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Suffian buried at Royal Mausoleum

KUALA KANGSAR, Wed. - Former Lord President Tun Mohamed Suffian Hashim who died of throat cancer was buried at the Royal Mausoleum here this afternoon.

His body arrived from Kuala Lumpur about 2pm and was immediately taken to the Ubudiah mosque for prayers.

Among those who accompanied the body were Suffian's brother Tan Sri Talha Hashim, who is retired Public Works Department director-general and close friends Tunku Sofiah Jawa (the niece of first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman) and her husband Datuk Dr Yaacob Merican.

Suffian, 83, died at the couple's home in Petaling Jaya at 9.37pm yesterday.

About 200 family members, friends, lawyers and judges were present to pay their last respects at the mausoleum. They included Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali, retired Federal Court judge Tan Sri Azmi Kamaruddin, High Court judges Datuk P.S. Gill, Datuk Abdul Hamid Embong and Datuk James Foong.

Talha said Suffian, the eldest in their family of 12, had his early education at Clifford High School here. His contemporaries included the Yang di-Pertua of Penang Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir and former Economic Adviser to the Government Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badiozaman.

Hamdan described Suffian as one of the most illustrious and well-known boys from the Clifford School.

Earlier in Petaling Jaya, hundreds turned up at the residence of Tunku Sofiah and Yaacob to pay their last respects.

They included the Raja Muda of Perak Raja Nazrin Shah, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah, Chief Justice Tun Mohd Eusoff Chin, High Court judge Datuk K.C. Vohrah and Court of Appeal judge Datuk Shaik Daud Ismail.

Tengku Razaleigh said Suffian was one of the leading legal minds in the country. "I remember him not only as a jurist but also as an intellectual who contributed in the creation of the country's laws."

"The Attorney-General's Chambers feels a great loss with the passing of Suffian," said Mohtar. He added that many still looked upon him as example of dedication to work, country and the law.

Eusoff said Suffian's judgments were always being referred to in court and it was sad to lose a good man like him.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Datuk Param Cumaraswamy said Suffian was well-respected internationally.

"Throughout his life, he believed in an independent and impartial judiciary. He brought back humanity into the law," he said.

President of Commonwealth Lawyers Association Datuk Dr Cyrus Das said Suffian had played a key role in the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association. "He was always held in very high regard as one of Malaysia's foremost constitutionalists."

Immediate past Bar president R.R. Chelvarajah said the Malaysian Bar was greatly indebted to Suffian for his inspiration and guidance.

"He was a true believer in the rule of law and firmly upheld the independence of the judiciary. He never failed to speak his mind."

Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali said Suffian would always be remembered as a person with the highest integrity.

"He was a judge who always wanted to protect the independence of the judiciary," he added.

Parti Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah, who was also present, described Suffian as a pillar of justice.

Court of Appeal judge Datuk Shaik Daud Ismail remembered Suffian as the man who was responsible for his elevation to the High Court.

"I had wanted to name my son after him but when I had a daughter instead, I named her Suffina. I told Tun this and he was very happy."

Suffian, whose wife Toh Puan Bunny died in 1997, had no children.

During his stay at Tunku Sofiah's home, his many visitors included Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

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