

Corporate leader takes on **new role**

➤ Newly-appointed Senator Zurainah to take issues close to her heart to a higher platform

BY ELLY FAZANIZA
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

BUSINESS has been Datuk Seri Zurainah Musa's forte for more than three decades.

As someone who has worked her way up to the top, the boardroom has become her homeground.

But a new challenge now awaits the executive director of Berjaya Corp Bhd.

Zurainah, who was appointed a senator on Dec 22, will add women empowerment, children's rights and access to education to her portfolio. She described her appointment as "unexpected".

"When I first heard it, I thought it was a prank. But it is a pleasant surprise," she told *theSun*.

Zurainah said she also realised that while it was great to be given the honour, there was also the need to fulfil the responsibilities that come with the position.

"It is about dealing with people, emotions and situations. It is about looking after the economy, dealing with the (Covid-19) pandemic and now, the floods. These are challenging times," she added.

But Zurainah is no stranger to wearing several hats or forging new paths.

"I like challenges that constantly knock on my door anyway," she said.

Apart from her corporate role, Zurainah also chairs several non-profit organisations like Rumah Taman Seri Puteri Cheras, KoopNita and Srikanda AVTM. She said those roles have brought her an immense wealth of experience that she now intends to use in the Dewan Negara.

She admits to having a passion for women's

issues, a determination to help women realise that there is no such thing as a glass ceiling.

"I started from being very poor, to where I am now," she said, adding that life for her has not been a bed of roses either.

Zurainah abhors the policy of setting a target for women representation as decision-makers.

"Why do we need a 30% benchmark? If you're capable, you should be given the job," she said, adding that women should be given the opportunity not because of their gender but for their capability.

Zurainah, the youngest of three children, takes her cue from her mother Rahimah Bee Abdul Hamid, an enterprising woman with a heart of gold.

"Apart from my siblings and I, my mother took in eight of our cousins. She treated us all the same."

To support her family, Rahimah and her children made curry puffs to sell. Her father was a civil servant whose work often took him away from the family.

Zurainah recounted times when they had to ration food.

At school, my only objective was to get out of poverty, to be successful and to have money so my mother would not go on suffering. My siblings shared the same commitment."

Her first ambition was to become a flight attendant but the idea was quickly shot down by her parents.

"They said that I could end up throwing people out of the plane," she said with a laugh.

She settled for a Secretarial Science diploma and is now doing her PhD, qualifications that led her to key positions in the corporate world.

Zurainah has a passion for children's rights.



Women empowerment, children's rights and access to education are issues close to Zurainah's heart.
— ASYRAF RASID/THE SUN

She recounted meeting a 10-year-old girl who had been sexually assaulted.

"Worse than that, she was also pregnant. She just hugged me for comfort," she said.

It is such issues that have prompted Zurainah to leverage on her corporate experience to help make a better world.

"With fellow Berjaya directors and team, we have crafted a programme to empower abused children and help them reintegrate into society."

Her family values extend to making Malaysia an inclusive nation.

"We must respect each other because we are all Keluarga Malaysia, as advocated by our prime minister," she said.

"As Malaysia is facing numerous challenges in health, environmental and political issues, we have to stand strong and (stay) united."

"We should teach our children to refrain from setting racial boundaries. We are all Malaysians," she added.

The role she relishes most now is being "Glam-mother" (grandmother) to four-month-old grandson Adam Mikhael Ikhwan.

"I would hear his laughter and I'd kiss him before I leave for work," she added.

