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Dr Mahathir, other world leaders pay their last respects to Obuchi

Hardev Kaur in Tokyo

WORLD leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Japan's crown prince and princess, the Supreme court justices and leaders of the Japanese political parties attended the funeral of the late Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

Some 6,000 dignitaries among them world leaders, including those from Asia, Europe and the US, attended the funeral service for Obuchi who died on May 14 after six weeks in coma brought on by a stroke.

The funeral, organised by the Cabinet and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Obuchi's party, was held at the Nippon Budokan Hall in Tokyo's Kudan district.

Obuchi's ashes were carried into the hall by his son who placed them on a bed of white orchids and chrysanthemums before the packed hall.

Eulogies were read by the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Yoshiaki Tsusumi, chairman of Seibu Railway Co and a close friend of Obuchi.

A one-minute silence was observed and silent prayers offered throughout the country at 2.10pm. After the funeral service Dr Mahathir visited the Prime Minister and the Matsushita Multimedia Centre in Tokyo and was briefed on the latest technological developments. During the visit he was shown and briefed on the Home Information Infrastructure (HII) centre, a high technology home of the future.

He also toured the AV&CC Systems Square - a single system for fusing sound, video and computer data transmission into an integrated whole to be called AV&CC. The Centre also presents different ways in which one can taste the multimedia experience right in one's own home environment, and learn how to build a system fit for individual needs.

In the evening he held bilateral discussions with Mori and Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid and attended the official dinner organised by Nikkei in conjunction with its sixth conference on the "Future of Asia - Asia's Resurgence: Challenges for the New Millennium".

Dr Mahathir will address the conference today and hold several meetings with Japanese corporate leaders.