

“Competence, commitment, courage, collaboration and clarity of purpose are visible elements of the Axiata ‘DNA’”

Dato Dr Nik Ramlah Nik Mahmood

Board Member
Axiata, 2017 – Present



After almost a year of self-imposed “garden leave” upon my retirement as Deputy Chief Executive of Securities Commission Malaysia in March 2016, I was appointed to the Board of Axiata Group Berhad on 21 March 2017.

Typically, public-listed companies are known to a capital market regulator for their notoriety or infamy. Those that get noticed for their glory and greatness, for doing the right things, for upholding the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and corporate conduct, are few and far between.

Axiata, however, was known to me for consistently being in this minority group, routinely contributing towards raising corporate governance standards in Malaysia. It is an exemplar of the best that corporate Malaysia has to offer, a GLC par excellence. This is manifested in the fact that, since the introduction of the ASEAN Corporate Governance Scorecard in 2012, an effort spearheaded by Securities Commission Malaysia, Axiata has always been among the top 10 Malaysian companies. In fact, in many of those years Axiata was in the top five.

At the ASEAN level, I had the privilege of knowing that Axiata was always in the top 20 among 550 companies from ASEAN countries. Axiata has also, through the years, won many accolades and excellence awards.

Hence, for a newly retired regulator, joining the Board of Axiata was one thing that I did with a deep sense of pride, but also a great deal of trepidation. How can I meaningfully contribute to the board? What do I know about the telco industry? Was there a fit for me in a board comprising such experienced members and charismatic and award-winning chairmen and CEOs?

At my first meeting the distinguished and affable Tan Sri Ghazzali helped address some of my initial doubts. However, I was then told that in joining the Board I would pave the way for Datuk Azzat’s retirement. He is a very experienced and highly respected senior legal practitioner and the fact that he was already a Commission Member when I joined the Securities Commission as a manager in 1993 compounded my apprehension.

It is now more than two years and my experience has been nothing short of exhilarating. Axiata’s management team, comprising highly qualified and talented people of many nationalities and led by the energetic and charismatic Tan Sri Jamal, provides strong support to the Board.

Competence, commitment, courage, collaboration and clarity of purpose are visible elements of the Axiata “DNA”. True to my expectation, the Board is a powerhouse of knowledge and experience, where diversity extends beyond gender to age, nationality, experience and qualification. Discussions are robust. Views are given with candour and conviction, but never at the expense of the strong camaraderie among Board members.

The Chairman of the Board, (Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar and, since 2018, Tan Sri Ghazzali) steered the meetings with fair and firm hands, delicately balancing the distinct but symbiotic roles of Board and management. Given the scale of Axiata’s business and presence in many countries in the region, meetings can be long and intense but, clichéd as it might sound, there is a never a dull moment.

Meanwhile, I am still trying to catch up with the frenetic pace of change that is sweeping across the telco industry worldwide....

