The country has lost an expert in higher education and road safety.

In the early days, we focused on road safety in a fragmented way. Dr Radin Umar introduced an integrated approach internationally known as the Haddon Matrix in Malaysia in 1995, and the results began to show in 1997,” he says.

Prof Ahmad Farhan who served as Miro director-general from August 2008 to July 2011, says he met Dr Radin Umar in 1987 as they both worked in highway and transportation engineering.

“We were fellow academics who used to meet at conferences. We co-supervised and also examined each other’s students.”

“We were in the same committees covering transport, engineering and academia,” he says.

He adds that among Dr Radin Umar’s biggest achievements at Miro were the institutionalisation of the accident investigation procedures and the inquiries to be carried out by relevant authorities. A big contribution by Dr Radin Umar was also the inclusion of the road safety education syllabus in national primary and secondary school curriculum from 2009. Dr Radin Umar analysed in a long-term measure to change the culture towards safety. It was an uphill battle to bring it into the national school syllabus.

“Road safety elements were put in the Bahasa Malaysia component and was a collaborative effort with the Education Ministry,” he adds.

Prof Ahmad Farhan says he used to consult Dr Radin Umar when he served as Miro director-general as he was the guru for road safety.

“If I may sum up our relationship at Miro... he has a dream... and managed to deliver that dream,” he shares.

Dr Radin Umar leaves behind his wife Datin Norsham Ahmad, five children and four grandchildren. His son Mundzir Radin Umar says his father died of liver failure at Serdang Hospital last Sunday morning where he had been hospitalised for the last three weeks.

“He was diagnosed with colon cancer some time last year, it spread and affected his liver,” he says.

Happy to help out

Starden journalists always found Dr Radin Umar to be friendly, approachable and ever ready to explain the different issues and concepts.

The last time the writer was in contact with Dr Radin Umar was just before Hari Raya when he shared how happy he was to be discharged from the hospital and celebrating with his family at home.

He said he would forget the pain he had been through with his grandchildren.

Despite his stance on university rankings, he never wrote on the topic, and would either let me know an announcement was imminent or take the time to send comments on how he thought the rankings were handled in a matter where he was in the world.

He was very excited when UPM created history in Malaysia by being the first higher education institution through its Putra Business School to receive accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business last year and sent me a text message to write about it.

May he rest in peace.