entrepreneurial skills and IT knowledge were among the initiatives that graduates needed to emphasise.

With a Ruler who champions causes that affect everyone regardless of colour and creed, the people of Negri Sembilan can always rely on Tuanku Muhriz to ensure fairness and equality for all.



Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah (left) and Tuanku Muhriz leaving Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur after the 260th Conference of Rulers meeting. — Bernama



The Istana Besar Seri Menanti in Negri Sembilan is where Tuanku Muhriz bestows awards and honours to recipients in conjunction with his birthday celebration.