

22 NOV 2001

Agong-Lying-in-state

MOURNING THOUSANDS PAY LAST RESPECTS TO LATE KING AT LYING-IN-STATE

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- A morning drizzle and an overcast hanging over the city add to the sorrowful mood as people in the thousands today paid their last respects to the late King, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah who died yesterday.

For the lying-in-state at Istana Negara's Throne Room, the coffin bearing the King's remains was placed on a seven-tiered dais draped in yellow and guarded by officers of the police and the tri-services of the armed forces.

Those unable to make it in person, watched a telecast of the proceeding of streams of people from all walks of life from noodle-sellers to monks and diplomats to heads of state filing past the dais and stopping briefly to offer farewell prayers.

On the fifth tier of the dais were placed medals and honours bestowed upon Sultan Salahuddin during his reign as Malaysia's 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong or constitutional monarch under a unique rotational system among the country's nine Malay Rulers.

Recitals of Quranic verses filled the mournful air at the Throne Room as the grieving Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Siti Aishah remained seated nearby to observe the proceeding, accompanied by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and members of the royal family.

Tuanku Siti Aishah, wholly attired in white and at times visibly trying to hold back her tears, earlier led the proceeding followed by the Regent of Selangor Tengku Idris Shah and other members of the Selangor royalty.

Sultan Salahuddin, fondly remembered as the ruler who broke tradition and set aside protocol to reach out to the masses, was also the Sultan of Selangor for the past 41 years. He married Tuanku Siti Aishah in 1990.

After paying their last respects, each one of the dignitaries approached the Queen to express condolences for the loss of the King who died of heart failure shortly before noon yesterday at the Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre here. He was 75.

National and international dignitaries who paid their last respects during the lying-in-state that lasted almost two hours from 9.15am include the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin and Permaisuri Nur Zahirah, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah of Kedah and Sultan Azlan Shah.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Singapore President S.R.Nathan and Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah, the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Cabinet members and foreign diplomats.

At the close of the lying-in-state, the coffin bearing the King's remains was taken out of the Throne Room by pall-bearers comprising military and police officers.

It was then placed on a carriage pulled by slow-marching soldiers from Istana Negara headed for another ceremony at Dataran Merdeka in front of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, enroute to Istana Alam Shah in Klang for the funeral proper.

Meanwhile in Singapore, a condolence book was opened at the residence of Malaysia's High Commissioner Datuk Hamidon Ali in Dalvey Estate.

Among those who signed the book were Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and

members of the diplomatic corps.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AHH RYN