

SUNPIX BY ZULKIFLI ERSAL



Mahathir waves during the walk to his car.

Dr M leaves hospital

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed was discharged from the National Heart Institute (IJN) early yesterday after undergoing two operations over a period of 49 days.

The 81-year-old former prime minister, who underwent a coronary bypass surgery on Sept 4 and a wound debridement operation on Sept 22, was flanked by family members, bodyguards and policemen who formed a human chain to protect him from the press and curious onlookers.

Mahathir, who looked weak but in good spirits, walked out from the lift at the ground floor at 10.25am. He took just a little more than five minutes to take a slow walk to the entrance of the hospital where he posed for photographs at the request of pressmen before getting into his car with his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Ali.

Mahathir will continue his recovery at his home at the Mines in Seri Kembangan where he will receive 24-hour care from two IJN nurses.

He is expected to continue with his physiotherapy exercises at home.

Mahathir's daughter Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir's eyes welled up as she told the media how happy and relieved

the family was to see Mahathir walk out of IJN.

"You know, there were times when we thought we would never get to this day ... so we are happy ...," she said.

"Mum is thrilled and happy to go home, but we leave with mixed feelings because we felt cocooned with so much love from the staff here who were wonderful, and like family, and we are sad to leave this family to go back to our family.

"But after seven long weeks, it is nice to go back home," she said.

"For now the plan is to allow him to relax and just be at home with his grandchildren."

Asked whether there were plans to celebrate his return home, Marina said: "We were sort of focusing on this part; to see him walk out of IJN and that was the goal from the beginning."

"He was determined to do that, we were determined to do that, and we did not think about anything else after," she said, adding the family would hold thanksgiving prayers soon.

In a statement to the media, IJN said the doctors are happy that Mahathir has made encouraging progress in his post-surgical rehabilitation.

It said he will return to undergo periodical check-ups at the institute.

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