

Rapid rise to the top

THE public life of Datuk Mokhtar Hashim read like an impressive success story — until he was arrested for murder on July 10 last year.

From the time he stepped into the political arena at the age of 30 till his re-appointment as the Culture, Youth and Sports Minister last year, he was often seen as part of that carefully groomed new breed of young leaders.

His break in Umno came in 1972 when he was elected vice-chairman of the Morib Umno division. In the same year, he was chosen by the late Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak to contest the Rembau-Tampin parliamentary seat by-election.

It was his first victory. From then on, in his brilliant rise to the top, Datuk Mokhtar won all his political battles.

Following his by-election victory, he was appointed parliamentary secretary to the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry.

In the August 1974 general election, he was returned unopposed in the Tampin parliamentary constituency.

He was then appointed Deputy Agriculture and Rural Development Minister.

He was also elected a committee member of Umno Youth and became the vice-chairman of the Tampin Umno division, which was then headed by the late Datuk Mohamed Taha bin Talib.

Datuk Mokhtar retained his seat in the 1978 general election and became the Deputy Foreign Minister. Later, he was appointed Deputy Defence Minister.

He also rose in the ranks of the Umno Youth leadership. He became its deputy president in 1978 and retained the post in 1980 when he was given the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministership.

In that year, too, Datuk Mokhtar, as Tampin Umno youth leader, challenged the incumbent, Datuk Taha, for the division's chairmanship.

Datuk Taha lost by 81 votes.

Datuk Mokhtar continued his winning streak in last year's general election by defeating his PAS challenger for the Tampin seat.

He was re-appointed Culture, Youth and Sports Minister.

Before his entry into politics, he was a research officer with Harrisons and Crosfield.