

Pioneering activist loses battle against cancer

NATION

Thursday, 02 Apr 2020

By N. TRISHA



Fondly remembered: Meenakshi (right), granddaughter Isabel Ho, five, and other family members at the Mount Erskine funeral parlour in George Town.

GEORGE TOWN: He fought gallantly for the weak and needy for about 50 years and was a true hero in the eyes of the poor.

Yesterday, Malaysian civil society icon Martin Khor lost his battle against cancer and passed away peacefully at the age of 69.

Known for his kindness and compassion towards those in need, Khor is remembered by his wife Meenakshi Raman, who said his passing was a great loss to the community, country and world.

“He was a contributor to the world. He made the biggest issues simple to understand.

“Many people have said that he inspired them in the causes they are dedicating their lives to now,” she said, adding that they first met in the course of work at the Consumers’ Association of Penang (CAP).

Meenakshi, who is president of Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), said Khor was battling colorectal cancer since 2015.

Born in 1951 in Penang, Khor studied in St Xavier’s Institution and did his Masters in Economics at Cambridge University and taught political economy at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Khor, a Penangite, was also a journalist, economist and former director of the Third World Network, which is based in Penang.

He was also a columnist with The Star from 1978 to 2019.

Star Media Group adviser Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai said he had known Khor for decades.

“He was a columnist with The Star. With his ability to explain complex economic issues in simple journalistic style, he was a man of immense intellect.

“His father, the late Datuk Khor Cheang Kee, was a pioneer staff member of The Star before retiring as an adviser. Both had a long time link with The Star,” he said, adding that Khor devoted his life to NGOs.

“He was always on the side of the weak and poor, whether developing countries or underprivileged people.”

CAP co-founder Datuk Dr Anwar Fazal said Khor was a towering Malaysian who chose to harness his high intellect for the purpose of social activism in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

“Many of us will remember him for his eloquence and writing when exposing the hypocrisy of the West in their trade negotiations or environmental policies,” he said.

CAP president Mohideen Abdul Kader said that Malaysia had lost one of its best activists, who was also an intellectual of global standing. “He is best remembered for his contributions to poor communities in Malaysia, including Kuala Juru, Thean Teik Estate, and the fight against Asian Rare Earth and the stopping of the Penang Hill project.

“Khor was instrumental in the development of CAP together with the late CAP president, SM Mohamed Idris.

The funeral will be held today at 11am at the Mount Erskine crematorium. A memorial will be held at a later date in remembrance of Khor’s life and work. The family requests no wreaths.

Donations in honour of Khor can be made to CAP (CIMB bank account number 7020582991) and SAM (CIMB bank account number 7020585730) – the two organisations close to Khor.

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