

# Zhariff counts on putting his platform to good use



Zhariff believes the TN50 Initiative is the right platform to build on for a better future for both the people and country.

By Azdee Amir  
azdee@mmmail.com.my

PETALING JAYA — Zhariff Afandi, 36, is a passionate, patriotic Malaysian on a mission. Zhariff, who was born without arms, has never had it easy but he is not one to just sit back or take things lying down.

From a young age, he learnt to be independent and do things for himself instead of relying on others for help.

He is a fine example of someone who prides himself on having a positive outlook and a never-give-up attitude.

This is why it came as no surprise when Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin named Zhariff as one of the 13 2050 National Transformation (TN50) initiative ambassadors.

Zhariff said he initially had reservations when approached about the TN50 initiative because of past experiences.

"Early last month, when Khairy invited some of us to come by his office to have a chat about his ideas on TN50, I was initially sceptical and rather hesitant," he said.

"This was because of the rather comical failure of my previous ambassadorial experiences with various governmental ministries and agencies. Despite the hesitation, I felt it was best to hear him out and keep an open mind."

Making his feelings known to Khairy, the minister in turn presented an intriguing proposition and idea that immediately caught Zhariff's attention.

"Khairy put forth a valid question which sparked my interest when he asked, 'Where are we and what have we achieved? It would in fact be more important to figure out what now then,'" he said.

"As a TN50 ambassador tasked with delivering the values component, I hope to get the opportunity to truly make this something that unites us. A platform where we can discuss pertinent matters of importance while shaping our destiny."

"The true success of this is the buy-in from diversity ... regardless of race, religion,



political or social orientations, even age or gender.

"No more just complaining, let's start thinking of ways to make things better for the future."

Zhariff said he is adamant on being as positively impactful as possible because he believes Malaysia can become a top developed nation by 2050.

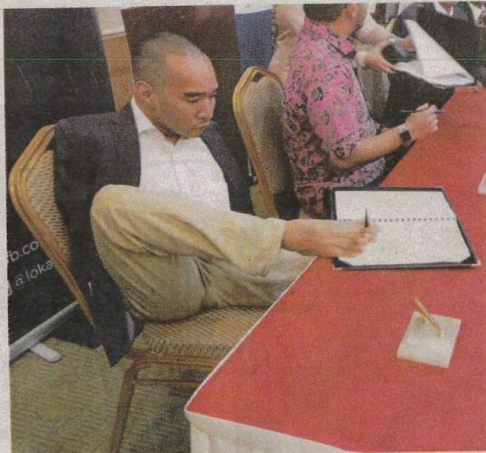
"I have much faith in Malaysia because with the right leadership, vision and platform such as the TN50 initiative, we can grow, prosper and develop. A better future is up to all of us really, as in how we build and forge ahead collectively as one nation," he said.

"I believe this strongly because there are so many amazing Malaysians out there, and I can attest to this as I encounter numerous amazing people every day." Zhariff said that despite the physical altercation incident that overshadowed the TN50 open discussion forum in Putrajaya on Wednesday, there is a lot of groundwork being laid for a better future.

"I know for a fact that a lot of work is going on behind the scenes to really prepare us for the next 30 years," he said.

"Recently, for the very first time, we had a circle discussion towards creating a workable structure for Malaysia to manoeuvre through to the future."

"We had a fairly diverse group of highly motivated people coming together on designing a framework for the future ... from academicians and professors to company founders and CEOs, analysts, strategists, social scientists, writers, environmentalists,



Zhariff takes down notes during a meeting.

social advocates and also people from arts and science. It's a concerted effort to bring the best minds from different layers of society to start shaping the future.

"We had discussions on an array of highly relevant topics for nation building, such as physical and social infrastructures, values, education, employment, food and health, safety and security, a wide range of topics really for a better tomorrow."

Zhariff brought a friend from Palestine to the discussion and his friend was more than impressed by what went on.

"My Palestinian friend Amjad pointed out how impressed he was with such a bold and forward thinking and moving initiative," he said.

"He couldn't believe his eyes, seeing so many amazing Malaysians all under one roof, fully utilising the opportunity to discuss and create real plans for the future of the nation."

Zhariff said Amjad, who is working with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) in Malaysia, pointed out to him that other countries around the globe have yet to achieve the kind of social and political progress Malaysia has.

"In a lot of other countries, the people's voice is much more suppressed, freedom and liberty are scarce or virtually non-existent, and the quality of life is lacking and wanting in many aspects," he said.

"We're not perfect, but I reckon we'll be fine as long as we're on the right path."

