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Kamal Hashim dies at age 77

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Fond memories: Kamal (right) with (from left) Wong, Abdullah, Star Media Group Bhd chairman Datuk Fu Ah Kiew and Think City Penang chairman Datuk Anwar Fazal looking at the Hotshot photo exhibition during the launch of The Star Pitt St. in 2014.

Star executive director leaves behind legacy

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GEORGE TOWN: Star Media Group Bhd executive director Tan Sri Kamal Hashim, an illustrious son of Penang, has passed away.

He died at 7.30pm yesterday after suffering a stroke in September last year and had been hospitalised since then. Kamal, 77, leaves behind wife Puan Sri Su Akil, 80, three daughters and nine grandchildren.

A pioneer of *The Star*, Kamal was appointed to the newspaper's board in May 1973. He was a director who served as personnel and administration manager as well as northern regional sales manager, and was appointed regional director in 1984.

Kamal served in various community organisations, including being a trustee of Star Foundation and Yayasan Budi-Penyayang Malaysia, and adviser to the Crime Prevention Foundation Penang Chapter.

He was also chairman of the Penang Association of Justice for the Peace from 1993 to 2001 and chairman of the Penang Hospital's Board of Visitors for about 10 years.

Star Media Group Bhd group managing director and chief executive officer Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai said Kamal was a pioneer director of the company.

"In the early years of the newspaper, he went around knocking on doors to help the newspaper stay afloat.

"He put in his savings and borrowed money from tycoons. He played a big role in the company's growth. He was truly a *Star* man," said Wong.

He added that Kamal had helped steer *The Star* through tough times, via his special friendship with the company's former chairman and first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

On a personal note, Wong credited Kamal with his joining *The Star* as a rookie reporter after he left school in 1980.

"He encouraged me to pursue my tertiary studies and made sure I rejoined *The Star* in 1984 after graduating," Wong added.

Former executive deputy chairman of Star Publications (M) Bhd Datuk Steven Tan said Kamal's work in the board of directors for over two decades led to a strong readership for the paper, particularly in the northern region of the peninsula.

"He had a relationship with the people in the north. He did his best over the years supporting the company; he tried to work with all the directors for the good of the company,"

said Tan, who remembered Kamal as an affable and approachable person.

Former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who last saw Kamal a few days ago, was shocked to hear of his passing.

"He was a friend, and I would like to convey my condolences to his family," said Abdullah, who also hails from Penang.

Kamal's long-time secretary Gierle Teh, 68, described him as a good boss.

She said he always invited her to his yearly Hari Raya open house even after she retired in 2008.

She recalled a touching moment on her retirement when Kamal called her to his house where his wife gave her an expensive necklace.

"I never expected it. His wife and I hugged each other and both of us cried," she said.

The Star's former chief photographer Ng Ah Bak described Kamal as a man with principles and a fair boss.

He said that just before the company was public listed, Kamal received many queries from friends and colleagues on whether the company's shares were worth buying and how high the price would go.

"Kamal just said to them: 'I don't know about such matters,' although he was a board member. That shows he was a man of principles," he added.

Kamal recruited Ng as a photographer when the publication's headquarters was in Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Keling (then Pitt Street).

"As then personnel and administration manager, he interviewed me and said I could start work tomorrow if I had a camera. He was a very practical boss who had a good relationship with the employees," Ng said.

Former regional operations manager Chung Chok Yin said Kamal, whom he had known for about 40 years, was a demanding but easy-going boss.

"He got things done without being overly bossy," he said.

The newspaper's former northern region senior security supervisor Prince William said he had known Kamal since 1982 and the boss always treated him well.

"I was the one who carried his bag and ran errands for him to the office of former Penang chief minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

"Whenever he held a Hari Raya open house with his VIP guests, Kamal would ask me to assist at the function," William said.

Prayers will be held at Mesjid At-Taqwa Taman Tun Sardon Gelugor at about 9.30am today, followed by burial at the Perak Road Muslim cemetery.