

King unveils memorial to mark 82nd anniversary of sunken British WW2 battleships in Kuantan

By **T.N. Alagesh** - December 10, 2023 @ 2:15pm



The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah unveiled a memorial dedicated to the sailors of two sunken British warships, HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales at Teluk Cempedak. -BERNAMA PIC

KUANTAN: The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah today unveiled a memorial dedicated to the sailors of two sunken British warships, HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales at Teluk Cempedak here.

The memorial overlooking the South China Sea was built to commemorate the sinking of battleship HMS Prince of Wales, the pride of the British Royal Navy, and battlecruiser HMS Repulse some 61 nautical miles off the coast of Kuantan.

Today also marks the 82nd anniversary of the sinking of the warships, described as one of Britain's worst naval disasters of the Second World War, which occurred two days after the Japanese invasion of Malaysia on Dec 10, 1941.

The British warships were tasked with intercepting a Japanese invasion fleet at sea. Sailing without air escort, the ships were vulnerable to attacks from Japanese bombers and torpedo aircraft, resulting in the loss of 840 sailors.

An auxiliary anchor believed from one of the warships which was previously displayed at the Army Museum in Port Dickson, Negri Sembilan, has been incorporated along with the memorial stone which was unveiled with the support of the British High Commission and the Royal Navy.

Permaisuri Agong Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah also graced the event.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ailsa Terry described the memorial as an opportunity for visitors to reflect on the enormity of the loss and the cost of war.



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"It is a fitting tribute to the personnel who perished along with the ships, and also serves as a reminder that important naval heritage like this must be protected as well as of the strength of the United Kingdom-Malaysia relationship," she said.

Meanwhile, Royal Navy's Director of Joint Warfare in Strategic Command, Rear Admiral Andrew Betton said the significant loss of life on both the British warships will be remembered through the monument here.

"To see the auxiliary anchor from one of the ships on display here really brings home the memories of the number of people who lost their lives on that day. Let us all remember those 840 souls who perished in the attack that day," he said in his speech.

Over recent years, the designated war grave site of the two warships has received international publicity following illegal salvage activity in 2015 and May 2023 this year.

The shipwrecks resting on the South China Sea bed were reportedly badly damaged after [illegal salvage](#) operators "cannibalised" the steel, high-grade aluminium and brass fixtures.

In May this year, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency detained a foreign vessel off the coast of Johor allegedly involved in [plundering World War 2-era shipwrecks](#) in the region.

The New Straits Times had previously ran reports on how shipwrecks in the South China Sea, off the coast of Pahang, were being plundered by illegal salvage operators under the pretext of fishing in 2015.