

**Pak Non, the original 1M'sia journalist**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**April 6, 2013**

**By A Vaithilingam**

OBITUARY We knew Pak Non as hilarious Zainon Mat (below) more than 50 years ago. Last week, journalism in Malaysia lost one who could be considered a role model not only for journalists but for all Malaysians.

I have followed with great interest the well deserved accolades showered on my friend Zainon Ahmad, whom I have known from my youth more than 50 years ago and now popularly known as 'Pak Non' by his journalist colleagues.

It is such a relief to note that he has so many fellow journalists writing so many lovely things about him, showing him to be the true Malaysian he has always been, long before our PM Najib Razak declared the concept of 1Malaysia.

One may be surprised to note how I came to know him. I believe it was in very early 60s, when he was a young teacher.

Many would not believe that he was a liaison officer (LO) in the 1st Asian Youth Football Tournament.

Those days the footballers in international tournaments including Merdeka Tournaments were housed either in school hostels or teacher training college hostels.

Zainon was an LO at the Technical Institute, located just behind the present Maxwell School, KL. It was a multi racial group of LOs, almost all of whom are now above 70s, with some no more with us.

He was such a jovial chap and so dedicated to his duties, which included attending to the needs of teams from about 6.30am until the teams went to rest at about 11pm on match days, not forgetting carrying of pails of iced towels for the use of players during half time!

Bundles of energy

Later at night, he will still have the energy to entertain us, the officials, with Tamil, Hindi and Malay songs.

During the short period of about two weeks in the camp, Zainon excelled in his devotion to duties.

He was ever ready to sacrifice his time, being the good team man that he was, by covering for his colleagues who were over burdened with demands of the difficult teams.

He probably was only an LO for a couple of year, mainly because of his desire to further his

studies. The LOs later missed his hilarious, jovial and entertaining comradeship in a team of LOs who were all volunteers.

Many years later I became very interested in reading his news and comments as a journalist.

Zainon's feelings for fellow humans, from all divisions of race and religion, in his writings impressed me most.

Though we have met occasionally saying 'Hello!' to each other, I was fortunate to have had an appointment with him in early August 2000.

Zainon then interviewed me, before my attendance at the Millennium World Peace Summit, a global inter religious conference held at the United Nations in New York from Aug 28 to 30, 2000, as president of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) and also as the president of the Malaysian Hindu Sangam.

Zainon was then the deputy chief group editor of the NST Group.

He read my conference paper and was taken up by my quotation of a great ancient Tamil poet Kanniyan Poongkunranar in the "Poorananuru" who sang "Yathum Ooray Yaavarum Kaylir", meaning "All the world in my village and all its people my kinsmen".

He later had a journalist in the NST highlight this article on the conference in a full page spread in the NST.

Regular admirer

I have also been following his struggle together with other journalists to get the restrictions on press freedom under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 repealed, and to assist the government in forming a National Media Council instead.

I sincerely hope his partners in this effort will pursue the matter successfully.

I have always kept up with his progress in journalism and was a regular admirer of his in theSun column, 'What They Say', which always gave the pro and con views, provoking readers to seek unity in diversity in multiracial Malaysia.

Each time I sent him an article for publication, he promptly acknowledged it and had it published within a few days.

The last one I sent a few weeks ago received acknowledgement but was not published. I never realised that he was so seriously ill.

His sudden demise is a true loss to all those who believe in a united Malaysia. The Almighty

God has His own ways. May Brother Zainon Ahmad's soul rest in peace.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd  
Source: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/225983>