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Sultanah Bahiyah of Kedah dies after long illness

ALOR STAR, Tues. - The Sultanah of Kedah, Tuanku Bahiyah Tuanku Abdul Rahman (picture), died at 12.23pm today at Istana Kuala Chegar, two days after her 73rd birthday.

She had been suffering from a terminal illness for some time.

She leaves behind daughters Tunku Soraya, 43, and Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz, 37, and five grandchildren.

Tunku Sarina, a twin to Tunku Soraya, died at the age of 30 on Aug 31, 1991.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain announced Sultanah Bahiyah's death at a Press conference at his office in Wisma Darul Aman here at 2.10pm.

A 17-gun salute was fired from Istana Anak Bukit five minutes later to announce her demise.

He said Sultanah Bahiyah's body would lie in state at Dewan Penghadapan at Istana Anak Bukit tomorrow from 9am until 12.50pm when sembahyang jenazah would be performed.

Sultanah Bahiyah will be laid to rest at the Langgar Royal Mausoleum after zohor prayers.

Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah of Kedah, dressed in traditional white reserved for royalty during such occasions, was seen leading the recital of the doa. He was accompanied by the Regent of Perlis Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail, and Raja Puan Muda Perlis Tuanku Lailatul Shahreen Akashah.

Other members of royalty at Istana Kuala Chegar today were the Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Ja'afar Tuanku Abdul Rahman, and Raja Zarith Sofiah, the wife of the Tunku Mahkota Johor.

Sultanah Bahiyah is the eldest daughter of the late Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, Tuanku Abdul Rahman Yamtuan Muhammad, who was also the first Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Members of the Press were allowed into Istana Kuala Chegar at 4.45pm.

Syed Razak said the public would be allowed to pay their last respects from 9am to 11am tomorrow. Members of royal families, State dignitaries and government officials will do so from 11am to noon.

He said Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah and other Malay Rulers and Governors were scheduled to pay their last respects from noon to 12.50pm.

At 1pm, Sultanah Bahiyah's body will be taken in a royal hearse to the Langgar Royal Mausoleum in Jalan Langgar.

The departure to the royal mausoleum will be marked by a 73-gun salute. The funeral procession will pass Lebuhraya Darul Aman, Jalan Sultanah and Jalan Langgar.

Syed Razak said the King and Queen were scheduled to attend the funeral along with other Malay Rulers and Governors. The Sultan of Brunei was also expected to attend.

Syed Razak said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would also attend the funeral.

He said the State Government had declared a seven-day mourning period from today.

He also declared tomorrow a State public holiday and ordered all national and State flags to be flown at half-mast until Sept 1.

All official State functions will be cancelled or postponed including the State-level National Day and Farmers' Day celebrations. He also ordered all cinemas, entertainment outlets and all forms of entertainment in Kedah to be closed during the period.