

Fostering unity and togetherness

Stories by **SARBAN SINGH** and **C.S.NATHAN**
sarbans@thestar.com.my

MALAYSIANS are grateful for the blessings they enjoy, but they must not allow themselves to become complacent, advised Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir recently.

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, who celebrates his 76th birthday today, also reminded Malaysians of the importance of upholding the principles of the Rukun Negara, the foundation for national unity.

The Ruler's message to Malaysians to unite for a better Malaysia is more apt than ever, particularly at a time when world news seems to be headlined by conflict.

Reflecting on recent world events, the Ruler repeated this call in his opening address at the Negri Sembilan Bar Committee dinner and dance held last November.

"When we look at the conflicts that occur around the world today, we get dismayed at all the injustice that is perpetrated.

"There are nations whose authorities neglect the development of their own countries, causing widespread poverty, or practise gross discrimination between their citizens on the basis of religion, race or culture," he said.

While they appreciated the nation's blessings, the Ruler urged citizens not to rest on their laurels and instead, to work on improving their understanding and practice of the Rukun Negara, which is integral to the Malaysian identity.

"The good news is that here in Malaysia, we are grateful for all the blessings we enjoy. But we must not be complacent, resting on our laurels.

"Instead, we must safeguard what we have and also work towards improving on practising the values we uphold.

"Simply put, the essential values are a responsible society and good governance. If properly practised, the Rukun Negara can achieve these goals," he said.

In times of crisis or on happy occasions, whether offering words of comfort to flood victims or enjoying cultural performances at the state's Deepavali Open House, the Ruler does not shy away from lending his support to the people.

To foster the spirit of togetherness, the Ruler encourages greater interaction between people of different cultures and religious beliefs.

As someone who truly believes in practising the values set out by the Rukun Negara, Tuanku Muhriz exemplifies what it means to embrace the principle of mutual respect and good social behaviour – the fifth pillar embodied in the Rukun Negara.

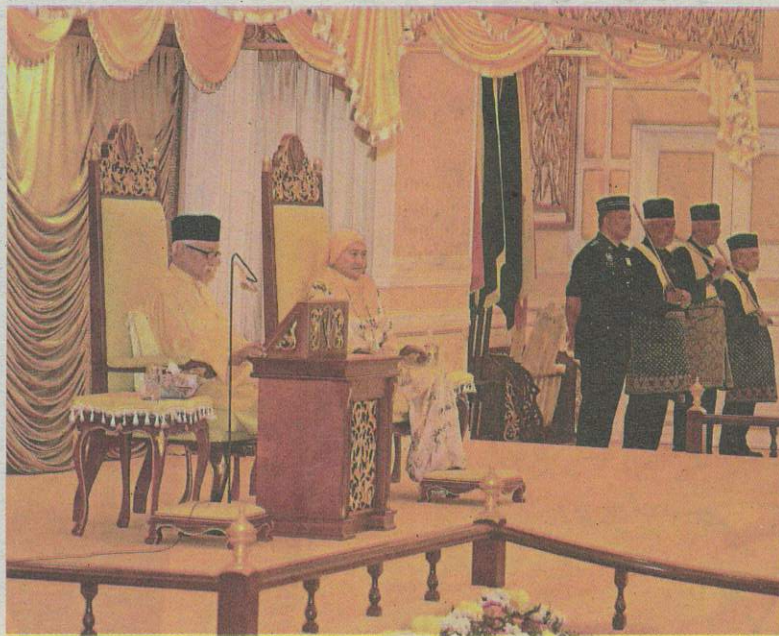
"Greater interaction will result in an appreciation of the values upheld by cultures different from your own.

"In this way, one is not merely encouraged to be tolerant of others, but to have a greater respect for the ways and culture of others," he said.

While acknowledging the



Tuanku Muhriz, accompanied by his consort Tuanku Aishah Rohani and their children Tunku Ali Redhaudin (left) and Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin, attending an event to mark the 250th anniversary of the Negri Sembilan state monarchy in November 2023.



Tuanku Muhriz delivering his address at the swearing-in ceremony of the Mentri Besar at Istana Besar Seri Menanti following the last state election. Present was his consort Tuanku Aishah Rohani.

numerous calls to revive the observance of the Rukun Negara's principles, Tuanku Muhriz said merely reciting it was not enough.

"The Rukun Negara was formulated in 1970, and yet, it is not appreciated by many.

"It is not enough to be able to memorise and recite the Rukun Negara in the early years of school, only to forget it as one grows up.

"It is also not enough to have a recitation at functions by youths. If we are serious about observing its principles, recitations must be led by leaders," he said, citing Negri Sembilan's Mentri Besar-led recitation of the Rukun Negara on National Day as one good example.

The Ruler, a firm believer in the power of education, suggested that the teaching of the Rukun Negara could be done at several levels beginning with the basics

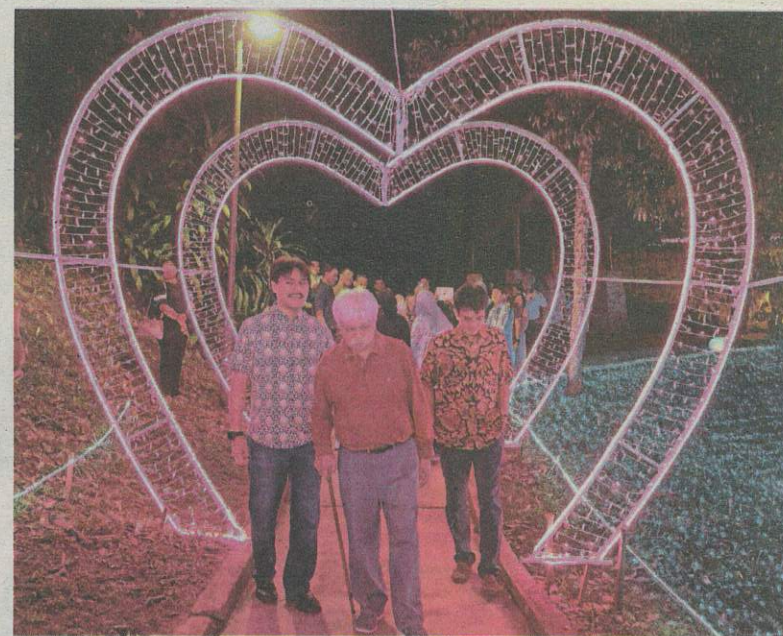
in primary school.

The teaching of the Rukun Negara at different levels of understanding in schools is imperative to mould citizens with a strong sense of responsibility.

"At secondary school, there can be classes to explain the objectives of the principles. At a higher level still, there can be discussions to encourage a deeper understanding," said Tuanku Muhriz, who is also Chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

Since ascending the throne in 2009, the Ruler has reiterated that national unity and the spirit of togetherness are pivotal for the nation's continued peace and harmony.

At the Negri Sembilan Bar Committee event, he reminded guests of the motto emblazoned on Malaysia's Coat of Arms – "Bersekutu Bertambah Mutu" or



Tuanku Muhriz, accompanied by his sons Tunku Ali Redhaudin (left) and Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin, taking a stroll at the breathtaking Luna Lights Wonderland in Seremban's Malaysia Park.

Unity is Strength.

"I expect you remember the motto of your alma mater, but the country's motto is never mentioned and is forgotten.

"It is Bersekutu Bertambah Mutu, Unity is Strength, and sits very well with the Rukun Negara," he said imploring that the motto be used more frequently in correspondence and speeches.

Having inculcated the values of righteousness and integrity as a young law student at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (now Aberystwyth University), the Ruler espouses doing the right thing, particularly in the face of injustice.

Tuanku Muhriz, who graduated with an LLB (Hons) in 1970, credits the concepts he learned at university for imbuing in him an unwavering sense of integrity.

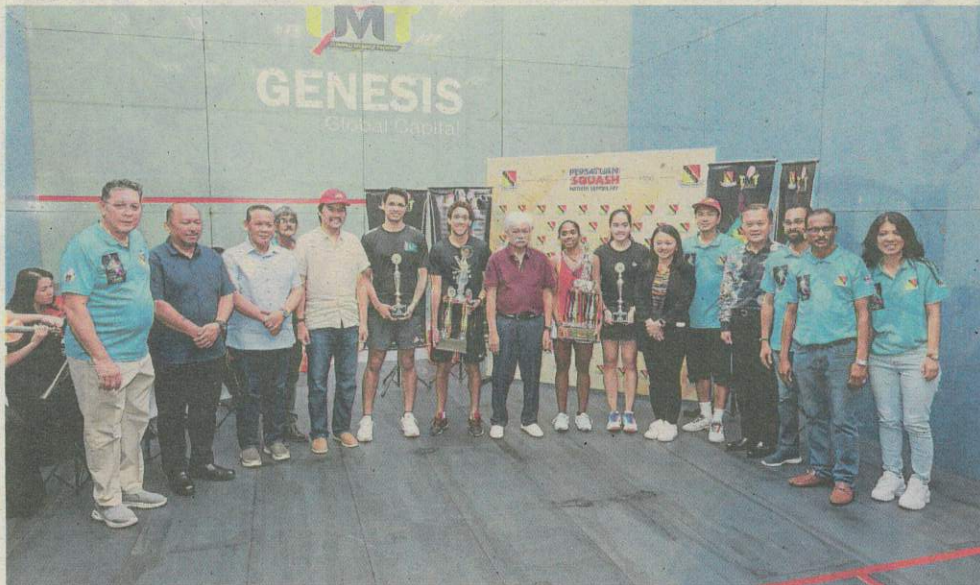
These principles of justice and fair play are the background for

the Ruler's approach towards his subjects and the many causes he champions.

Having served the community in various capacities including as a member of the Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur DiRaja in his younger years, the Ruler always prioritises selfless service.

Tuanku Muhriz's untiring efforts to ensure people from all walks of life have equal access to quality healthcare, for example, was recognised with an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh (RCSEd).

The honour, which is the prestigious institution's highest award, was presented to Tuanku Muhriz in appreciation of his efforts to support healthcare in aid of impoverished communities in Malaysia and the advancement of surgery.



Tuanku Muhriz (centre) with winners of the Tuanku Muhriz's Trophy 2023 PSA Challenger Tour 15 tournament and other officials at Kompleks Sukan Tan Sri Mohd Said in Seremban 2, in August 2023.



Tuanku Muhriz, Tuanku Aishah Rohani and their sons with the Negri Sembilan Bar Committee at its recent Negeri Sembilan Bar dinner held at a hotel in Seremban.

An approachable Ruler loved and respected by all

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Another award, the Tuanku Muhriz Travelling Fellowship in Rural Surgery, a collaboration between RCSEd and UKM, was also named in his honour.

At the opening of the UCSI Hospital in Bandar Springhill near Port Dickson in November, Tuanku Muhriz spoke about how the provision of high-quality medical care had the potential to change the healthcare landscape in Negri Sembilan.

"The availability of high-quality medical care and sufficient specialists as well as doctors offers more medical care and treatment options for the people of Port Dickson and Negri Sembilan.

"UCSI Hospital is part of UCSI Health Metropolis, a mega project planned to make Bandar Springhill a hub for medical tourism and education. This multi-facility project includes accommodation, a convention centre, a shopping complex, sports facilities, a research lab and more," he said.

A Ruler who walks the talk, Tuanku Muhriz insists that elected representatives hold to the same standard of putting the people first. To the Ruler, duty and service are foremost.

During the state investiture ceremony to mark his last birthday, Tuanku Muhriz had said that leaders who had been given the mandate by the people must possess sincerity to serve and put the country's interests above their own.

"Although there are differences in ideologies and agendas among us, I am sure that there are similarities, especially in the agenda for development and the people's welfare to establish a more prosperous country."

This sentiment was repeated in October during the opening of the state assembly when the Ruler congratulated newly elected representatives and commended the formation of a new collaborative state government working towards a common aim — continued progress for the state.

In line with his views that elected representatives should always set any differences aside for the benefit of the rakyat, Tuanku Muhriz stressed that duties given to the people's



Tuanku Muhriz (hand pointing) and his consort Tuanku Aishah Rohani (on his left) leading the procession during the recent Maulidur Rasul celebrations in Seremban.

representatives must be carried out with full integrity and accountability, prioritising the interests of the state without any political or personal agendas.

Tuanku Muhriz said that politicians must be sensitive to the wishes and views of people who voice their sentiments via various spaces and platforms.

"Know that you are always being watched and judged by the people, so debate and argue rationally and intellectually on matters that can bring good and mutual benefit by complying with the rules of the House throughout the sitting.

"I wish to remind honourable house members to always appreciate, protect, preserve, and defend the Federal Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Negri Sembilan," he said.

Tuanku Muhriz also applauded the state administration for successfully steering Negri Sembilan through economic uncertainties and challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, saying it was due to its commitment and cooperation in working together effectively that helped the state remain a preferred destination



Tuanku Muhriz inspecting a guard of honour during the state-level Merdeka Day celebration in Seremban, last year.

for investors.

However, Tuanku Muhriz said, while the state recorded good financial performance, it was imperative that issues such as the cost of living, job opportunities and income disparity between urban and rural areas also be addressed.

In his speech, the Ruler out-

lined initiatives implemented by the state government to ensure that the people had access to a sufficient food supply and that they would not be burdened by the higher cost of living or goods.

"These economic empowerment programmes include the development of unused land, business capital assistance, halal

cottage industry certification, fishing equipment assistance for coastal fishermen, monthly living assistance for university students and the provision of Rumah Harapan subsidies.

"The state government also launched the Jualan Harga Ladang Negri Sembilan Prihatin initiative to combat supply issues and the rising prices of essential items. Through the programme, the people can purchase essential goods 20 to 30% cheaper than the market price," he said.

The Ruler expressed hope that socio-economic development efforts that include the state's economic empowerment agenda, digitalisation and the adoption of new technology, entrepreneurship and human capital development, would be intensified to boost the state's economic growth.

If there is one thing that the people of Negri Sembilan know, it is that they have their Ruler in their corner.

Tuanku Muhriz's love of state and country and his commitment to put people first endear him to his subjects as an approachable Ruler.

Championing lifelong learning



Tunku Ali officially launching the Program Kelestarian Pendapatan Universiti Melalui Integrasi Zakat, Wakaf dan Endowmen at USIM.



Tunku Aishah chatting with two of the award recipients during USIM's recent convocation ceremony.

TUANKU Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud regularly accompanies Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir whenever the state Ruler attends events in her capacity as the Tunku Ampuan Besar of Negri Sembilan.

There are many such events graced by the royal couple which include the opening of the state legislative assembly, official state celebrations and programmes with the rakyat held throughout Negri Sembilan.

Tuanku Aishah always makes time for these events, including visits to hospitals and homes despite her royal status which has only endeared her more to the people.

As Chancellor of Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Tuanku Aishah makes it a point to attend the Nilai-based university's graduation ceremonies.

Since being proclaimed as Chancellor back in 2011, Tuanku Aishah has presented degrees to thousands of graduates and postgraduates, as well as conferred honorary doctorates (PhD) and other awards to others.

Tuanku Aishah is also always present at important events at USIM such as when its Faculty of Quran and Sunnah Studies created the country's first Quran application to facilitate hearing-impaired individuals to read and discover the holy book.

The achievement allowed hearing-impaired communities not only in Malaysia but from all over the world to read the Quran using the Sign Language Quran application that can be downloaded through the Android and iOS platforms for free.

Tuanku Aishah has personally witnessed several other milestones that have helped in the rapid development of the university, leading it to become one of the most respected Islamic institutions especially in the Asean region.

Tuanku Aishah always shares words of wisdom with graduates, advising them that their outstanding achievements in both the fields of academics and co-curriculum such as debates, Islamic arts and culture and international relations reflected USIM's ability to help realise the nation's higher education policy and vision.

While delivering her address at the university's 21st graduation ceremony recently (in December 2023), Tuanku Aishah said USIM has produced graduates who have made a positive impact on the local community and the ummah.

"USIM graduates have not only become public figures but have succeeded in becoming job creators by providing job opportunities for others.

"They have proven that they have been able to apply the knowledge, skills and values they acquired at the university in their career and their daily lives," Tuanku Aishah said, adding that this was in line



Tuanku Aishah delivering her address at USIM's 21st convocation ceremony recently.

with the national education development plan to produce holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates.

Tuanku Aishah was proud that the graduates had been instrumental in helping the local community including people with disabilities, single mothers and Orang Asli by helping raise their quality of living.

This was made possible, among others, through USIM's mobile clinic, the Ummi Maktum centre and its sports centre.

Tuanku Aishah said the university's graduates were not only knowledgeable but were competent professionals who possessed leadership qualities.

"There are also undergraduates and graduates who have brought honour to USIM by achieving success in various fields including research and competitions at both national and international levels," she said, reminding them that with every challenge comes opportunity.

Tuanku Aishah also expressed confidence that graduates who had pursued their studies at USIM had developed their potential in a holistic manner, which would enable them to face future challenges and build more meaningful lives.

Citing an example, Tuanku Aishah said at present, the challenges faced by graduates come from artificial intelligence (AI) although it brings with it plenty of potential.

"We need to accept the fact that the pace of this man-made technology will be a part of our lives and that there are times when we cannot live without the help of technology.

"However, there needs to be a balance between the advancement of AI and the preservation of dignity, love and spiritual development," Tuanku Aishah said, adding that technological progress will improve human capabilities but not

replace humans.

Tuanku Aishah went on to say that she believed USIM graduates were the true manifestation of the Madani Malaysia slogan which was the basis of the country's administration.

"And through the integration of Naqli and Aqli knowledge cultivated at USIM, the graduates produced are ready to be leaders of the future," Tuanku Aishah said, adding that these leaders should continue to apply and strengthen values they learnt at the university such as trust, consensus, professionalism, efficiency and possessing a global outlook.

Tuanku Aishah also congratulated the graduating foreign students, expressing hope that as future leaders, they too would be able to instil USIM's philosophy in the integration of naqli and aqli knowledge in all aspects of their lives.

Tuanku Aishah's oldest prince, Tunku Ali Redhaudhin Tuanku Muhriz who is also USIM's Pro-Chancellor, regularly accompanies her for events there.

In his recent address to graduates, the Tunku Besar of Seri Menanti said as they embark on the next chapter of their lives, graduates need to remember that learning is a lifelong journey which extends far beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

"While you've achieved an incredible feat by graduating, this is just the beginning," Tunku Ali said, adding that their graduation was not the conclusion, but a catalyst for a lifetime of growth and development.

Tunku Ali also commended the teaching staff at the university, adding that their dedication to the profession and the care they showed for the students made them invaluable assets.

"I am confident with this level of dedication and spirit, USIM's name will be upheld to be amongst the very best of

"USIM graduates have not only become public figures but have succeeded in becoming job creators by providing job opportunities for others."

Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud

higher educational institutions," the Prince said.

Tunku Ali also advised the graduates to always uphold the principles of Rukun Negara wherever they served in the future.

This, the Prince said, would help them become leaders with good ethics and of high integrity who could bring positive change to society.

"I am confident that the principled graduates will contribute to the development of a harmonious, fair, and united country regardless of their background," Tunku Ali said.

Echoing Tuanku Aishah's sentiments on AI, Tunku Ali told the graduates that it plays a pivotal role in driving the changes we witness today and will revolutionise the way we live, work, and interact.

"Embracing AI is not merely an option but a necessity for future graduates who will enter the workforce to stay competitive and innovative in a rapidly evolving global environment.

"Indeed, embracing AI, balancing technology and research is crucial for making a positive impact on society," the Prince said, adding that AI will also help bridge gaps, disseminate information, and improve academic outreach.

The collaboration of technology and research in universities, he said, would not only equip future leaders with essential skills for a tech-driven world but would also empower them to contribute meaningfully to society's betterment.

Tunku Ali congratulated the university's international students, adding that their journey at USIM had significantly enriched its academic community.

"Your achievements speak not only to your academic excellence but also to the strength of character and adaptability essential for thriving in a new cultural and educational environment.

"As you navigate the journey back to your hometown, I hope that USIM remains close to your hearts, and you carry with you the values instilled during your time here," Tunku Ali added.