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Singer's death makes headlines

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FOR the first time in almost a week, the front pages of the major Chinese dailies headlined something other than the invasion on Iraq and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) - the death of Hong Kong singer-actor Leslie Cheung.

The death of Cheung, a music icon who had mesmerised millions in Asia and Malaysia, sent shock waves across the globe as the date of the incident coincided with April Fool's day.

China Press reported that some readers had not taken the news seriously, thinking it was a joke.

Some DJs on Mandarin radio stations tried hard to convince listeners that the death was not a joke.

Cheung's decision to end his life at 46 was not reported in major Chinese dailies in their evening edition on Tuesday night but in Wednesday's edition instead.

Sin Chew Daily, China Press and Oriental Daily News front-paged the story on Wednesday. The dailies also dedicated two pages to reports and photographic coverage on the issue.

Oriental Daily introduced its readers on Tuesday to New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad who gave the newspaper an exclusive interview.

Highlighting Abdullah's opinions and comments on issues including Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad decision to retire this October, the newspaper said the former special envoy to the United Nations had a long and colourful history in Malaysian politics.

It also touched on his early days in the United States.