

27 JUN 2004

Zainul-Retires

TOP CIVIL SERVANT WHO RARELY GOES ON LEAVE RETIRES

By: Azman Ujang

PUTRAJAYA, June 27 (Bernama) -- Throughout his 35 years in the civil service, Tan Sri Dr Zainul Ariff Hussain rarely goes on leave. He probably holds the record as the civil servant with the most number of leave written off.

When he reached the mandatory retirement age of 55 three years ago before his service was extended on contract, he accumulated a total of 1,333 days or three and a half years of leave.

According to the original civil service regulation, one can accumulate up to 90 days' leave but this was increased to 120 days with effect from this year. This means that leave not taken beyond 120 days will be forfeited.

But why Dr Zainul Ariff did not like to go on leave?

" Probably because I am blessed with good health. I take care of my health dan I see no reason to go on leave as there is so much work to do. I like to work. I see work as an enjoyment," he told Bernama in an interview at his office here shortly before his retirement on Tuesday in his last post as Director-General of Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department.

And during the three years of his extended service, he also did not take the 90 days' leave that he was entitled to because " there's still a lot to be done to develop this country".

Quoting former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his poem entitled "Perjuangan Belum Selesai" (The Unfinished Struggle), Dr Zainul Ariff said: " If we like to do work, it creates satisfaction in our work".

" After all we are paid for it. When we play football we are normally satisfied playing and yet we are not paid. But when we do our work as civil servants and are paid for it and if we don't do it well, it is to me

not
right".

Another special trait of Dr Zainul Ariff is to send birthday cards to all his 900 staff throughout the country which he describes as his own way of forging teamwork among his staff.

" I feel that because I am given the leadership role, it is a kind of trust. I told my staff that as the head of department I have my own role.

But as human beings we are all the same. So we have to work as a team with our own respective duties and responsibilities.

" We need to work together and as the head I,too, need to be caring, see to it that there is close rapport and teamwork and one thing which I think is sensitive to all individuals is his or her birthday," he said.

" Every ICU staff receives a birthday card from me, whether in Sabah, Sarawak, Kelantan, Terengganu, or other nook and corner of the country.

Thanks God, I have been able to do this for the past five years..more than 900 cards sent out a year," he said.

Dr Zainul Ariff said there were times when he personally telephoned his staff on their birthdays and even sang the birthday song to them over the phone.

" When they receive such calls direct from the Director-General, it can be a big morale booster to them. At places that I visit and when there are staff who celebrate their birthdays on that particularly day, I take a birthday cake along and this really pleases everybody," he said.

In his six years as ICU Director-General, one of the most senior posts in the civil service, Dr Zainul Ariff put in place a 12-point code of work ethics for his staff, besides making it a must for them to pass a computer competency test as well as consistently encouraging them to master English.

At ICU offices, a big mirror is also hung for the staff to " have a look at themselves".

" The mirror is meant for every one of the staff to look at themselves.

The mirror can tell them about the state of their physical condition, their behaviour and also from the point of view of them seeking God's blessings in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted on them.

"And more often than not we find that they are able to keep in good physical shape after looking at themselves in the mirror, as well as to correct whatever shortcomings from time to time," he said.

What about the retirement plans of Dr Zainul Ariff, who has served under all of Malaysia's five prime ministers.

He said that even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi asked him the same question the other day.

"The prime minister asked me..what do you want now that you are retired?

" I told him that I do not ask for anything...being able to serve the PM (prime minister) is already an honour, getting the PM's trust and confidence and being able to carry out my responsibility successfully is also both an honour and a blessing.

" Not everybody has had the privilege to work with the PM, we are given a position and trust, it is indeed a heavy responsibility and trust...but after this I'm of course relieved as I don't carry those responsibilities".

" I'm a blessed person. God has been very kind to me. I'm doing something that is beneficial in order to contribute towards national development and I have been a witness to the country's amazing development.

We all must count our blessings," he said.

On a philosophical note, he said at times people chose to forget such blessings and regard, for example, their good health as a right rather than God's privilege to them.

" We tend to regard power as a right, in actual fact it is something given by God for us to carry out as a trust. We also tend to regard whatever remunerations we get as a right and if we do not get something that we think is our right, we feel depressed and even become angry and so on...No, this is not the way.

" To me, God has His own way. if He does not give there is a reason for it...if he gives it is a trust...this is something that we must not forget".

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