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A highly respected scholar and leader

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KOTA BARU: Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat was a much-revered leader among Pas members and supporters.

His frail figure and soft-spoken personality belied his firm stand in handling issues, which won him the respect of admirers.

His sometimes controversial statements, however, normally did not go down well with his political opponents, earning him many enemies.

With a career spanning 47 years, Nik Aziz was one of the country's longest-serving politicians.

The son of a well-known Islamic scholar, Nik Mat Raja Banjar, or better known as Haji Nik Mat Alim, Nik Aziz was born in 1931, the second of nine children, in Pulau Melaka, a village 7km from here.

Nik Mat founded a *sekolah pondok* (religious school) in the village, and Nik Aziz's received his early education from his father.



A file picture of former Kelantan menteri besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat in March 1992.

Nik Aziz also studied under various religious teachers, including the famous Tok Khurasan, whom he respected and admired.

He continued his studies with other Islamic scholars in Kelantan before he was sent by his father to a *pondok* run by the late Abbas Ah-

mad in Jertih, Terengganu.

After five years at the school, Nik Aziz left for India in 1952 to further his studies at Deoband Darul Ulum in India.

From there, he continued his education at the renowned Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

He completed his studies and returned home in 1962, with a degree in Arabic Language and a master's in Islamic Law.

Upon his return, Nik Aziz started working as a full-time religious teacher.

He became an Islamic preacher to fulfil his father's wishes.

A year after his return, he married Tuan Sabariah Tuan Ishak, the daughter of his father's close friend.

The couple had 10 children: five daughters and five sons.

Nik Aziz left his position as a religious teacher at Kemas in 1967 after he was offered a chance to stand as Pas' candidate in a by-election for

the Kelantan Hilir parliamentary seat.

He won the by-election and held the seat, which was later renamed Pengkalan Chepa, until 1986.

That year, Nik Aziz contested the Semut Api state seat, and retained it in 1990, when the party recaptured the state.

He was then named menteri besar, and despite his ailing health, he held the post for more than 22 years until the 13th General Election (GE13), when Datuk Ahmad Yakob took over the post after Pas retained power.

Despite being retired, Nik Aziz continued to hold the posts of Pas *mursyidul am*, or spiritual adviser, and state assemblyman for Chempaka.

One of his sons, Nik Mohamad Abdul Nik Abdul Aziz, who followed his footsteps in politics, was elected as Pasir Mas member of parliament in GE13.