

Humble and sporting Ruler

DATUK Mohd Rashid Hasnon's first close encounter with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah was when he was Penang deputy chief minister.

He said Sultan Abdullah (who was then Tengku Mahkota of Pahang) had just been appointed as president of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) in May 2014.

"As the head of a prestigious sports association, His Majesty handled his responsibilities firmly when facing criticism from various quarters, especially from sports fans and critics from all over the country.

"I never saw Sultan Abdullah get angry or feel offended by any remarks. Instead, he took the comments in his stride and viewed them as constructive criticism for the future of the country's football," he said in an interview with *The Star*.

Mohd Rashid added that every time he and His Majesty met during a friendly football match involving Penang, Pahang or Selangor, Sultan Abdullah would approach the spectators and amiably chatted with them.

"That really grabbed my attention. Tuanku was never arrogant and treated everybody with full respect although His Majesty is a highly respected figure.

"His Majesty is very well acquainted with football and adopted some of the concepts of the game during his term as FAM president.

"Tuanku is an excellent planner who can strategise amazingly and communicate well with all the players in order to achieve victory.

"From my personal point of view, Sultan Abdullah is a warm person with a friendly smile.

"Tuanku is also an interesting character and Members of



Sultan Abdullah giving the Jalur Gemilang to ex-national football coach Datuk K. Rajagopal before a match in October 2011. (Inset) Mohd Rashid often saw His Majesty chatting with spectators at matches. — M. AZHAR ARIF/The Star

Parliament get to meet him when the Parliament convenes during the start of each meeting," he added.

Mohd Rashid, who is Batu Pahat MP and the Dewan Rakyat's Deputy Speaker, added that the King would give his advice and views to all MPs as the head of the country.

"The King's speeches are very much in line with the Standing Order and rules of the august House, showing his deep understanding in the administration and management of Parliament," he said.

He also noted that His Majesty

follows the Federal Constitution in all of his speeches to ensure that it becomes a guide and basis for Malaysia.

Recalling last year's leadership crisis, when each lawmaker was summoned to meet His Majesty one by one, Mohd Rashid said Sultan Abdullah was calm and listened to their opinions.

On His Majesty's personal life, Mohd Rashid said the King was known to be very close with his family members, especially his wife and children.

"Tuanku spends time with his children and usually interacts with

them during meals or while playing sports.

"Whenever I meet Tuanku, his family will always be by his side and Tuanku will introduce them to all of us," he added.

"Sultan Abdullah is a leader who is moderate, including as the head of Islam in Malaysia.

"Everything is conducted perfectly according to the tenets of Islam and implemented in moderation," Mohd Rashid said.

He added that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw the enforcement of movement restrictions including physical

distancing, Sultan Abdullah had consented for the surau located within the Istana Negara grounds to be opened to the public for Friday prayers.

"As the head of state that upholds Islam, His Majesty's life is very close to religion," Mohd Rashid said, adding that Sultan Abdullah was also a humble and down-to-earth person.

"Tuanku will sometimes stop by the roadside and talk to the rakyat.

"He has even helped small businesses by buying items directly from the rakyat, which they really appreciate," he said.

Wishes for a beloved King

YANG di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah is a wise and compassionate Ruler who is the symbol of unity of all Malaysians regardless of their background.

Malaysians believe that the King represents harmony among the multiracial and religious communities living in the country.

Despite the postponement of events and programmes in conjunction with the King's official birthday this year, Malaysians of all backgrounds continue to extend their good wishes.

This is the second time that all events in conjunction with the King's official birthday have been postponed to another date due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lawyer Datuk Andy Low Hann Yong said the King was a symbol of peace and a sage Ruler who has the rakyat's best interests at heart at all times.

"My hope is that His Majesty's reign will be peaceful and that he will live a long and healthy life," he said.

Television host and popular personality Datuk Aznil Nawawi said the King was a humble and down-to-earth person, and that there was no protocol barrier between him and the people.

"Even when he was still the Crown Prince of Pahang, he followed in the footsteps of his father, who had no qualms about going down to the ground to meet the people.

"There are many pictures of His Majesty going on a boat ride or a four-wheel drive with Raja Permaisuri Agong Tunku Hajah Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah to

help those in need.

"This practice has continued during his current reign as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," he said.

Aznil, popularly known as Pak Nil, added that the rakyat was lucky to be able to see the King and Queen exercising their royal duties through photos and videos shared on social media.

"We rarely see any form of strict protocol as the King blends in naturally with his subjects.

"Our King clearly shows that he is one with the rakyat and never creates any barriers between him and us," he said.

Aznil added that the rest of the royal family, including Pahang Regent Tengku Hassanal Ibrahim Alam Shah, also shared the same traits, values and humbleness that warmed the hearts of the rakyat.

"They are often seen with minimal police presence or protocols, and the people really appreciate this about them," he said.

He also noted that Sultan Abdullah was helping the country during a particularly challenging period.

"His Majesty is playing a big role in managing the Covid-19 pandemic and the rakyat is always behind him.

"I believe Allah put him in the right place at the right time to steer the country forward," said Aznil, who expressed his confidence that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong would use his wisdom to make the right decisions for the people.

"I wish Tuanku a long and healthy life, and I hope Malaysia will prosper under his reign," he said.



Low: 'I hope His Majesty's reign will be peaceful and that he will live a long and healthy life.'

Sabahan Jim Matthew, 40, said Sultan Abdullah was always down-to-earth and caring towards the people.

"His Majesty always seems to be up to date on current issues and the welfare of his people.

"I remember the many times the King stopped to help accident victims he encountered on his journeys, as well as the time His Majesty and the Queen went down to the ground to check on the welfare of flood victims in Pahang," he recalled.

University student S. Priyanka, 23, said the King had shown exceptional discretion and consideration for all races in Malaysia.

"The King and Queen have acknowledged every major cultural celebration in the



Aznil: 'His Majesty is the best person to lead the country during this challenging and uncertain time.'

country without fail, even when some people have raised controversial views.

"His Majesty has also proven that he is level-headed and makes sound decisions for the well-being of the rakyat.

"When talk of an Emergency was first raised amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the King did not simply accept the government's proposal; rather, the King listened to the rakyat's sentiments and asked for more solid reasons to justify an Emergency," she said.

Priyanka noted that the King had also given much concern to every decision made by the government to address the impact of Covid-19, especially on financial and economic matters such as unemployment and the most affected sectors of the economy.