

Pak Lah transformed Kepala Batas

Former cowboy town now a city of knowledge thanks to former MP

KEPALA BATAS: The late Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is widely credited with revitalising the once-sleepy Kepala Batas constituency, where he served as an eight-term Member of Parliament.

Resident Muhammad A'fif Osman, 49, said the country's fifth prime minister had significantly developed the constituency into a thriving and respected hub of knowledge.

"He transformed the area from being a cowboy town into a city of knowledge," he said.

Fondly known as Pak Lah, Muhammad A'fif said Abdullah

was a humble and soft-spoken leader who served as the Kepala Batas MP from 1978 to 2013.

Raised during Pak Lah's era, he revealed that he was named by Pak Lah's father.

"My father was a village chief and a close friend of Pak Lah. I was named by his father," he said, adding that their families resided in the same village - Permatang Bertam.

Retired teacher Mohd Saleh Rashid, 72, a long-time resident of Permatang Bertam, described Pak Lah as a leader who was always approachable and down-to-earth,

even when he returned to his constituency.

"Pak Lah was never one for protocol when he came back home. He was gentle in nature and friendly with people from all walks of life, regardless of their status or rank," he said.

Pak Lah's leadership had transformed Kepala Batas into a thriving hub of education and development, benefiting the local community, he added.

Former Penang chief minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said he was deeply saddened by the demise of Pak Lah, who was the

first prime minister from Penang.

He fondly recalled their first meeting in April 1982 at a Barisan Nasional gathering in Penang ahead of the general election.

"Pak Lah was a very kind and friendly leader, especially to me as a novice in politics," he said.

He also praised Pak Lah's open-mindedness and responsiveness during his tenure as the education minister, noting their collaborative efforts to address issues related to Chinese education.

"Pak Lah's kindness and magnanimity will be fondly remembered by all of us. He set a very

good example as a kind and caring leader," said Koh while extending his heartfelt condolences to Pak Lah's family.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow has described the passing of Pak Lah as a great loss to the nation.

"May all the services and contributions he made in developing the country and this state remain forever etched in the hearts of all Malaysians and the people of Penang," he said in a statement.

Abdullah, 85, passed away on Monday at the National Heart Institute in Kuala Lumpur.