

33-year veteran of Umno politics

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Haji Ramli Omar, the Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government who was defeated for the chairman's post of the Bagan Serai Umno division on Sunday, entered politics 33 years ago.

"I joined Umno in 1947. At that time, the party was led by Datuk Onn Jaffar and Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn was the Umno Youth chief," he said today.

Datuk Haji Ramli, 49, said that in 1953 he was made chairman of his Gunung Semanggol branch (he is still chairman of the branch) and in 1959 contest-

ed in the Gunung Semanggol State constituency in the general election.

He was beaten by a PAS candidate by 34 votes but in 1960 was appointed secretary of the Krian Umno division of which his branch was an affiliate.

In 1963, the division was split into the Krian Darat and Krian Laut divisions and he was elected leader of the Krian Darat division unopposed. The division was renamed Bagan Serai in 1972.

He said the late Tun Abdul Razak asked him to contest as a candidate for

the Parliamentary seat in 1964. He stood and won by 8,000 votes beating an opponent from PAS.

He retained his seat in 1969 and in 1972, was appointed Parliamentary Secretary in the Labour Ministry.

In the 1974 general election he was returned unopposed to his Parliamentary seat as PAS was then in the Barisan Nasional.

After the election, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary in the Communications Ministry.

Two years later, when Datuk Hussein Onn became Prime Minister following

the death of Tun Razak, he was appointed to the Ministry of Housing and Village Development as its Deputy Minister.

In the 1978 election, he beat his PAS opponent by 7,000 votes in Bagan Serai and was re-appointed Deputy Minister of the re-named Housing and Local Government Ministry.

Datuk Haji Ramli, who is the sole elected member of the Umno Supreme Council (Perak Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Mohamed Wan Teh is an appointed member), first tried to win a

Supreme Council post in 1975 but was defeated.

"I came out 24 out of 60-odd candidates who contested for the 20 elected posts," he said.

In 1978, he tried again and this time was elected when he received 509 votes. He was active in Umno Youth from 1965 to 1971 when he had to quit because he had reached the mandatory "retirement" age of 40.

During that time, he was Perak Umno Youth leader and a member of the Umno Youth Executive Committee.