A royal life remembered

Royalty has long fascinated the common people. A royal museum in Klang provides a look at the life of Selangor’s eighth sultan, writes ZANNA ES.
 SELANGOR has a new museum and gallery which provides a fascinating glimpse into the history of the Selangor sultansate and the life and times of the eighth Sultan, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

The Royal Gallery Sultan Abdul Aziz in Klang, opened in November, houses magnificent artifacts, gifts and personal collection of the late Sultan.

A brainchild of the late Sultan, and originally funded by him, it was set up in 1988 as the Memorial Museum, in one of the late Sultan's private palaces in Jalan Kota Raja (Kampung Jawa).

The palace was renovated, with the support of the State Government, and opened to the public in the year 2000, renamed the Royal Gallery Sultan Abdul Aziz, in honour of his birthname.

However, a year later, the Sultan passed away and the gallery was temporarily closed.

His eldest son, who succeeded him as the ninth sultan, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, took up his father's wishes to safeguard traditional values and nurture heritage consciousness.

As the museum stood on the sultan's private land, the Sultan Sulaiman building, built in 1909 and named after Raja Sulaiman who became Sultan Alaeddin Sulaiman Shah was chosen for its historical significance and accessibility to the public.

Conservation and renovation works on the building adjacent to the Klang Post Office, began in 2005 and were completed late last year. "The Sultan took a personal interest in the museum and would often spend about three hours going through the artifacts, ensuring that they were correctly documented," said Munasor Aliyasa, the museum manager.

Exhibits on the ground floor provide background on the sultansate, the royal lineage, and brief histories of Selangor's nine sultans.

The late Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Alhaj was born on March 8, 1926, at Idana Bandar in Kuala Langat.

The late Sultan's ancestry can be traced back to the Bugis Sulawesi family of Opu Tanreburung Daeng Relaka who featured in the history of the Malay Archipelago.

The eighth Sultan also

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Visitors will be dazzled by the beauty of hand-embroidered shoes as well as the several pieces of gold thread-embroidered hate sample and a gold-buckled belt with the alphabet X embroidered in the centre.

The late Sultan also kept a pistol which was used for shooting practices while the German-made pistol was often carried for his personal protection.

The late Sultan enjoyed taking pictures and it is not unusual to find that he owned a few cameras which are also displayed here.

He often cycled in the rural areas to visit the people, especially to Pulau Indah and Pulau Ketam and the bicycles he used are on display, such as the Raleigh New Yorker, as Underwood with a leather saddle, pouches as well as the Ta Buncha.

The late Sultan was also a avid collector and his collections include commemorative gold coins, dollars in conjunction with Kuwait’s 50th national day and Russian coins.

Of particular significance were the containers in Selangor’s soil and yellow with the white crest embossed on the cover. The containers were used for egg boxes. Another is a colourfull tin metal box which could easily be converted into a pencil case for children. Although they were simple gifts it meant a lot to both the late and the present Sultan as they were donated to the royal court, said Makwasee.

On display are also gifts from companies which include a set of golf balls individually signed in the late Sultan’s hand in the late Sultan presented by Nike Darby, the classic F & N soft-drink bottle in gold presented during the late Sultan’s visit to the factory, as well as a copy of the paper currency which was used in the Sangi Ruhul Deproy Centre in 1936, which was presented in the late Sultan during his visit to the centre.

A centrepiece of the display is a royal regalia such as the Sultan’s crown which superseded the pure gold Mahkota Leleng crown used in the 19th century. During the reign of Sultan Muhammad (1826-1857), a Muslim theologian, Sheikh Abdul Gaan, counselled the royal court to obtain a substitute for Mahkota Leleng.

Dinosaurs and gem stones from the Puntun, Indonesia, and genuine rubies, set in pure gold from Pahang adorn the present crown which is worn on royal occasions.

Also on display is a replica of the diamond-tipped sword worn by the Tengku Ampuan during functions such as royal banquets and investitures.

The Sultan’s keis Kersi Tengku Ampuan of Keris Jawa Pening, has a blade forged from a sword trusted by the Sultan of Java, which encases the seven grooved blade. The tip of this sword is ash-shaped and the hilt is adorned with gemstones.

One of the gifts that the Sultan received while serving as Yang di-Pertuan Agong was a model of the Dome of the Rock, presented by the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

A jade cannon with a dragon carved on the top of the barrel was a gift from Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei. Among the souvenirs collected by the late Sultan during his travels abroad were silver spoons, samurai head gear as well as beautiful clocks which include the crystal ball clock, manek clock, swinging clock with brass sculpture as well as the marble clocks.

There is a section of commemorative official places and plates used at Mahkota Permaisuri Palace as well as a gold-plated tea set. Visitors would certainly be interested in the 67-metre-long crocodile captured in the Klang River in 1961 by M. Salih bin Abdul Karim and Ibrahim bin Abdul Karim, three months after Sultan Salabuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Alhaj ascended the throne.

It is said that the crocodile “surrendered” itself to the two mediums as an attestation to the sovereignty of the new Sultan. The crocodile’s skull was presented to the Sultan by V.M. Husson, first curator of the National Zoo.

Other items of interest are a cathedral-shaped bird cage, a Japanese tiger, as well as gold-plated flamingo, gold-plate deer and a porcelain horse.

The final section houses personal paintings and decorative chairs as well as greeting cards with Chinese characters embossed in solid gold, as well as the 10 cm clock.

The gallery is open from 10am to 5pm daily except Mondays and on public holidays. Call 03-3373-6500 or fax 03-3373-6510.