

Headline	Suriakala makes history as 'two-star' general		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	28 Feb 2020	Color	Full Color
Section	Local News	Circulation	36,278
Page No	12	Readership	108,834
Language	English	ArticleSize	387 cm ²
Journalist	ADRIAN DAVID KUALA LUMPUR	AdValue	RM 13,340
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 40,021



'DEDICATED OFFICER'

Suriakala makes history as 'two-star' general

ADRIAN DAVID
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE country will have its first non-Malay, woman 'two-star' general. Making history will be Brigadier-General Suriakala Suriabagavan, who will be promoted to major-general at a ceremony in conjunction with the 87th Army Day in Kota Kinabalu on Sunday.

Army chief General Tan Sri Ahmad Hasbullah Mohd Nawawi commended Suriakala, a grandmother of two, for her astute leadership and top-notch officer qualities.

"She needs minimal (or no) supervision and can deliver where it matters most."

"Suriakala is a very dedicated officer and we are proud and honoured to have someone like her serving in not only the army, but the entire armed forces and nation."

"We need more staff with her calibre in all ranks, as she is a fine example for others to emulate."

"The army is proud to present her the second 'star'. Well done!" Hasbullah told the *New Straits Times*.

He said despite the challenges and hindrances she faced in her private life and at work, Suriakala always carried out her duties exceptionally.

Suriakala, who will turn 60 on Oct 26, said she was touched by the gesture from the army and armed forces.

"Never have I imagined that someday I would be promoted to such an esteemed level. My family and I are forever grateful to the army for where I am today."

"I will continue to give my best in my undertakings."

"I hope my achievement will spur other Malaysian women to pursue a rewarding career in the armed forces."

Suriakala hails from Klang, Selangor, and is a mother to two sons.

She is from the third intake of women cadet officers from the short-service commission, who enlisted with the armed forces in December 1981.

Her coursemates include Army deputy chief Lieutenant-General Datuk Hasagaya Abdullah.

After completing a year of training at the Officer Cadet School in Port Dickson, she was commissioned as a second-lieutenant in 1982.

She began work as an assistant records officer with the Records and Pensions Directorate on Dec 18 that year.

From there on, Suriakala continued her 38-year career with the directorate, rising through the ranks to become a major in

August 1993 and lieutenant-colonel in December 2000.

In October 2008, she was promoted to colonel and made the army's human resources (policy and development) director.

On June 3, 2015, she was made a brigadier-general to become personnel services division (manpower branch) director at the armed forces headquarters.

Suriakala has master's degrees in management from Universiti Malaysia in 2000, and social science (defence studies) from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2006.

In May 2012, she attended a defence resource management course at the United States Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

Dental specialist Major-General (Rtd) Datuk Dr Roshidah Ishak was the first 'one-star' woman in the military in January 2007, before becoming a 'two-star' general in November 2015.

Brigadier-General Datuk Dr Thavachelvi Tangarajah became the second woman to be made a

'one-star' in 2009, and is still serving as an obstetrics and gynaecology specialist at the Tunku Mizan Armed Forces Hospital in Wangsa Maju.

Military intelligence officer and former Armed Forces sportswoman of the year, Brigadier-General (Rtd) Datuk Norhuda Ahmad, was the first woman non-medical officer to become a 'one-star' general in February 2011.

In November 2017, the Defence Ministry's former public relations deputy director, Major-General (Rtd) Datuk Fadzlette Othman Merican Idris Merican, became the military's second woman 'two-star' general. She, however, was seconded to serve as press secretary to former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force had its first 'one-star' woman in Brigadier-General (Rtd) Datuk Yohanez Ahmad in August 2016.

The Royal Malaysian Navy has yet to see its first 'one-star' admiral.



Suriakala
Suriabagavan