

09/12/2001

Outgoing Datuk Bandar says stint was very fulfilling

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Outgoing Kuala Lumpur Datuk Bandar Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff today described his six-year mayoral stint as one which was "very fulfilling although stressful at times".

He was grateful that he had managed to cope with a wide array of excitement, ranging from public attacks on the City Hall to the nitty-gritty reality of administering a large pool of staff from all categories.

"Based on the law, the final decision lies with the mayor. He is the corporate soul who decides on everything, even to the extent of where a dustbin should be placed.

"I am like a father taking care of so many wives, children and grandchildren. Not everybody is the same. Each has a different calibre, attitude and level of performance," he said, referring to City Hall's 9,328-strong workforce.

Speaking to the New Sunday Times, Kamaruzzaman said "one has to be hands-on and there are no two ways about it" to be an effective mayor.

"There is no such thing as a protocol mayor. He has to see that the drains are clean, planning approvals are in order, handle the resettlement of squatters, overcome flooding woes and supervise development of construction works to ensure that all worksites are well maintained.

"My aim ultimately was to house all hawkers in proper sites because we cannot have a city where hawkers impede traffic flow, block pedestrian paths and trade in a dirty environment."

Kamaruzzaman, whose term ends on Thursday, will be replaced by Datuk Mohamad Shaïd Mohd Taufek.

Penang-born Kamaruzzaman, 60, was the Defence Ministry's secretary-general prior to his appointment as Datuk Bandar on Dec 13, 1995.

"As we are a multi-disciplined institution, the Datuk Bandar must possess knowledge in drainage, architecture, engineering, landscaping and social work to be on the ball."

Asked to describe his most memorable moment as Datuk Bandar, he said he felt truly honoured when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed his gratitude for the successful staging of the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

"I am very happy to see that KL has achieved balanced development and has a soul. Quality of life has also improved, not only for the people in Kenny Hills but for all, including squatters.

"I see the city as a beautiful lady. As she gets older we have to add more cosmetics. Certain parts have to be re-developed such as the vicinity of Jalan Chow Kit, Loke Yew, the Pekeliling flats, while areas such as Jinjang and Kepong have had facelifts."

He also paid tribute to lower ranking staff, "including those retired labourers who toiled day and night to maintain the cleanliness of the city".

"We don't see it, but when there are floods and sludge everywhere, they clean it to ensure that the city returns to normal the next morning. I always shake their hands or wave at them."

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