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Former A-G Mohtar Abdullah dies

PETALING JAYA, Mon. - Federal Court judge Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah died at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital today, after nearly a year in a coma following an operation to remove a blood clot in his brain.

Mohtar, 59, who was also former Attorney-General, was buried at the Bukit Kiara Muslim Cemetery in the afternoon after Asar prayers.

His wife Puan Sri Zaleha Shukor was by his side when he died at the hospital this morning. Mohtar leaves three children.

The body was taken to his home in Kelana Jaya, where a steady stream of visitors came to pay their last respects.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad arrived around 1pm and was joined by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali later.

Others who paid their last respects included Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman, Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail and Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

Several prominent judges and lawyers were also present.

Rais, who spoke briefly to reporters, described Mohtar's death as a loss to the country.

"He was an effective Attorney-General and many excellent laws were legislated during his tenure. As a Federal judge, he will be difficult to replace," Rais said.

Lawyer Karpal Singh described Mohtar as a good friend.

"We both studied at the University of Singapore. His death is a great loss, as he had a bright future ahead of him. He was the first judge to become Attorney-General and, after retiring as Attorney-General, to be appointed as a Federal judge," Karpal said.

Mohtar had been a High Court judge before he was Attorney-General from 1994 to 2000. He became a Federal Court judge in 2001. He entered the judicial and legal service in 1971.

Mohtar suffered a stroke in March last year, and was admitted in August to the Subang Jaya Medical Centre, where he underwent the operation.

A relative said Mohtar had spent the past four months in the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, after he was transferred there from SJMC.

He was the second of nine siblings, and had three brothers and five sisters.