

50 still good

Survey: Older workers seen as valuable assets

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PETALING JAYA: Older workers are seen to be good workers – they have special skills, are trustworthy and good problem solvers.

A survey has revealed that many

top local corporate personnel perceive those aged 50 and above as “valuable assets” and have a lot to contribute at the workplace.

More than 96.3% of respondents said workers aged 50 and above have special skills, 88.8% felt that they were trustworthy and reli-

able while 84.2% believed that they were good problem solvers.

The findings of this survey will be welcomed by most of the 1.3 million government workers who are awaiting news of a possible

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Employers group not keen on extending retirement age

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extension of the mandatory retirement age for civil servants, from 56 to 60, in Budget 2008 this Friday.

"Older workers, particularly those past retirement age, still have a lot to offer. With their skills and experience, it is a waste not to tap into them as a manpower resource for the job market," said UPM's Gerontology Institute director Assoc Prof Dr Tengku Aizan Hamid.

She said the institute had shared its research findings with the Government a few years ago, proposing an extension of retirement age.

"The PM then, Tun Mahathir Mohamad, was receptive and had announced that they would review the retirement age, but nothing came out of it at the time," she added.

However, in May it was reported that the Public Service Department had finally submitted another recommendation to the Cabinet for the retirement age to be extended beyond 56 after deliberating on the issue for several years. The Government extended the retirement age from 55 to 56 in 2001.

The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services, which has been pushing for an extension of the retirement age since 1998, supports the move. Its president Omar Osman said it would benefit civil servants, particularly with the rising cost of living.

A recent study commissioned by Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad reveals that 67% of retirees' primary source of income was in the form of monetary aid from children while another 14% depended on part-time jobs.

The Prudential Retire-Meter 2007 survey involving 1,038 Malaysians from urban areas nationwide showed that more than one-third of retirees are thinking of returning to work for a stronger financial security, with 37% of retirees forced to return to the workforce as a result of dwindling savings.

Said Omar: "It is too early for one to retire at 56, especially now that the population has a longer lifespan. Malaysia is relatively more advanced than some of its neighbours but our workforce retires much earlier. It is a waste."

Global retirement age

Japan	60	USA	62
China	60	UK	65
Singapore	62	Scandinavia	67
Philippines	60	India	58
Indonesia	60	Malaysia	55

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan, however, said its members had decided not to extend the retirement age regardless of the Government's decision.

"We don't want a blanket ruling for all employers. It is better for the employer and employee to negotiate their contract for what is acceptable to both parties," he said.

Assoc Prof Dr Jariah Masud, who led the UPM study, said the majority of private companies followed the mandatory retirement age for civil servants by using the cut-off age of 55 years (70%) and 56 years (10%).

Nevertheless, the study, conducted by a group of academics from the Gerontology Institute, found that the overall positive perception of the 134 survey participants towards older workers was encouraging.

Older workers were perceived as calm and thorough at work (80.6%) and mentally sharp (55.2%). Only a small number (37.4%) thought they were prone to illness.

Former top-level officer from the tax department Vincent Josef agreed that the Government was making a mistake in taking out its best workers in their prime.

"I think most people reach their peak at work at the age of 45, and from then to 60 they are at their most capable," he said.

Society of Active Generation of Elders (Sage) president, retired teacher Chin Sek Ham, 67, said teaching was one profession that many retirees could contribute to with their experience and knowledge.