

21 NOV 2001

Agong-Obituary

RULER WHO SET ASIDE PROTOCOL AND FORMALITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, who died today at the age of 75, will be best remembered as a Ruler who set aside protocol and formality to reach out to the people.

Sultan Salahuddin, who was Ruler of Selangor for 41 years, was also media friendly.

Media representatives covering official functions were often extremely delighted to find him responding to various questions on personal or current issues especially pertaining to Selangor.

His informality endeared him to the people who love him for his warmth and caring manner.

Sultan Salahuddin died at 11.57am at the Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre in Jalan Ampang here of heart failure.

He was installed as the 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Sept 23, 1999 for a five-year term on expiry of the term of the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan Tuanku Jaafar ibni Almarhum Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

"I am created not to be arrogant to the people," he said in an interview by Utusan Malaysia six years ago.

His Majesty always showed concern for people especially in the rural and interior areas.

In his younger days, Sultan Salahuddin often cycled throughout the state including Pulau Ketam and Pulau Indah to find out the problems faced by the people.

When age caught up with him and he could no longer do so, His Majesty remained concerned for the welfare of the people.

On several occasions, he had set aside protocol and formality by directly raising the problems faced by the people with the state's administration.

Sultan Salahuddin was also known as among the most significant contributor of ideas for the development of Selangor which is recognised as the most developed state in the country.

"I must admit that I truly love the people. That's God's gift I am most grateful for," he said in the interview with the daily.

His Majesty had also related his sufferings during the Japanese Occupation when his father, the late Sultan Sir Hisamuddin Alam Shah was stripped as the Sultan of Selangor by the Japanese administrators and was replaced by his younger brother, Sultan Musa Ghiatuddin.

However, when the Second World War ended, Sultan Sir Hisamuddin Alam Shah was restored to the throne.

"I ate tapioca with the people. In fact, I had even gone from village to village to sell tapioca and mingle with the people," he said.

Another interesting fact about His Majesty was his close friendship with the first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, regarding him like his own brother.

"I love the Tunku. We became friends when we were in school. In fact, I used to drive the Tunku around, sending him to school. I had even washed the Tunku's car. We were very close," he said.

In the interview with Utusan Malaysia, Sultan Salahuddin spoke of his many friends who had passed away.

"Only (former minister Tan Sri) Khir Johari and I are left. Only the two of us are left. All my other friends are gone. I know that my time will

also come," he said.

As the head of Malay customs and Islamic affairs, His Majesty gave serious attention to the development of the religion in the state and it was not surprising that he personally funded the construction of several mosques in the state.

It was not unusual for him to perform Friday prayers at different mosques so that he could meet the people.

Among all the mosques, his favourite had to be the Sultan Abdul Aziz Mosque in Kampung Perigi Nenas in Pulau Indah, formerly known as Pulau Lumut.

He would perform his Hari Raya Aidilfitri and Aidil Adha prayers at this mosque to which he contributed RM1.6 million for the construction of the RM5 million mosque.

Sultan Salahuddin once said: "I feel that we shouldn't think of becoming rich only. We shouldn't forget to be grateful to Allah. It's amazing that nowadays there are people who only strive on becoming rich."

In another interview with The Star after a heart surgery in the United States in 1995, he spoke of how close he was to death.

"I was told that had I not been treated in time, I would have little chance of surviving. That's how close it was, mati hidup semula (like being dead and to live again)," he said.

While on a holiday trip to Orlando, Florida, the previous year, Sultan Salahuddin suffered a heart attack and underwent surgery at a hospital where he stayed for two months.

"The operation took 10 hours. That was not the end of it because later the doctors told me that I was also suffering from stomach cancer and had to go through 36 radiation treatments," he said.

As the 11th King under Malaysia's unique system of constitutional monarchy where the nine Malay rulers take turns to become Yang di-Pertuan Agong for five years, Sultan Salahuddin had been an outstanding one.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the monarch had been a good friend who had worked closely with him.

He said Sultan Salahuddin had been a very active King who visited various places, departments and ministries almost daily.

"I knew he was not very well because he already had a heart operation and other complications but he insisted that he should perform his duties as the Agong," the prime minister said after announcing his death live over RTM.

Sultan Salahuddin has 10 children from three marriages.

From his first marriage to his cousin, Raja Nor Saidatul Ihsan Tengku Badar Shah, he has three sons and four daughters -- Tengku Idris Shah who is the Raja Muda of Selangor, Tengku Puteri Sofiah, Tengku Sulaiman Shah (Tengku Panglima diRaja Selangor), Tengku Puteri Seri Zanariah, Tengku Abdul Samad Shah (Tengku Panglima Besar Selangor), Tengku Puteri Arafiah and Tengku Puteri Aishah.

Tengku Ahmad Shah is his son from his second wife, Cik Mahiran, while from his third marriage, to Tengku Ampuan Rahimah Almarhum Sultan Abdul Aziz, he has two daughters, Tengku Puteri Nor Marina and Tengku Puteri Nor Zihan.

On May 3, 1990, Sultan Salahuddin married Siti Aishah Abdul Rahman who was proclaimed Cik Puan Besar Selangor and then appointed as the Tengku Permaisuri Selangor and later became the Raja Permaisuri Agong. They have no children.

Sultan Salahuddin used to enjoy golf and driving in his vintage cars.

He repeated history when he also died in office like his father, Sultan Hisamuddin Alam Shah who died on Sept 1, 1960.

Sultan Hisamuddin was proclaimed as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on April

14, 1960 and had yet to be installed as King when he died.

-- BERNAMA

AU NZ RM