

31/01/2003

Khair Johari's secrets for being fit and healthy at 80

Zulita Mustafa

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - A happy family life, exercise, a balanced diet - and no bad thoughts - these are the secrets to being healthy and fit at 80, according to Tan Sri Mohd Khair Johari.

In an interview with the New Straits Times today, the former Cabinet Minister who celebrated his birthday yesterday, said being around his family - wife, Puan Sri Christine Lim and their two sons, Zairil, 20, and Yusri, 14, meant a lot to him as he shared many common interests with them.

"Living in a happy family is very important as `one should not worry as it (worry) will take away all the good things you're about to treasure in life.

"I am blessed with two loving boys and a good and caring wife."

Khair, who takes a keen interest in sports, says his sons share his interest in sports.

Khair said he begins the day by walking around the courtyard before doing some light exercises.

He will then read the newspapers - local and foreign. "It is a must ... the most important thing in the morning while my wife prepares a light breakfast with carrot juice, apple juice or fresh yogurt."

When asked whether he has nasi lemak for breakfast, Khair said: "Once in a while".

During the interview at his office, Khair was accompanied by Christine.

"I thank God Tan Sri is blessed with a healthy life. I will keep track of his meals and will only prepare `balanced and healthy meals'," she said, adding that both "Tan Sri and I take lots and lots of vitamins to keep healthy"

Khair still enjoys doing social work, together with his wife.

"I love doing social work rather than being in the corporate world," he said, adding that he would step down slowly from his positions in the corporate sector.

"One thing, the mind must be very clear. Don't think of anything bad."

Khair is president of Zoo Negara, patron of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, president of the Malaysian Institute of Directors, patron of Kiwanis Down's Syndrome Centre and member of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation.

"What you see me doing is a continuation of Tunku Abdul Rahman's good work. I was with Tengku from the very beginning."

Being the first chairman of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation, Khair said the foundation was "his baby".

Khair has fond memories of the Tunku, one of his closest friends, and said he never missed visiting Tunku's grave every year.

"I will visit his grave without fail. I always remind my two sons to continue doing the same thing every year even when I am no longer around as I believe that what we are today is because of the Tunku," he said.

Khair served as a Minister under the Tunku.

Born in Alor Star on Jan 29, 1923, Khair held several important portfolios, including Education Minister, Agriculture Minister and Trade and Industry Minister from 1957 to 1973. In 1973, he became the ambassador to the United Nations in New York, as well as ambassador to Mexico and Brazil.

Despite his busy schedule, Khair and Christine attend to their sons'

needs and spend quality time with them.

Zairil is pursuing a software engineering degree programme at the Multimedia University while Yusri is in Form Three at Sekolah Seri Cempaka.

On politics, Khir expressed his appreciation of the efforts by the Government and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who he said has done everything possible for the country and that's what he "liked about living in Malaysia".

He said the Government today was doing its best to serve the country in every way possible.

Asked about his plans for the year ahead, Khir said: "I don't plan anything, when the time comes, we will go travelling ... maybe towards the end of the year. We have to actually schedule ourselves with our sons' time-tables," he said.

"My only advice is don't be money-minded. If you think of money alone, it will be a disaster for the country. I don't believe in currying favour ... I am what I am through my own efforts," he said.