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The JDT FC (Johor Darul Ta'zim Football Club) and the Success of *Bangsa Johor*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In the 19th century, Sultan Sir Abu Bakar created a singular Johorean identity distinct from that of the European colonizers that he partnered with. This was the beginning of Bangsa Johor
- Today, the royally propagated Bangsa Johor identity marker is widely accepted by people from Johor, and is one of the reasons behind the citizens and diaspora's support for the Johor Sultan and Crown Prince. In contrast to the federal government's 1Malaysia concept, the Bangsa Johor identity is seen to be authentic and sincere.
- JDT FC is the Johor state football club and its social media channels are highly popular, outranking other teams and popular figures on Facebook. JDT FC is very adept at promoting the Bangsa Johor concept on their media channels, further driving its popularity.
- Similar to Sultan Sir Abu Bakar, JDT FC and the Crown Prince of Johor have elicited international recognition and accolades for both the team and Johor royalty, further engendering pride in the team, its royal owners, and the Bangsa Johor identity.

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INTRODUCTION

While members of Malaysia's political elite have turned to yet another rebranding exercise to corral the citizenry behind them (with the launch of the *IMalaysia Negaraku* logo), individual Malaysian states remain steadfast in their identities through their own subtle yet enduring means. In the north and east of Peninsular Malaysia, Kedahans, Kelantanese and Terengganu folk bond through their unique dialects upon meeting each other outside of their home states. In East Malaysia, the *Sarawak for Sarawakians* and *Sabah for Sabahans* campaigns bring the people together in their determination to protect East Malaysian state rights and interests. Bangsa Johor is the clarion call for those from the southern-most state, an identity instituted by Johor's royal family and most strongly brought forth through the state football team, JDT FC (the acronym for Johor Darul Ta'zim Football Club – also known as the Johor Southern Tigers).

Sport has always been a useful tool for engendering national or state patriotism and loyalty. In spite of an increasingly (politically-instigated) publicly polarized society, Malaysians of all colours and creeds invariably come together in suspense and support of sportsmen and sportswomen such as squash champion Nicol Davids, badminton legend Lee Chong Wei and Paralympian Muhamad Ziyad. This phenomenon is not unique to Malaysia of course.

FOOTBALL TO ESTABLISH AND UPHOLD IDENTITY

Sports are generally highly-charged emotional ecosystems in which every match instigates passion and patriotism for one side against the other. Spectators overcome otherwise tangible differences amongst themselves in support of their team, and in many cases this accord also unites them in political matters well beyond the playing field. In Spain for example, matches between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona harbour more significance than just the spectacle of two top-notch teams battling for a prize. It is the embodiment of the historic tension between Spanish nationalism and Catalan pride.¹ In its hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup, South Africa attempted to demonstrate its evolution from a country known for apartheid to one that is non-racial and inclusive.²

Matches between neighbouring countries, states and even districts within a state are always the ones most fiercely contested and most raucously supported. The rivalry between Argentina and Brazil is always amplified through its football matches, with representations of the opposing team in all manner of media – advertising, articles, television, sporting commentaries and the like – depicting each nation's disdain for the other.³

¹ Vicente Rodriguez Ortega (2016) Soccer, nationalism and the media in contemporary Spanish society; La Roja, Real Madrid & FC Barcelona. *Soccer & Society*, 17:4, 628-643.

² Vishanthie Sewpaul (2009) On national identity, nationalism and Soccer 2010. *International Social Work*, 52(2), 143-153.

³ Simoni Lahud Guedes (2014) On criollos and capoeiras: notes on soccer and national identity in Argentina and in Brazil. *Soccer & Society*, 15:1, 147-161.

THE BANGSA JOHOR IDENTITY

The multiracial Bangsa Johor identity presently being used in Johor state existed long before the formation of its football team. In his account of Johor's history, Trocki⁴ noted that Johor before the arrival of the British was a thriving maritime entrepôt with the indigenous *orang laut* (sea people) and island people forming its military and administrative infrastructure.

After the arrival of the British, Johor was distinct from other Malay states in that its ruler was able to successfully incorporate the Chinese population under his reign. This was quite extraordinary in 1885, but Sultan Sir Abu Bakar ibni Al-Marhum Tun Temenggung Raja Daing Ibrahim (Sultan Abu Bakar), was able to succeed because in essence, the Johor government had become a business; the economy of the state took precedence over traditional military pursuits. Chinese secret society headmen became businessmen and Malay pirates were transformed into bureaucrats. Trocki went so far as to state that Sultan Abu Bakar 'ruled over a Chinese state'.⁵ Not only was the ruler able to maintain old Malay ties even as he absorbed the Chinese under his reign, but during his lifetime, he was able to ensure that the Europeans treated him more as a business and administrative partner (and less as a subordinate as they were wont to do with other Malay rulers). While ideologically they still perceived any Asian ruler as despotic and inferior to themselves,⁶ they were otherwise unable to untangle the complicated web of local politics and trade. Their access to local resources and means of production had to go through the Johor rulers and their government.⁷

It was through this consolidation of local peoples – regardless of ethnic origin – against the advances of the Europeans that the concept of Bangsa Johor emerged. While the notion was not as wittily phrased at the time, the idea that all citizens of Johor were equal under one ruler was established then.

To be sure, the concept of 'race' was a uniquely European one, and the division of a state's people by race was a colonial practice employed for better control of the locals.⁸ The 'Malay' people identified themselves with names that referenced their geographical location such as '*orang sungai*' (river people) or '*orang darat*' (land people).⁹ The use of the phrase 'Bangsa Johor' is thus significant on many fronts. 'Bangsa' was a word used by royal Malay

⁴ Trocki, C.A. 2007. *Prince of Pirates – The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*. NUS Press, Singapore.

⁵ Trocki, C.A. 2007. *Prince of Pirates – The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*: p186. NUS Press, Singapore.

⁶ The Sultan who could not stay put. *Malaysiakini*, 30 April 2001.

<https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/6833>

⁷ Trocki, C.A. 2007. *Prince of Pirates – The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*. NUS Press, Singapore.

⁸ Arrifin SM Omar. 2011. The makings of a nation-state: Malaysia's struggle in promoting national unity since 1948. In *Bangsa and Umma, Development of People-grouping Concepts in Islamized Southeast Asia*. Hiroyuki, Y, Milner, A, Midori, K and Kazuhiro, A. (eds.): 108-140. Kyoto University Press, Japan.

⁹ Firth, R. 1966. *Malay Fishermen, their Peasant Economy*. The Norton Library, Connecticut, USA.

courts to refer to those of ‘glorious descent’ or descendants of rulers or the noble elite.¹⁰ Using the term ‘Bangsa Johor’ returns the identity marker to that of the people’s geographical location, as was customary before the arrival of the Europeans. This concept of Bangsa Johor was put forward and is greatly emphasised by Johor’s currently reigning Sultan Ibrahim Ismail ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar and his son, the Crown Prince, Tunku Mahkota Ismail ibni Sultan Ibrahim, thus incorporating the people of Johor neatly under the royal family and their oversight.

Sultan Ibrahim has taken many steps to visibly uphold the concept of Bangsa Johor, and demonstrate its authenticity. He consults various ethnic groups in important state-level decisions and participates in festivities by all ethnicities and faiths in his state.¹¹ While federal religious leaders decree that it was sinful to utter festive greetings, both Sultan Ibrahim and the Crown Prince publicly wish their subjects ‘Merry Christmas’ on their media channels, followed by the hashtag (among others) #muafakatBangsaJohor (meaning: Bangsa Johor consensus).¹² The Permaisuri (Johor Queen) also released an open letter calling for a return to a time when “saying ‘Merry Christmas’ offended no-one”.¹³ These clear stands for racial and religious tolerance in the state endears the royal house to its people, and these messages are invariably disseminated through the JDT FC media channels.

JDT FC & THE STRENGTH OF JOHOR ROYALTY

Originally known as the Kelab Bolasepak Perbadanan Kemajuan Ekonomi Negeri Johor (PKENJ FC), the Johor state professional club team was set up under the PKENJ Recreation Bureau, where its highest accolades included winning the FAM (Football Association of Malaysia) Cup in 1994 and 1995, then the Malaysian Premier League title in 2001. Johor Corporation then took over the club in 1996 and renamed it Johor FC.¹⁴ It participated in the AFC (Asian Football Confederation) Cup for the first time in 2009, but lost in the group stages. In what is now a legendary story recounted in a recently released video clip that traces the JDT journey to success,¹⁵ Tunku Mahkota Ismail (popularly referred to as TMJ) and his younger brother Tunku Idris Sultan Ibrahim attended a Johor FA (now known as

¹⁰ Nishio Kanji. 2011. Statecraft and people-grouping concepts in Malay port-polities: Case studies on Johor-Riau and Riau-Lingga. In *Bangsa and Umma, Development of People-grouping Concepts in Islamized Southeast Asia*. Hiroyuki, Y, Milner, A, Midori, K and Kazuhiro, A. (eds.): 50-70. Kyoto University Press, Japan.

¹¹ Hutchinson, F. 2016. The Johor Sultanate: Rise or Re-emergence? Trends 2016/16, ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

¹² Johor sultan, crown prince wish ‘Happy Christmas’, while Brunei ruler bans greetings. Today Online, 26 December 2015. <http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/johor-sultan-crown-prince-wish-happy-christmas-while-brunei-ruler-bans-greetings>

¹³ An Xmas note from Johor Sultanah. FMT News, 24 December 2016.

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/opinion/2016/12/24/an-xmas-note-from-johor-sultanah/>

¹⁴ <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/>

¹⁵ Masanya Telah Tiba – The Revolution Begins

<https://www.facebook.com/johorsoutherntigers.com.my/videos/896357573860876/>

JDT II) match in 2012 where there were just a handful of spectators, and the older brother heard a lone voice call out for someone to ‘save Johor football’. That, it seems, was the trigger for him to act.¹⁶ Not long after, he became the President of the Johor Football Association and by December 2012, it was announced that the Johor state teams would be taken over. Rebranded as JDT FC and JDT II, and backed by royal clout and generous financing, the teams were able to attract local and international players of good repute, including those from both the English Premier League and the Spanish League.¹⁷ In an extraordinarily short time, JDT FC climbed the table and won four consecutive Super League titles (2014-2017), as well as the regional AFC (Asian Football Confederation) Cup in 2015.

All of JDT FC’s exploits are documented in images and videos and posted on their Facebook page and the Johor Southern Tigers website. The royals’ adept use of these media channels has been the key to the diffusion of the Bangsar Johor identity through JDT FC. While these sites were set up to publicise the achievements of the state football teams, they quickly evolved into the unofficial mouthpiece of the royal family, primarily that of Tunku Ismail. An overview of the sites reveals not just the usual team listings, fixtures, match photos, scores and celebrations of championships won, but also a liberal dose of Johor state history and news as well as updates from the royal family. When the need arises, the sites become the opinion outlet of either TMJ or Sultan Ibrahim, and published statements, images or videos quickly become viral. Table 1 below lists the JDT FC social media channels and their following. A few other teams and public figures’ Facebook following have also been included for comparison.

¹⁶ Love him or hate him, TMJ makes an impact on Malaysian football. Malaysian Digest, 30 October 2014. <http://www.malaysiandigest.com/frontpage/282-main-tile/525514-love-him-or-hate-him-tmj-makes-an-impact-on-malaysian-football.html>

¹⁷ From European champion to Malaysian superstar. World Soccer website, 13 July 2013. <http://www.worldsoccer.com/blogs/from-european-champion-to-malaysian-superstar-341582>

Table 1: JDT FC Social Media Following

Social media type	Username	Number of followers
Facebook	JOHOR Southern Tigers	1,845,407 (likes)
		1,836,918 (followers)
		167,715 (PTAT*)
Twitter	JOHORSouthernTigers @OfficialJohor	160,000 followers
Instagram	OfficialJohor	459,000 followers
YouTube Channel	JDT TV Media	More than 100,000 views on many videos posted
Facebook	Kelantan FC	200,972 (likes)
		200,401 (followers)
Facebook	Pahang FA	143,110 (likes)
		144,532 (followers)
Facebook	Football Association of Malaysia (Official)	504,583 (likes)
		506,768 (followers)
Facebook	Khairy Jamaludin**	1,170,686 (likes)
		1,166,743 (followers)

*PTAT – People talking about this: number of stories created about the page

** Khairy Jamaludin is the Malaysian Minister of Youth and Sports

According to the third party website LinkAlyzer, the JDT FC Facebook page was the most sought-after brand in August 2015.¹⁸ At the time of writing, JDT FC is ranked number 26 out of 144 ranked pages in Malaysia.¹⁹

DISSECTING THE ALLURE OF BANGSA JOHOR THROUGH JDT FC

The primary strength of JDT FC in the reinforcement of the Bangsa Johor identity is its ability to create a sense of belonging. Through the emotion of competition, JDT supporters bond through historical affinity and state representation.²⁰ Imagery such as that of the tiger illustrates the power, energy and strength of the JDT teams, and is not unlike a coat-of-arms used by nation states to embody their identity. This tiger imagery once subtly juxtaposed a widely circulated photo of TMJ pretending to dine on a mini slain elephant (Johor's neighbour and bitter rival Pahang's mascot) after beating them in a crucial match;²¹ an incident not unlike those that occur between Argentina and Brazil.²²

¹⁸ <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/advertising/>

¹⁹ <https://likealyzer.com/explore>

²⁰ Adriano Gómez-Bantel (2016). Football clubs as symbols of regional identities. *Soccer & Society*, 17:5, 692-702.

²¹ TMJ's 'eating elephant' picture causes a stir. Mole.my, 26 May 2016. <http://mole.my/tmjs-eating-elephant-picture-caused-a-stir/>

²² Simoni Lahud Guedes (2014) On criollos and capoeiras: notes on soccer and national identity in Argentina and in Brazil. *Soccer & Society*, 15:1, 147-161.

Historical posts on the website serve to remind the populace of their origins, state history and the efforts taken by the Johor royals for their citizens.²³ In Spain, Basque footballing identities, personified through Real Sociedad and Athletic Bilbao, among others, are political identities, where in spite of internal differences, ‘unity’ of the Basque nation is created to counter other Spanish ethnic groups.²⁴ JDT FC, on the other hand, is owned by royalty; an establishment which constantly reminds its populace that they are above politics – and thus also above politicians.²⁵ Unlike that of the Spanish Basque states, the Johor state team is not a vehicle used to put forward a political construct. Instead, JDT FC perpetuates a pre-existing concept of unity through the team’s popularity, which comes about as a result of its royal leadership and success on the field.

Johorean football and sport is deemed apolitical because it is not led by politicians; a concept constantly touted by TMJ in his criticism against Malaysia’s national football team.²⁶ This too brings the people together in support of their vocal Crown Prince, in part for his bluntness, as well as out of frustration with the lack of success of the Malaysian national team. In establishing themselves as the ‘Southern Tigers’ JDT also differentiates itself and its success from that of the national team²⁷ – usually referred to as *Harimau Malaysia* (Malaysian Tigers) – and thus became a southern sibling who fares much better.

Added to the mix are the highly publicised spats between TMJ and Khairy Jamaludin (popularly referred to as KJ), Malaysia’s Minister of Youth and Sports. The tiff began with TMJ accusing the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) of politicking and corruption²⁸ (which eventually led him to successfully bid for the role of president²⁹). In a recent open letter bemoaning the state of Malaysia,³⁰ TMJ made veiled comments about KJ’s participation in the recent Southeast Asian (SEA) Games as a polo player. Even Sultan Ibrahim weighed in on this, inviting the SEA Games polo team to play the Johor state team,

²³ (for example) History of Johor: Sultan Sir Ismail often received overseas recognition. Posted 28 August 2017. <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/history-of-johor-sultan-sir-ismail-often-received-overseas-recognition/>

²⁴ Robert Györi Szabó (2013) Basque identity and soccer. *Soccer & Society*, 14:4, 525-547.

²⁵ Johor Sultan: I am above politics. The Star Online, 27 December 2015.

<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/12/27/johor-ruler-im-above-politics-the-interest-of-the-rakyat-always-comes-first/>

²⁶ TMJ: I want to stop FAM from being misused for political reasons. The Malay Mail Online, 22 February 2017. <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/sports/article/tmj-i-want-to-stop-fam-from-being-misused-for-political-reasons#EYzopVYIylc6B5dK.97>

²⁷ Dorsey, JM. 2015. Constructing national identity: the muscular Jews vs the Palestinian underdog. RSIS Working Paper No. 290. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore.

²⁸ TMJ claims to possess evidence of FAM’s purported corruption. Goal.com, 18 July 2016. <http://www.goal.com/en-my/news/3889/main/2016/07/18/25724332/tmj-claims-to-possess-evidence-of-fams-purported-corruption>

²⁹ FAM set to tackle corruption, TMJ to meet MACC for talks. New Straits Times, 22 April 2017. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2017/04/228494/fam-set-tackle-corruption-tmj-meet-macc-talks>

³⁰ I will always pray for your stability Malaysia. Malaysiakini, 8 July 2017. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/387895>

featuring his two sons.³¹ This saga was played out on the JDT FC media channels to a large following, as well as shared, retweeted and featured in regular print and online news media. The drama once again distinguished Johor, Johorean sporting teams and the Johorean way as different and better than others, eliciting further pride in Bangsa Johor.

As Sultan Abu Bakar was recognised for his ability to establish international acknowledgement of Johor, JDT media channels often publicise international support, recognition or accolades for both the team and the Crown Prince. This too differentiates JDT from other teams. It also nurtures a parallel diplomacy by the royal house that upstages the federal government. A case in point is the recent announcement by North Korea's envoy to allow TMJ the 'highest honour' by enabling him to fly direct to Pyongyang from Johor.³² While this pronouncement was in preparation for a planned football match between North Korea and Malaysia, it comes at a significant time; less than 10 days after Prime Minister Najib Razak made a much-criticised visit to President Trump in the US,³³ and two days after Trump announced to the UN General Assembly that the US is able to 'totally destroy' North Korea.³⁴ TMJ's sporting diplomacy with North Korea illustrates the power of royalty to elevate itself above politics, further endearing itself to its people. Support for JDT and the royal house then translates into further support for the visions that they put forward.

A recurrent theme on JDT media sites is the hashtag #JDTForAll, or in Malay, #JDTUntukSemua which emphasises the equality of all Johoreans in their support for JDT. This is often compared to the national '1Malaysia' slogan, which both the Sultan and the Crown Prince have derided as an unsuccessful political gimmick.³⁵ The JDT media channels are often used by TMJ to candidly express his views on the state of the country and its government. An example of this is his desire to establish Bangsa Johor schools across the state to unite Johoreans from young³⁶ as well as Sultan Ibrahim's wish to ensure that English is a medium of instruction.³⁷ These are prickly issues frowned upon by the federal government which, by law, oversees educational matters nation-wide. Political comments from the royal house are particularly attractive at a time when the federal government is

³¹ Sultan dares national polo team to play against Johor FMT News, 24 August 2017.

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/08/24/sultan-dares-national-polo-team-to-play-against-johor/>

³² North Korea grants special TMJ special access to Pyongyang. Malaysiakini, 20 September 2017. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/395745>

³³ Jimmy Fallon pokes fun at Najib-Trump meet with video parody. FMT News, 16 September 2017. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/09/16/jimmy-fallon-pokes-fun-at-najib-trump-meet-with-video-parody/>

³⁴ Trump threatens to 'destroy North Korea' if necessary. Al Jazeera, 20 September 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/trump-threatens-destroy-north-korea-170919140528723.html>

³⁵ We are Bangsa Johor not Bangsa Malaysia says Crown Prince. Malaysia Today, 7 July, 2017. <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2015/07/07/we-are-bangsa-johor-not-bangsa-msia-says-crown-prince/>

³⁶ Johor Crown Prince wants vernacular schools to be replaced with Bangsa Johor schools. Says.com, 5 September 2016. <http://says.com/my/news/johor-crown-prince-wants-vernacular-schools-to-be-replaced-with-bangsa-johor-schools>

³⁷ Make English a medium of instruction in schools: Sultan of Johor. Asia One, 12 June 2015. <http://www.asiaone.com/singapore/make-english-medium-instruction-schools-sultan-johor>

weak³⁸ and in both these cases, the Sultan and TMJ have been able to show that they are in closer touch with the needs of their people (unlike the federal government). Media reports indicate that there is public support for both of these goals.³⁹ It is also interesting to note that the JDT FC media channels are bilingual, but with English as the main medium of communication.

Detractors to the propagation of Bangsa Johor through JDT FC posit that it is but a clever marketing strategy that allows Johor royalty to exert and reclaim its power, as well as make good earnings from JDT merchandise and ticket sales.⁴⁰ Johor Southern Tigers Sdn Bhd is listed on Facebook as a media company, thus the JDT FC media channels are professionally set up to function along a well-planned media strategy. The website has a specific page dedicated to generating advertising revenue.⁴¹

The Crown Prince often takes pains to emphasise the importance of a team's fans and his state's citizens. JDT media channels often showcase events in which members of the royal family go to the ground to meet with their citizens,⁴² bestow royal gifts,⁴³ and provide opportunities for people to celebrate team wins through championship parades.⁴⁴ While on the one hand these posts highlight the importance of a team's fans for its empowerment⁴⁵ (and by extension its owners' empowerment), it also preserves the status of the royal house in relation to its subjects through its demonstrations of wealth and generous offerings to the people.⁴⁶ An example of this is Sultan Ibrahim's gift of a private jet to the state team.⁴⁷ Again, this further strengthens the support base for JDT, TMJ and the concept of Bangsa Johor. The physical manifestation of support for JDT can be seen in how countless houses and cars are often decked out in full JDT livery, as well as in the proliferation of people of all ethnicities in JDT jerseys or other merchandise. Comments on the JDT media channels include those by people from other states, and even Singapore, who post praises of the team, the Crown Prince and his approach to both football and equal citizenship.

³⁸ Ward, T. (2009). Sport and the national identity. *Soccer & Society*, 10:5, 518-531.

³⁹ Parents support Johor Sultan's call for English as medium of instruction in schools. Asia One, 13 June 2015. <http://www.asiaone.com/singapore/parents-support-johor-sultans-call-english-medium-instruction-schools>

⁴⁰ Bangsa Johor – a brief analysis. Malaysiakini, 31 August 2016. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/354167>

⁴¹ <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/advertising/>

⁴² (for example) Second day Kembara Mahkota Johor. Posted on 10 September 2017. <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/second-day-kembara-mahkota-johor-2017/>

⁴³ (for example) Sultan of Johor to build houses for the people. Posted on 21 March 2017. <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/sultan-of-johor-to-build-houses-for-the-people/>

⁴⁴ (for example) JDT FC fans invited to join JDT celebration of winning fourth consecutive Super League title. Posted on 3 September 2017. <http://johorsoutherntigers.com.my/jdt-fc-fans-invited-to-join-jdt-celebration-of-winning-fourth-consecutive-super-league-title-2/>

⁴⁵ Totten, M. (2016) Football and community empowerment; how FC Sankt Pauli fans organize to influence. *Soccer & Society*, 17:5, 703-720.

⁴⁶ Trocki, C.A. 2007. *Prince of Pirates – The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885*. NUS Press, Singapore.

⁴⁷ Sultan Johor gifts JDT an aircraft. FourFourTwo, 3 August 2016. <https://www.fourfourtwo.com/sg/news/sultan-johor-gifts-jdt-aircraft>

CONCLUSION

While the Bangsa Johor identity is not new, its importance has been amplified through its prominence in JDT FC media channels. It is through these vehicles that the royal house perpetuates the concept and engenders it as the definitive marker of a Johorean, wherever he or she may be residing.

The popularity of JDT FC as a result of its royal leadership and success on the field drives the enthusiasm for the unifying identity. The success of the concept is often highlighted in contrast to less successful national attempts to nurture a unified 1Malaysia, stimulating even further support for Bangsa Johor.

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