

**Programme To Groom More Women For The Board - Shahrizat
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PUTRAJAYA, Feb 9 (Bernama) -- The women, family and community development ministry is ready to kick-off the Women Directors Programme (WDP), as part of its efforts to achieve the policy targets of at least 30 per cent women representation in decision-making positions in the corporate sector by 2016.

The minister, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, said through the ministry's agency, NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW), a structured curriculum was designed to include a comprehensive online board readiness assessment, coaching and training for both technical and soft skills.

Upon completion of training, she said, the potential women directors would go through a board simulation exercise that would familiarise them with real-life challenges of serving on boards.

"A pilot group comprising a batch of 25 women participants will be invited to undergo the Women Director's Onboarding Training Programme, which is designed to prepare potential and qualified women to fully understand their roles as board directors.

"We are targeting to prepare between 100 to 200 women this year for immediate placement on board position through this initiative," she said at the 'Women Directors Programme' Framework press conference here Thursday.

The text of her speech was read by secretary-general Datuk Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur.

Today, women participation on the board in Malaysia is only 7.2 per cent while the proportion of women on the board of top European companies has grown to 12 per cent in 2010, from 8 per cent in 2004.

Beside the WDP initiative, Shahrizat said NIEW had developed a comprehensive women directors registry that would be the single source of accurate and updated data of all eligible and qualified Malaysian women for board positions.

"The registry would address the issue of demand by corporate companies to fill board positions in their organisations," she said.

To create awareness of the WDP initiative, Shahrizat said NIEW would be holding a series of road shows in major cities -- Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak -- next month to create an opportunity to network with industry business leaders and communicate the business values of the WDP and the registry.

"We will also use this platform to engage senior businesses and thought leaders in a discussion on why diversity in the boardroom is the right thing for business," she said.

Meanwhile, NIEW director Tan Sri Datuk Rafiah Salim said the agency targeted to register 500 women in the registry by year-end.

Beside capturing pertinent information of the skills and experience of professional women, she said the registry would also track the placement of board-ready candidates.

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