

Mahathir saddened by demise of 'a very good and close friend'

SUN 22 NOV 2001

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is saddened over the demise of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference after making a live television announcement at Angkasapuri, Mahathir said: "He has been a very good friend of mine and we were very close. I didn't expect him to go so fast."

Asked how he felt, Mahathir said: "I'll miss him a lot."

He described Sultan Salahuddin, who was the 11th king, as "a very good Agong" who was dedicated to his duty.

Mahathir said His Majesty

was very active as the King and visited various places and departments almost every day.

"I knew he was not very well, but he insisted that he should perform his duty as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong."

Mahathir said the body will remain in Istana Selangor till this morning for the relatives to pay their last respects.

He said the body will then be bathed and *kapan* (covered by white burial cloth) and taken to the National Mosque for funeral prayers at 8am.

Mahathir said the body will be placed at Istana Negara for the lying-in-state for VIPs and members of public to visit from 9.45am to 11.45am

From there, the cortege will leave for Dataran Merdeka at 12.15pm and transferred into a hearse before being given full military burial honours.

The body will then be taken to Istana Alam Shah for burial at the Royal Mausoleum at 3pm, said Mahathir.

Asked on the appointment of the new Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the prime minister said the Conference of Rulers will be meeting within four weeks to decide on the new king.

"Until they appoint the new king, the Deputy King (Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin) will act as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," Mahathir said.