

**Nik Aziz A Humble And Respected Leader**  
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KOTA BAHARU, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Former Kelantan Menteri Besar and PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat was a highly respected religious man who commands respect from both sides of the political divide.

Nik Aziz, 84, who passed away Thursday night at his house in Pulau Melaka, Kota Baharu, has led a humble lifestyle despite being the Kelantan Menteri Besar for more than two decades.

He was regarded as the leader who united PAS, PKR and DAP into a coalition.

In fact, stories are abound about his humble lifestyle and mannerism while all races welcome him with open arms and the late Nik Aziz himself practices a concept that goes beyond boundaries of race and religion.

When he was the Kelantan Menteri Besar, he renamed Jalan Kebun Sultan as "China Town" since the place was a major Chinese populated business district since the 17th century.

Born on January 10, 1931 in Kampung Pulau Melaka, Kubang Kerian, Nik Aziz obtained his early education from his own father, who was a religious teacher and continued his studies in Darul Uloom Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, India, majoring in the Arabic language in 1952 and Universiti Lahore, Pakistan in 1957.

Nik Aziz who can speak Tamil, also spoke Urdu, Arabic, English and Bahasa Melayu and has been known to command support from non-Muslims in Malaysia and has played a leading role during PAS' increase in popularity among non-Muslims.

After his first degree from the Al Azhar University in Egypt, he later graduated with a Masters of Arts in Islamic jurisprudence and worked as a religious teacher upon his return in Sekolah Menengah Agama Tarbiyyah Mardiah, Sekolah Menengah Agama Darul Anwar and Sekolah Menengah Maahad Muhammadi before deciding to contest in his first general election after joining PAS in 1967.

He won the Kelantan Hilir parliamentary seat which was later renamed as Pengkalan Chepa and retained the seat until 1986 before shifting to contest the Bachok Parliamentary seat and Semut Api (now Chempaka) state seat which he held until his death today.

Despite being the Menteri Besar from 1990 to 2013, Nik Aziz never stayed in the official residence of the Menteri Besar but stayed put at his own house in Kampung Pulau Melaka.

Nik Aziz was appointed at the PAS Ulama Chief in 1971 and Kelantan PAS Commissioner in 1978 after the party lost the state, and as a result the then-PAS President Datuk Asri Muda and Nik Aziz did not see eye-to-eye.

In 1982, he was part of a movement by young members to bring change to the party leadership when PAS had lost the Kelantan state elections in 1978 and, as PAS state commissioner, Nik Aziz began to question Asri Muda's leadership.

Finally, in the PAS Muktamar (General Assembly) that year, Asri was forced to resign.

Nik Aziz stepped down as Kelantan Menteri Besar on May 6, 2013 despite retaining the Chempaka state seat in the 13th general election and replaced by his deputy Datuk Ahmad Yakub.

He leaves behind wife Datin Tuan Sabariah Tuan Ishak and 10 children, including Pasir Mas MP Nik Mohd Abduh Nik Aziz.

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