

An academic and agriculture icon

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GENEROUS, passionate and sincere.

That is how Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris remembers Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Mohd Rashdan Baba.

Mohd Rashdan, UPM's first vice-chancellor from 1971 to 1982, passed away on March 30, aged 85.

"He always shared his ideas for the betterment of the varsity as he wanted UPM to focus on agricultural research — plants, animals, food and other areas, and to come up with research products that are useful for farmers, communities and the nation.

"I'd see a glow in his eyes, followed by a

sweet smile, whenever we told him about UPM's achievements. That always made my day," she said.

A brotherly figure, she often sought his opinion and advice.

"I felt refreshed and motivated to work harder after every conversation with him.

"I could not visit him in the hospital as the movement control order was already implemented by then," she said with sombreness.

His passing, UPM said, marks the loss of a leader and fighter in the field of agriculture.

Known for his generosity, Mohd Rashdan sponsored an annual gold medal worth RM1,000 and a RM3,000 cash prize for graduates from fields relating to agriculture.

As its first vice-chancellor, he established nine faculties and two centers that adminis-

tered 19 degree programmes, nine diploma programmes, and one professional and advanced degree programme.

The Rashdan Baba Auditorium is a tribute to his contribution to the development of the university. He was bestowed the title of Professor Emeritus by UPM in 1982.

Mohd Rashdan, the first vice-chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia from 1969 to 1971, was also conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Law by UKM in 1999 and an Honorary Doctor of Science from University of Reading, United Kingdom in 1986.

He was also conferred the Honorary Doctor of Law from University of Leeds, United Kingdom in 1989.

In 2013, he was named the recipient of the National Academician of the Year award.



First vice-chancellor: Mohd Rashdan was appointed UPM's first vice-chancellor from 1971 to 1982.