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# He made 'Setia' popular

KUALA LUMPUR: "Tok Mat", "Mat Setia", "Mat Umno" and "Mat Bulat" are among the nicknames given to reflect the personality and character of Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat, a former information minister who left a significant mark on the country's political scene and entertainment industry.

A two-time information minister from 1978 to 1982 and from 1987 to 1999, Tok Mat had his own style to ensure that all government policies reached the grassroots.

Tok Mat was instrumental in the "Setia Bersama Rakyat" or "Semarak" campaigns, which became a two-pronged programme to instil love for the country and regain the people's trust in Umno which was then going through a leadership crisis

He also came up with the patriotic song *Setia*, which became so important that it was sung every time after the national anthem, *Negaraku*, was played.

His loyalty to the party was also proven when he was prepared to shoulder the heavy responsibility as Umno and Barisan Nasional secretary-general from 1988 to 2004.

As Umno secretary-general, he was responsible for restoring the party's integrity and injecting life back into it after its de-registration because of a leadership crisis in 1988.

"To me, it was most shameful. A black patch in the history of Umno when the party was banned," said Mohamed, whose membership number in Umno was 00000003.

Born in Pulau Johor, on Jan



**Mohamed Rahmat was instrumental in the Setia Bersama Rakyat programme**

4, 1938, Mohamed had his secondary education at Maktab Abu Bakar, Johor Baru in 1956 before pursuing his Bachelor of Letters at Univer-

siti Indonesia, Jakarta in 1961.

However, he did not have time to complete his Master's because of the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia.

Beginning his career as a teacher at the King Edward VII School, Taiping, Perak in 1963, Mohamed later ventured into script writing at Filem Negara Malaysia for one year in 1964.

The ex-minister died yesterday at the age of 71, leaving a legacy of his strategies for reference.

Recounting Mohamed's involvement in politics, his eldest son, Datuk Nur Jazlan, said it began when he joined Umno in 1963. Mohamed was then elected as member of parliament for Johor Baru Barat (which was renamed

Pulai in 1974) in the general election in 1969.

Mohamed remained as the Pulai MP for six terms or 30 years until 1999.

He was Malaysia's ambassador to Jakarta in 1982.

Among the memorable incidents when he was information minister was resolving the disciplinary issue that arose in 1990 when he insisted that rock singers appearing on television had to crop their hair.

Among the "victims" were singers Awie and rock band Search.

After retiring from the government and Umno, Tok Mat wrote a book entitled *Umno: Akhir Sebuah Impian* (Umno: The End Of A Dream) which delved into political manipulation by past Umno leaders to hold on to power. — Bernama