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'Saudi king a visionary leader'

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BELOVED RULER:
PM expresses
condolences over
death of monarch

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DATUK Seri Najib Razak yesterday expressed his condolences to the Saudi royal family and the people of Saudi Arabia over the death of King Abdullah Abdulaziz Al Saud.

The prime minister described King Abdullah as a visionary leader, who earned the love and respect of his countrymen and the *ummah* through the development and prosperity of Saudi Arabia. Najib said King Abdullah was instrumental in building the strong ties between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

"When he was the king of Saudi Arabia, ties between Malaysia and the kingdom progressed at a rapid pace. This can be seen through the enhanced cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

"The facilities extended to Malaysians performing the Haj pilgrimage are much appreciated by the Malaysian government," he told Malaysian journalists here before heading to Zurich, where he will take a flight to Riyadh to attend the funeral of the late king.

"On behalf of His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah), the Malaysian government and all Malaysians, I wish to extend my condolences to the family of King Abdullah," said Najib.

The Saudi monarch died yesterday. He was 90. Prince Salman Abdulaziz Al Saud has been named the new king.

Najib said as a far-sighted ruler, King Abdullah's death was a big loss to the people of Saudi Arabia.

In a Twitter post, he said: "Received the sad news of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's passing this morning. My condolences to the Saudi royal family and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

He said the late King Abdullah would be remembered as a great leader for his initiative in promoting interfaith dialogues and greater understanding among people of different faiths and beliefs.

"His Majesty (King Abdullah) always had the stability and security of the Middle East and other Islamic nations in mind, and devoted his life to serving his people and country. This earned him the love and respect of his countrymen and the *ummah* for the prosperity and development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

Najib said Malaysia would build on King Abdullah's legacy and contributions in strengthening the brotherly relationship between the two nations.

"In this hour of grief and sorrow,



This picture, dated July 18, 2009, shows Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** and Saudi monarch **King Abdullah Abdulaziz Al Saud** (right) during the former's **working visit** to Saudi Arabia. Bernama pic

on behalf of the government and people of Malaysia, I would like to convey my deepest condolences and sympathy to His Majesty King Salman and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Our thoughts and prayers are with His Majesty King Salman and the rest of His Majesty's family members. May Allah Almighty grant his (King Abdullah's) soul eternal peace and forgiveness, and place him in *Al-Jannah*."

In Kuala Lumpur later, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin tweeted his condolences to the family of King Abdullah and the people of Saudi Arabia. Additional reporting by Elvina Fernandez

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Najib leaves WEF early

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has cut short his working visit to the World Economic Forum (WEF) to attend the funeral of Saudi monarch King Abdullah Abdulaziz Al Saud, who died yesterday.

Najib was scheduled for a packed day at WEF yesterday, including having a bilateral meeting with United States Secretary of State John Kerry.

Najib and his wife, Datin Seri

Rosmah Mansor, left for Riyadh at noon (local time) from Zurich International Airport. The prime minister's three-day working visit to the United Kingdom, beginning today, will proceed as planned.

Najib said he made the decision to cancel remaining engagements at WEF to attend the funeral of King Abdullah immediately, as the Saudi leader had been instrumental in building ties between the two countries.