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# 'Rahman a visionary leader of Sarawak'

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**KEY FIGURE:** 2,000 pay last respects to former Sarawak head of state

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**T**UN Abdul Rahman Yaakub was a visionary leader and Sarawak's father of development.

That was how most of the leaders in the state described the former Yang di-Pertua Negeri, who died on Friday.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said Rahman was a key figure in many important moments in the state's and country's history.

"He transformed the education system and was one of many key individuals involved in the formation of Petronas."

Former state Information Department special officer Ibrahim Mekhir said Rahman was the first leader to bring development to the state and the people.

"He was the first person to bring infrastructure development in the state and he made a bold move by changing the medium of instruction for schools and higher learning institutions from English to Bahasa Malaysia."

He was among the thousands who attended the state funeral yesterday.

Former Sarawak police commissioner Tan Sri Hamdan Sirat, who was also a former acting state Yang di-Pertua Negeri, said Rahman was the father of peace.



Sarawak Chief Minister **Tan Sri Adenan Satem** (fourth from left) performing prayers at the funeral of **Tun Abdul Rahman Yaakub** near Kuching yesterday. Pic by **Che Rani Che Din**

Hamdan said Rahman, who was the third chief minister of Sarawak, was the first leader to fight against the communist insurgency and brought peace to the people.

"I remember when I worked with him during the communist era. We were having a difficult time persuading the communists to leave the state but he never gave up."

"I remember when he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Pasukan Rakyat Kalimantan Utara director and political commis-

sar **Bong Kee Chok** in Sri Aman in 1973.

"The MoU was called the Peace Declaration of Sri Aman."

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim said Rahman was her political mentor.

She said he was the person who encouraged and inspired her to become a political leader.

The sombre atmosphere in the state reflected the emotions of the people as they bid farewell to Rahman, who was 87 when he died.

Jalur Gemilang and the state flag were flown half-mast as the state mourned his passing.

Present were Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud, Adenan and his deputy Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, as well as state cabinet members.

With them was Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.

Rahman was buried next to his wife Toh Puan Normah at Semariang Cemetery in Petra Jaya near here.

It was an emotional moment for the 2,000 people present when Uztaz Wan Habib, who read the final rites, broke down.

Habib, who was brought up by Rahman, runs Surau Seri Bahagia, a religious school located in Rahman's residence.

"He was like a father and a teacher to me," said Habib.

Several government departments and agencies cancelled their programmes yesterday to mark a day of mourning for the state. Additional reporting by **Esther Landau**



Family members of **Tun Abdul Rahman Yaakub** mourning as he is buried at Semariang Cemetery near Kuching yesterday. Pic by **Mas Adib Sale**