

Nation bids goodbye

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Malaysians lined the streets of Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya to bid farewell to the late Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah yesterday.

The emotional ceremony began at the Istana Negara where citizens and dignitaries filed solemnly past the remains of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to pay their respects.

People from all walks of life gathered at Merdeka Square, where he was given a military salute before the funeral procession left for Istana Alam Shah in Klang.

The King was laid to rest near the graves of his grandfather, Sultan Alauddin Shah, and his father, Sultan Sir Hisamuddin Alam Shah, at the Sultan Suleiman royal mausoleum shortly before 6pm.

The 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, who died of heart failure, had undergone treatment at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore for eight weeks, but his condition became critical after his kidneys malfunctioned on Oct 15.

He was then admitted at the Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre last Sunday, where he was put on the ventilator and dialysis machine. He died at 11.57am on Wednesday, aged 75.

His remains were taken to the Istana Selangor in the afternoon.

Yesterday, the coffin bearing the King's remains left the Istana Selangor on Persiaran Sultan Salahuddin at 8am for the National Mosque, where more than 2,000 people gathered for the pre-funeral prayers.

The remains were then taken to Istana Negara, where local and foreign dignitaries paid their respects during the lying-in-state that lasted almost two hours from 9.15am.

Among them were Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, Permaisuri Nur Zahirah, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah of Kedah, Sultan Azlan Shah of Perak, Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah of Brunei, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Singapore President

S.R. Nathan, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, cabinet ministers and foreign diplomats.

At Istana Negara, Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah, attired in white and at times visibly trying to hold back her tears, led the proceedings, followed by the Regent of Selangor Tengku Idris Shah and other members of the Selangor royalty.

After paying their respects, the dignitaries approached the Queen to express their condolences over the death of the King, who had been Sultan of Selangor for 41 years.

She then led the dignitaries to accompany the carriage carrying the coffin to Merdeka Square.

There, the Armed Forces gave the final salute to the late King, their supreme commander, in front of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, which is named after His Majesty's great grandfather.

A guard-of-honour mounted by 120 officers and men of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment, commanded by Mejar Hamdan Musa, gave the final salute.

The funeral procession then made its way along the Federal Highway to the Istana Alam Shah in Klang, watched by thousands.

It was also here that the Regent, Tengku Idris, 55, was proclaimed the ninth Sultan of Selangor, carrying the title Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah.

The burial of Sultan Salahuddin then took place at the Sultan Suleiman royal mausoleum, about 1.7km from the palace.

Meanwhile, condolences continued to pour in from foreign leaders.

Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf said Pakistan has lost a great and trusted friend, and that the King's services to the people of Malaysia will always be remembered.