



'King Ghaz' remembered as no-nonsense man
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Former home minister Muhammad Ghazali Shafie who died at his home in Subang Jaya today was known to be so strict in his work that it earned him the nickname, 'King Ghaz'.

Those who knew him, including journalists who interviewed him, were expected to have enough knowledge when they asked a question on an issue or subject so as not to incur his wrath or displeasure.

This gave many reporters the jitters when interviewing him during their assignments.

The late Ghazali had served under four prime ministers beginning with Tunku Abdul Rahman until Dr Mahathir Mohamad's time. He was also known internationally when he was foreign minister, besides serving with various international bodies and missions.

Escaped death

He famously escaped death in a plane crash in Kampung Janda Baik on Jan 10, 1982 which killed his personal bodyguard and the co-pilot. The incident shocked the nation at the time.

Born in Kuala Lipis on March 22, he received his early education at a number of Malay and English schools in Raub, Kuala Lipis, Bentong and Penjum before studying at Clifford School, Kuala Lipis from 1939 to 1940.

In 1941, he furthered his studies at Raffles College in Singapore before obtaining his LLB (Honours) at University College of Wales and then a degree in international relations from the London School of Economics in 1954.

From 1941 to 1946, he served in several defence forces including the Malayan Volunteer Force and Anti-Japanese Movement.

Ghazali who had worked as a clerk with the Selangor Council, was appointed as Malaya's High Commissioner to India in 1957 and two years later, was made the secretary-general of the Foreign Ministry. He was foreign minister from July 1981 to July 1984 and resigned from the post the same month.

A highly important task held by Ghazali was as a member of the Cobbold Commission on the formation of Malaysia.

His long service in the Cabinet started in 1970 when he was appointed minister with special functions and a year later was given the additional information portfolio.

Sixteen months later, he was made home and information minister and in July 1981, was appointed foreign minister.

After resigning from the cabinet in 1984, Ghazali held various important positions in the corporate sector and international organisations.

He was chairman of Paremba, Landmark Holdings Bhd, Westmont Bank Manila, the Philippines and Intermega Energy NL, Australia, among others.

In the political arena, Ghazali was Kuala Lipis member of parliament, Kuala Lipis Umno division head and Umno supreme council member.

He lost in the contest for a party vice-president post in 1972 and 1975. However, he won the post in 1981.

Other contributions

His contributions in other fields included being the founder and president of the National Art Gallery, University of Malaya Governing Council member, National Security Council member, chairman of Institut Teknologi Mara Governing Council, and founding member of the Malayan Forum, United Kingdom.

In sports, he held various important posts including honorary life president of the Royal Selangor Flying Club and president of the Malaysian Amateur Athletics Union (1962-1988). For his contribution in sports, he received the 'Tokoh Sukan' Award in 2002.

He was also a respected figure at the international level where he was president of the Asia Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983, member of the South Commission and chairman of the commission set up to revamp and strengthen the Asean mechanism.

He was also appointed to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on South Africa in 1981, member of the Commonwealth Observer Group for South Africa's general election, member of the observer groups for the general elections in Sri Lanka and Bosnia Herzegovina, as well as chairman of the observer group for the general election in Bangladesh.

The late Ghazali had also been special advisor to the prime minister on foreign affairs and consultant to the World Bank Economic Development Institute.

He received awards from several foreign countries including Singapore, France, South Korea, Iran, the Philippines, Japan, Tunisia, Thailand, Austria and North Korea.

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