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## Petronas chief Azizan dies, leaders pay tribute

By Syed Izzaddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin, 69, the man who oversaw Petronas' rise as the most profitable oil company in the world, died early this morning.

He woke up at 4.25am at his home in Putrajaya, complaining of chest pain and breathing difficulties. Shortly afterwards he died.

Tributes flowed for a man admired by many for walking on the straight and narrow path and for his humility. Besides being the head of Petronas, he was also the chairman of Putrajaya Corporation and Malaysia Airlines.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi described him as a man of integrity.

"He made great contributions to King and country. The nation appreciates his contributions to the country's growth. His contributions to the country are priceless," he said.

Abdullah said Azizan contributed greatly in developing Petronas and Malaysia's petroleum industry. The deceased joined Petronas as its chief executive officer in 1988, and became chairman in 1995.

Petronas has since become Southeast Asia's largest oil-and-gas company, with its net profit soaring to RM23.66 billion for the financial year ending March 31.

Azizan's body was placed in his house in Bukit Segambut for a few hours before being transported to the Putrajaya Mosque for prayers which was conducted by the Grand Imam Datuk Sheikh Ismail Mohamad..

He was buried in the afternoon at the Taman Selatan cemetery in Putrajaya.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin joined Abdullah and thousands of others who paid their last respects to the corporate figure.

Others included former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Dr Mahathir, who attended the funeral, was too choked with emotion to speak to reporters. After a few attempts to pay his tribute to his long-time friend, he asked to be excused before leaving in his car.

Azizan leaves behind wife Puan Sri Noor Ainee Che Teh and three children - Amir Hamzah, 37, Datin Norizan, 34, and Ikhwan, 25.

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