

April 13, 2007

Johor Sultan is honoured for his role in bilateral ties

By Paul Nah

JOHOR Sultan Iskandar Ismail was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Laws by the National University of Singapore (NUS) yesterday in recognition of his efforts to boost ties with Singapore.

In its citation, NUS said the award recognises Sultan Iskandar's 'enduring contribution to the long-standing bilateral relations between Singapore and Malaysia and those of Singapore and Johor'.

The 75-year-old Sultan has ruled Johor for nearly 26 years.

Under his leadership, the close friendship between Singapore and Johor has grown deeper and stronger, the citation said.

It also noted that under the Sultan's guidance and attention, Johor's economic growth has brought prosperity to the state and improved the people's lives.

The launch of the Iskandar Development Region (IDR), named after the Sultan, opened a new chapter in the state's economic development, the citation added.

The Johor ruler's two-day visit, which started yesterday, is his first official visit to Singapore in nearly 20 years.

Accompanying him are members of his family, as well as Johor Menteri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman and other officials.

He made a state visit to Singapore in 1988, when he was the Malaysian King.

Datuk Abdul Ghani yesterday said the conferment was an honour for the state.

Speaking to reporters after the ceremony, he said the award 'also confirms and reinforces the extent of the good relationship' enjoyed by both sides over the years.

Later in the day, the Sultan and his delegation visited the Urban Redevelopment Authority for a closed-door briefing on Singapore's national development.

Meanwhile, the Sultanah and princesses toured the National Museum and Malay Heritage Centre.

At the museum, they viewed two exhibitions, one showcasing the diversity of Arabian homes and interiors, and the other looking at the Arab world through the eyes of Arab and Western photographers.

They were presented with copies of Singapore: The Encyclopedia and Vintage Singapore.

President SR Nathan and Mrs Nathan hosted a lunch for the royal visitors.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Mrs Lee called on the Sultan and Sultanah before hosting them to dinner.

Today, the Sultan, a seasoned soldier, will visit the Singapore Armed Forces Commando Headquarters.

The Sultanah will tour the Botanic Gardens, where an orchid will be named after her.

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