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Radio station told to apologise to Keeper of the Rulers' Seal

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Airtime Management Programme (AMP) Radio Network, which operates Astro's Radio Era, has been directed to apologise to the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal for its broadcast last night that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong had died.

Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob conveyed this to Astro chief executive officer Ralph Marshall, AMP Radio Network general manager Borhanuddin Osman and Astro corporate communications senior manager David Yap this morning.

They had gone to the ministry to apologise and explain how the mistake had occurred.

Khalil, who had briefed the Cabinet earlier today on the matter, said he had told them "to seek an apology in the best way possible as it now depended on budi bicara dua-dua pihak (the goodwill of both parties)".

Speaking to reporters at his office later, he said: "We do not want to make a big thing out of this. We heard an explanation from the management of Radio Era. They have made a genuine mistake."

He said Radio Era was trying to make headway on the local scene and was sometimes overzealous.

"Anyway, we have asked them to contact the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal and make an immediate apology."

Asked where the radio deejay had got the information from, Khalil said: "Their explanation was that it was not based on information."

The minister reminded all print and electronic media to be more careful and not be overzealous when broadcasting or printing matters related to the palace as they must get all directives and confirmation from the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal at the Federal level or the Grand Chamberlain at the State level.

Asked about the King's health, Khalil said he had to obtain clearance from the palace before making any announcement.

On whether the ministry would be acting against the radio station and whether the deejay concerned had been suspended, Khalil said that he was satisfied with the management's explanation.

"It is a technical mistake. I hope the issue is closed."

Meanwhile, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei visited the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

The King has been warded at the hospital for a medical check-up.

Sultan Hassanal made a stopover on his way home after a three-day official visit to Kuala Lumpur.

An aide to the King said Sultan Hassanal spent an hour with the King who had earlier been visited by the Tunku Mahkota of Johor Tunku Ibrahim Ismail.

The Regent of Selangor Tengku Idris Shah and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had called on the King last week.

The King's private secretary, Datuk Raja Hydar Raja Iskandar, when contacted, said the King was in stable condition after a second examination prior to minor surgery.

Asked whether AMP Radio Network had apologised over the wrong broadcast, he said the palace had received a written apology and clarification.

A deejay on Radio Era had last night stated that the King had died. On realising the mistake, the station apologised over the air.

In Singapore, Malaysian High Commissioner to the republic Hamidon Ali,

when met at the Mount Elizabeth medical centre, dismissed the rumour as nothing more than a false alarm.

While saying the King was "very well", he declined to comment on when the King had been admitted or the duration of his stay.

Hamidon also reminded the media to verify facts on issues related to the royal family to produce accurate reports.

The hospital, in a statement, said the King had been admitted for a check-up.

Security at Block C of the hospital was tight with the strong presence of High Commission officials and support staff.

Several members of the royal family were also at the hospital.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said he would inform the Information Ministry of his dissatisfaction with the radio station concerned.

He hoped it would be more responsible.