

Three outstanding achievers win Berita Harian awards

Syarafana Shafeeq

Ms Shirin Abdul Hamid was no stranger to being a minority in most of the settings she found herself in, whether it was as the only Malay student in the lion dance troupe at National Junior College, or as one of fewer than five female undergraduates in a class of 100 at Coventry University.

That has only steeled her to stand out. In January, the 54-year-old will become chief information officer and information technology department director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC.

The appointment caps an illustrious career that took her from chief technology officer at the United Nations Development Programme for 11 years to director-general and chief information officer of the information technology department at the Asian Development Bank for close to six.

In recognition of her outstanding achievements, Ms Shirin was awarded the Berita Harian (BH) Achiever of the Year last night at a ceremony at the Grand Hyatt Singapore. As Ms Shirin is in the Philippines, her sister, Ms Zabrina Abdul Hamid, received the award on her behalf from the guest of honour, Transport Minister S. Iswaran.

Ms Shirin said she was honoured to receive the award and hoped the work she does can serve as inspira-

tion to others. "Perhaps somewhere out there, there is a little girl who may one day want to make a significant mark in the world, and that is what I hope I will inspire by this award," she told reporters by video link from the Philippines a day before the ceremony.

Being a woman in the male-dominated tech industry took plenty of grit. "You have to be confident. I think a lot of the time women feel secondary to opportunities out there and there is always a reason why you feel like a secondary individual in that setting," she said.

"But I think you can hone in on your strengths... You have to learn how to excel and to be confident about yourself."

Mr Mohamed Saat Abdul Rahman, editor of the Malay-language daily, said that Ms Shirin's achievements in the field of IT and technology were an inspiration. "She has made the community, country and other women proud, making her an excellent role model and a worthy recipient of this award," he said at the ceremony.

BH also honoured the late Cultural Medallion batik artist Sarkasi Said with the Achiever of the Year award. Mr Sarkasi died of kidney failure on Oct 14 at the age of 81. Through his artist name Tzee, he showcased Singapore batik to the world in exhibitions.

His son, Mr Ika Zahri Sarkasi, accepted the posthumous award and said it honoured his late father's contribution to the community.



Ms Zabrina Abdul Hamid receiving the Berita Harian Achiever of the Year award on behalf of her sister, Ms Shirin Abdul Hamid (portrait), from the guest of honour, Transport Minister S. Iswaran, last night. They are joined by BH editor Mohamed Saat Abdul Rahman. PHOTO: BERITA HARIAN



Achiever of the Year, the late Sarkasi Said, through his artist name Tzee, showcased Singapore batik to the world in exhibitions. He died of kidney failure on Oct 14 at the age of 81. ST PHOTO: NUR DIYANA TAHA

National fencer Kiria Tikanah Abdul Rahman, 21, was also lauded with BH's Young Achiever of the Year award. Her accomplishments include being one of the 23 athletes who represented the Lion City in the Tokyo Olympics in July.

Ms Kiria began fencing at the age of eight after coming across a fencing club in a shopping centre with her parents.

The second-year chemistry student at the National University of Singapore faced the world No. 1, Ana Maria Popescu, at the world's largest sporting event.

"To me it felt like I've come full circle with the sport, as I started

with watching the Olympics on TV, and now I'm on TV at the Olympics," she said.

Like Ms Shirin, Ms Kiria said she would like to inspire the younger generation.

"The Olympics used to seem like a very big and impossible dream for me, but I managed to achieve it. So my advice to the younger generation is to never be afraid to have big dreams," she said.

Mr Iswaran said the Malay/Muslim community has made significant strides in education, employment and income.

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