



LAST RESPECTS BY VIPs: Musa, former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, Khalil, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, and Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Ali Rustam at Ghafar's house yesterday.

Umno veterans mourn loss of nation's peacemaker

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno veterans mourned the passing of Malaysia's "peacemaker" - one who had managed to resolve leadership crises not only in Umno but also in other Barisan Nasional component parties.

Former Wanita chief Tah Sri Aishah Ghani said the late Tun Ghafar Baba was the man to turn to in difficult times. "He played his role very well in resolving any crisis and for this, everybody respected him.

"I think he was the man we turned to during the difficult times because he always had very good relationships with leaders in the component parties. He could talk to them," she said.

Former Education Minister Tan Sri Khir Johari described Ghafar as a "wonderful fellow," saying he was his friend for many years.

"He had been consistent as a leader and as a friend," he said, adding that Ghafar's love for the country and the people was also very important.

Malacca Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Khalil Yaakob spoke of Ghafar as a mentor, colleague

and friend.

"He was a very successful Barisan secretary-general and he emphasised unity," he added.

Former Umno information chief Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said Ghafar's struggles for the country proved his sincerity.

"He was the sort of person who was able to adapt easily to people regardless of whether they were the common folk or the upper class, whether they were veterans or young," he told reporters after paying his last respects at the National Mosque.

Megat Junid also spoke about an afternoon in 1992 when he got a call from the then deputy prime minister at 3pm.

"He told me: 'Megat I am getting married.

"I asked him what time, and he said: '5pm! Can you be my witness?' And I said: 'Okay'," recalled Megat Junid, who was then the deputy home affairs minister.

Back in 1992, Ghafar, who was in his 60s, had fallen for Heryati Abdul Rahim, a divorcee from Sabah.

They married and had a child, but he subsequently divorced her.

Tan Sri Sanusi Junid said Ghafar had many words of wisdom.

He added: "When I was agriculture minister, Ghafar said he wished all this *lalang* (people who sway according to the political situation) had commercial value. Then the Malays would be very rich."

Another who spoke highly of Ghafar was former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam.

"I began my career in politics with him and learnt a lot from him. If you want to know who was involved in Umno in the real sense of the word, in whose veins ran the blood of Umno, Ghafar was that person," he said.

Former Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said although Ghafar came from a poor family, he did not let this hamper him.

"His determination and hard work in the Government and politics should be an example to all of us," he said.