

09/06/2003

Chairman of Perodua Raja Mohar dies

Zulita Mustafa; Adrian David

PERUSAHAAN Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) chairman and former Special Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister Raja Tun Mohar Raja Badiozaman (above) ,81, died of bronco-pneumonia at the Pantai Medical Centre in Bangsar yesterday.

His only son, Raja Mazhar, 40, a manager with Petronas, said his father died at 3.19am.

Raja Mohar's family, including his wife Toh Puan Norella Talib, 67, and daughters Raja Noor Dunita, 45, and Raja Nor Mazli, 35, both businesswomen, were at his bedside when he died.

His eldest daughter, Raja Nor Dina, died two years ago. Raja Mohar also leaves behind nine grandchildren.

Raja Mazhar, when met at the family home in Jalan Damai, Ampang, said his father had returned home after receiving specialist medical treatment in London last month.

"He appeared all right until about two weeks ago when he complained of breathing difficulty and began to cough severely.

"He was then admitted to the Pantai Medical Centre where he was given antibiotics to remove phlegm from his lungs.

"He was unable to eat well at first but responded well to treatment."

However, Raja Mohar developed high fever after a viral attack, experiencing breathing difficulty at 3am yesterday.

Raja Mohar, who was born in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, in 1922, was buried at the Jalan Ampang Muslim cemetery after asar prayers at 5pm.

Among the 300 people who visited Norella at the house were Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datuk Seri Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.

Other members of the royalty present were the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan Tuanku Ja'afar Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Tuanku Ampuan Negri Sembilan Tuanku Najihah Tunku Besar Burhanuddin, the Regent of Perlis Tuanku Syed Faizuddin and his wife Raja Puan Muda Perlis Lailatul Shahreen Akashah Datuk Khalil, and the Raja Muda of Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Shah.

Dr Mahathir, when asked about the late Raja Mohar, described him as a man who had served his country until his last breath.

"He was not only my Economic Adviser. He had also served under Tun Abdul Razak and Tun Hussein (Onn)."

Abdullah said: "His death is a great loss to the country and the international community, especially his contribution to the many mega projects undertaken by the Government.

"He was a dedicated civil servant from the pre-Merdeka era who got along well with many people."

"His leadership ought to be followed by the present generation," Najib said.

Some of the corporate figures who paid their last respects also shared the same feelings.

Perodua managing director Tan Sri Ab Rahman Omar said: "As chairman, he laid down the guidelines for the management group and was a professional.

"Personally, he is very easy to get along with and a humble person."

Business tycoon Ananda Krishnan said: "He was a wonderful man and had

made great contributions to society and the country."

One of Raja Mohar's closest friends, former educationist Datuk Siew Nim Chee, said he was "like an elder brother to me... I called him Ungku. He was one of the country's greatest sons."

Also present were former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam, Petronas president Tan Sri Hassan Marican, former Finance Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, and National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia president Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Maidin.

Raja Mohar obtained his BA (Hons) in Economics from Cambridge University in 1952 and a year later, received his Diploma in Agricultural Economics from the Oxford University.

He joined the Malay Administrative Service in 1938 and later the Malayan Civil Service in 1952 and served in various capacities until 1971 when he was appointed secretary-general of the Finance Ministry.

Raja Mohar was Special Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister from 1972 to 1988.

He also served in the private sector and was, among others, chairman of Malaysian Airline System (MAS), Petronas and Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd.