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HEADLINE: Pathmanaban would never turn his back to whoever in need

BODY:

"ONE should not only move along in body, but also in spirit," Datuk K. Pathmanaban, who died at the Pantai Medical Centre about 1am yesterday, once said.

Born at a rubber estate in Linggi, Negri Sembilan, the former Deputy Human Resources Minister, who would have celebrated his 64th birthday today, was described by many as a man who would never turn his back to anyone in need.

Having the distinction of being the first estate worker's son to earn a university degree, he began his education at a Tamil school at the estate and later completed his secondary education at the Malacca High School.

In 1950 he enrolled at the University of Malaya in Singapore, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, and in 1959 completed his B. A. (Honours) degree in Indian Studies from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

He joined the Malaysian Civil Service in June 1960 and was in the thick of national issues and caught the eye of the then Prime Minister **Tun Abdul Razak** and Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam, who was the MIC president.

He also managed to obtain a Diploma in Public Administration from Carlton University, Canada in 1965 and Master of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1970.

He was married to Datin P. Prema, who passed away on Nov 10, 1996, and has three children - Praveen, Prashanth and Pramugh.

During his early schooling days, he had to study under the street lights because his estate house did not have any electricity, nor kerosene lights.

Pathmanaban left the civil service to contest the 1974 general election as the Barisan Nasional candidate for Teluk Kemang. He won the seat, which was at the time held by the Opposition, with a handsome majority.

He was the MP for the constituency for four terms - from 1974 to 1990.

In 1976 he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Manpower and later made Deputy Minister in 1977.

On July 20, 1981, he assumed the position of Deputy Minister of Health and in 1989 he was the Deputy Labour Minister.

He served the ministries with distinction as he spearheaded numerous changes to legislation. The entire field of labour laws, including Socso, bears his stamp.

At the Health Ministry, he was involved with very significant laws on food and drugs and improvements in the quality to the programmes in primary health and hospital care.

He had also made major contributions to the well-being of plantation workers.

In 1989, he promoted a five-year plan for estate managements to improve housing and provide portable water and electricity to estate workers.

He also campaigned for and succeeded in getting the Government to subsidise electricity supply to smaller estates.

In the MIC, he was a stalwart and was responsible for drawing up a 20-year socio-economic blueprint for Malaysian Indians, complementing the New Economic Policy of 1971.

In 1984, he became a vice-president of the MIC when he defeated Datuk M.G. Pandithan with a 644 majority. He was re-elected vice-president in 1987.

In the international arena, he served the UNDP/World Bank in leading economic development programme missions, particularly to the smaller countries.

He was a human resources consultant for Sime Darby Sdn Bhd, Guthrie and Golden Hope Plantations from April 1992 and also a member of the Commonwealth Observer Team for the African National Congress election in April 1994.

Pathmanaban became chairman of the National Kidney Foundation's board of governors in January 1995 and in 1997 he chaired the public inquiry to investigate the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur express train-car crash on Dec 31, 1996, which killed six members of a family at the Bukit Siput Railway crossing.

He was appointed a member of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia in April 2000.

He was awarded the Kesatria Mangku Negara in 1971 and Dato Setia Negeri Sembilan in 1978. He was also conferred the title of Mr AIPO by the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Organisation and had received the Golden Shawl and Gold Medal awards from the MIC.

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