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Tribute from the Armed Forces

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Malaysian Armed Forces paid a final tribute steeped in military tradition to their Supreme Commander, the late Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, with a guard of honour mounted by 120 men and officers at Dataran Merdeka today.

The men were from the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment commanded by Mej Hamdan Musa.

The guard of honour waited for the coffin which arrived in a carriage pulled by 28 men representing the Army, Navy, Air Force at Dataran Merdeka since 11.30am.

The ceremony was witnessed by more than 10,000 people who turned out at the famous square to pay their final tribute to the King, who is fondly remembered as a people's person.

Sombre yet calm, people from all walks of life, bade farewell to their beloved King.

Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong, died at 11.57am at the Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre yesterday.

The big screen showing live telecast of the procession at Dataran Merdeka was the focus of the crowd who stood along the concrete walkways to witness moments which they will remember for the rest of their lives.

Their concentration was briefly interrupted by the presence of a vagrant, but "peace" was again restored when the man was led away by policemen on duty.

The incident did not stop the people from looking for a good vantage point to observe the proceedings.

About mid-afternoon, the procession from Istana Negara arrived accompanied by dignitaries, including the Queen Tuanku Siti Aishah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

After the salute by the guard of honour, the coffin was transferred to the royal hearse by 12 pall bearers representing the three services of the defence forces.

Following this, the Queen and other guests boarded their respective cars to escort the King to his final resting place at the Royal Mausoleum in Klang.

Earlier, thousands took their turns to pay their last respects to the late King at Istana Negara while some waited outside the palace near the carriage.

The 3,402kg carriage was pulled by 48 uniformed personnel led by Kapt Zambari Khorib.

Some 48 personnel from the Armed Force (14), RMN (14), RMAF (10) and the Royal Malaysian Police (10) marched 2.5km alongside the cortege until Dataran Merdeka before it (the casket) was transferred to a hearse.

Twelve warrior-like clad Jejawat Payung dan Tombak from the 1st Malay Regiment bearing six umbrellas and spears escorted the carriage.

As the coffin was placed onto the waiting carriage and started its journey to Dataran Merdeka, all those who accompanied the late King walked slowly to the national anthem played by Royal Malay Regiment band led by Kapt Norman Kamaruddin.

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