

TAN SRI DR AHMAD MUSTAFFA BABJEE

MALAYSIA'S 'GREEN WARRIOR' DIES AT 82

Ex-Veterinary Services Dept D-G was a life-long learning advocate

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THE late Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Mustaffa Babjee who died yesterday at 82, was an advocate of life-long learning.

The former Veterinary Services Department director-general's credentials included a Masters of Science in Environment Biology from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), a PhD in virology from the University of Queensland, Australia, as well as two honorary doctorates from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and the University of Queensland.

At the age of 69, 13 years ago, Mustaffa earned his seventh degree — Masters of Science in Environment Biology — from USM.

"I am a believer in life-long learning, from womb to tomb," he had said.

Mustaffa was dubbed Malaysia's green warrior.

He was a prominent figure on nature conservation, and played an instrumental role in the preservation of Malaysia's rare and special biodiversity species.

He catapulted Malaysia into becoming one of the top 12 mega biodiversity nations in 2009.



Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Mustaffa Babjee signing the pledge book after donating RM1,000 to the Tun Abdul Razak Foundation at the office of the 'New Straits Times' in 1976.

Malaysia secured the prestigious spot as it was endowed with 15,000 species of flowering plants, 1,500 species of terrestrial vertebrates and 150,000 species of invertebrates at the time.

In one of the many books that he authored, Mustaffa was candid on how he had started to develop an interest in the environment.

In the preface of his book on

environment conservation titled *Glimpses of the Environment*, he said the Japanese occupation had had a profound impact on his life during his growing-up years in Sungai Petani, Kedah.

"Our immediate environment provided our daily needs for food.

"All my life, I have been curious about nature.

"I can sit and watch nature at work for hours."

The nature world, Mustaffa said, was more than merely a source of food and material, as the country galvanised almost all of its machinery towards becoming a developed nation.

In one of his interviews with this newspaper, he had highlighted the importance of Malaysia having sustainable development to prevent its vast species of flora and fauna from being wiped out.

"I believe development and conservation can co-exist.

"We can create economic activities not only through expansion and growth, but also through the improvement of life's quality.

"For example, in Kuala Lumpur, we can infuse green technology in existing buildings and utilise technology to improve the living standard of residents of low-cost flats."

His contributions to the poultry industry earned him the Lifetime Achievement Award during the Malaysian Livestock Industry Awards in April last year.

Mustaffa also did a PhD on the patterns of habitat of the Indian whistling duck, also known as lesser-whistling teal, at the Janda Baik pond in Pahang.

It is a medium-sized waterfowl species, native to Southeast Asia. It is different from other duck species and has longer legs and an erect goose-like posture.

After retiring from government service, Mustaffa made significant impact on the corporate world.

Among the positions he held were as UBM Malaysia chairman, Comsa Farms Bhd director, AMB Exhibitions Sdn Bhd president and Asia Internet Holdings Sdn Bhd executive director.



A 2011 picture of the late Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Mustaffa Babjee with the book, 'Glimpses of the Environment', which he authored. FILE PIX

'Nation lost a great writer, scientist and researcher'

KUALA LUMPUR: The late veterinary services doyen, Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Mustaffa Babjee, was described by close friends as a professional, considerate and fair-minded person.

Economist Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam described Mustaffa as a great man who was always keen to improve and develop his (veterinary services) department.

"He was always professional, considerate and fair-minded," said Ramon, now Sunway Group's group corporate adviser. He said although they sometimes differed in their views, he found Mustaffa fully dedicated to serve the best interests of the agricultural community and economy.

"His high commitment to serve the poor endeared him dearly to us all.

"But most importantly, Mustaffa was a gentleman and a true Malaysian who had high integrity and won our respect."

Mustaffa, who was identified by his trademark long grey hair and moustache, had been wheelchair-bound for quite some time due to a nerve disease, said one of his relatives, who declined to be named.

One of the last and most recent public appearances by Mustaffa was at the "5th Tan Sri B.C. Sekhar Memorial Lecture 2019" at the Royal Selangor Club in Dataran Merdeka two weeks ago.

At the event, officiated by Primary Industries Minister Teresa Kok, he was acknowledged as a senior scientist by the Malaysian

Scientists Association. Academician Tan Sri Dr Salleh Mohd Nor remembers Mustaffa as a true gentleman, with his honest and frank views on issues.

"During his career as Veterinary Services Department director-general, I remember him cross-breeding *lembru* and *seladang* to produce *Selembru*.

"The nation has lost a great professional, and a true friend."

Former Zoo Negara veterinary head and assistant director Associate Professor Datuk Dr S. Vellayan said he had known Mustaffa since 1978.

"During his term as Veterinary Services Department director-general, he brought numerous changes.

"He established diagnostic laboratories in all the states.

"He was well respected and well known by veterinarians throughout the world," said Dr Vellayan, who is now with the Universiti Teknologi Mara's Pharmacy Faculty.

He said Mustaffa was responsible in merging the Malaysian Veterinary Association

and the Association of Veterinary Surgeons Malaysia into one united body, known as the Veterinary Association Malaysia.

"Recently, I raised a question on the poisoning of Borneo Elephants in Sabah's oil palm plantations and he gave me some interesting insights.

"We have lost a great scientist, writer and researcher. He had a great passion and love for nature and wildlife too." **By Adrian David**

His high commitment to serve the poor endeared him dearly to us all. But most importantly, Mustaffa was a gentleman and a true Malaysian who had high integrity and won our respect.

TAN SRI RAMON NAVARATNAM
Economist

	SUBUH (am)	SYURUK	ZUHUR	ASAR (pm)	MAGHRIB	ISYAK
Melaka	5:44	7:03	1:11	4:29	7:16	8:27
Penang	5:47	7:05	1:18	4:35	7:26	8:38
K. Lumpur	5:45	7:03	1:13	4:31	7:20	8:31
Johor Baru	5:38	6:57	1:05	4:23	7:09	8:20
Kuantan	5:40	6:59	1:08	4:25	7:13	8:25
Ipoh	5:46	7:02	1:16	4:33	7:23	8:35