

Conference **of** Rulers to **decide** on next King

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Conference of Rulers will meet within the next four weeks to decide who among them will be the 12th Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Deputy King Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, the Sultan of Terengganu, would, in the meantime, continue as acting Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is elected by the Conference of Rulers, not the Government. The conference will be held within four weeks," he told reporters after announcing the King's death live over TV.

In a voice choked with emotion, Dr Mahathir said he was 'saddened by the death of Sultan Salahuddin because "he was a very good Agong."

"He was very active as the Agong. He visited various places, departments and ministries almost every day. I knew he was not very well because he had a heart operation and other complications but he insisted on performing his duties.

"He visited everybody and carried out his duties in a very dedicated way. I think he was a very good Agong," said Dr Mahathir as tears welled in his eyes.

Dr Mahathir said Sultan Salahuddin and he were close friends.

"I did not expect him to depart so fast," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Sultan Salahuddin's body would be taken 'to Istana Selangor to enable his family and close relatives to pay their last respects.

He said the King would lie in state at Istana Negara until 11.30am for members of the public and VIPs to pay their last respects today.

The King would then be taken to Merdeka Square, near Sultan Abdul Samad Building, before being taken in a hearse to Klang, he said.

"At Istana Alam Shah (in Klang), his body will be hand-

ed over to the Menteri Besar (Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo). There will be a proclamation of the new Sultan of Selangor," he said.

He said that Sultan Salahuddin would lie in state before his burial at the Royal Mausoleum.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir announced live on RTM that Sultan Salahuddin, the country's 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, had passed away at Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre at 11.57am yesterday.

"With this announcement,

tomorrow (today), the 22nd of Nov 2001, has been declared a public holiday to enable the people to visit and pray for the body of the Al-Marhum, and also to hold *tahlil* (prayers).

"I also announce a mourning period of seven days beginning today (yesterday) and with it, the Government asks all parties to fly the national flag at half-mast throughout the country during that period," he said.

He said that all official functions of the Government today and yesterday were cancelled as a sign of respect.