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Ex-Umno sec-gen dies after short illness

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Former Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Mustafa Abdul Jabar, 81, the man who oversaw the succession of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister and party president, died this afternoon.

He drew his last breath about 5pm at the University Malaya Medical Centre after a short illness. Mustafa leaves his wife, Puan Sri Asmah Kasmijan, five children and 13 grandchildren.

With more than 50 years' experience in politics, Mustafa witnessed many important events in Umno's history, including the memorable fights for the post of deputy president between Datuk Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

Mustafa took over the secretary-general's post in 1978 from his close friend, Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman.

During his six years running the Umno headquarters, Mustafa was known for his administrative abilities, as evident in the smooth running of Umno general assemblies and elections.

He also worked hard to amend the party's constitution to keep up with the times.

Mustafa was also credited for his diplomacy in settling party disputes at state and divisional levels, checking the problems of vote-buying and money politics, among others.

He stepped down as secretary-general in July 1984 after two consecutive terms, saying it was time for him to make way for a younger man.

Mustafa's political career began in the 1950s, when he was made a Selangor state executive councillor.

He headed the Sabak Bernam Umno division until 1982.

In 1968, Mustafa won a seat on the Umno supreme council and was made deputy chairman of Mara under the premiership of Tun Abdul Razak, whom he hailed as a leader committed to rural development.

A visionary, Mustafa will be remembered for his tireless efforts to improve the country's agriculture industry when he chaired the Farmers Organisation Authority during the 1980s.

Among the causes he championed then were integrated farming to improve the livelihood of farmers, a network of farmers' retail outlets and calling on farmers to increase their productivity to reduce Malaysia's food bill.

He was Deputy Minister of Agriculture between 1974 and 1978.

Mustafa's wisdom, warmth and presence will be very much missed.

He will be buried at the Kiara Muslim cemetery tomorrow.

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