

From Academician To High Flying Diplomat

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By Nurazira Rashid

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis, who died in a helicopter crash in Kampung Sungai Pening, Semenyih near here Saturday was a man of many talents.

The Rompin Member of Parliament who would have turned 64 on May 25, started his career as an academician with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in 1974 after graduating with a First Class Honours Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Manchester, United Kingdom.

Two years later, he completed his Masters in Electrical Engineering from the University of Manitoba, Canada and in 1980, a PhD in Electrical Engineering (Power Systems) from the University of McGill, Canada.

After six years in the academic sector, he quit to set up an engineering consultancy J&A Associates specializing in electrical and mechanical engineering in 1981.

In 1986, he acquired EPE Power Corporation Berhad, and was its Executive Vice Chairman before stepping down on Aug 3, 2000 a day before being appointed Deputy Chairman of Tenaga Nasional Berhad and later as TNB Chairman in September 2000.

In politics, he started off as a member of Kampung Mengkasar Umno branch in Pekan in 1980 and also as its youth chairman, five years later was elected as Pekan Umno Youth Chairman and in 1988 as Pahang Umno Youth Vice Chairman and also as an Umno Youth Exco.

He was an Umno Supreme Council member from 2008-2011.

The former Chairman of 1Malaysia Housing Programme (PR1MA) who first contested in the 1990 General Election for Rompin Parliamentary seat beat PAS candidate Salim@AHmad Awg Kalib by 13,128 votes and in the last general election in May 2013, was his sixth term as Rompin Member of Parliament with a big majority of 15,114 votes against PAS' Nuridah Mohd Salleh.

Jamaluddin left TNB in November 2002, following his appointment as Second Finance Minister during Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's administration and two years later appointed as Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs during Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's first cabinet reshuffle in January 2004.

Less than two months later, he was appointed as the new Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, where he was tasked to ensure the Angkasawan programme, sending a Malaysian to the international Space Station on board Soyuz TMA-11.

The programme, officially announced by Tun Mahathir in 2003 was a joint programme with the Russian Federation under the government-to-government offset agreement through the purchase of Sukhoi Su-30MKM fighter jets for the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

Malaysia's first space mission took off with Datuk Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor becoming the first Malaysian in space on Oct 10, 2007.

In 2009, Jamaluddin was appointed Malaysian Ambassador to the United States and had helped enhance the relationship between the United States and Malaysia.

At a function in Rompin, Jamaluddin officially opened a people's programme via video conferencing from the US despite the time difference.

His four-year tenure in Washington had placed Malaysia-US ties at the highest level.

Jamaluddin, who is Malaysia's special envoy to the US, has been aggressive in enhancing the relationship between both countries, and has been instrumental in US President Barack Obama's visit to Malaysia last year.

The first by a sitting US president in 48 years since President Lyndon B. Johnson's trip back in 1966.

Born in Pekan, Pahang on May 25, 1951, Jamaluddin leaves behind wife Puan Sri Dr Kalsom Ismail and three children - two daughters and a son.

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