

It's as if I am running a technology company, says Tajuddin

KUALA LUMPUR: Bursa Malaysia Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Tajuddin Atan is used to sleepless nights.

As a trader at Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Bhd in the early 1980s, while others slept, he would be up taking orders, and trading currencies and bonds when markets were trading in New York.

"I wake up early and sleep late out of habit. During my time as a trader, I'd get orders in the middle of the night. So, I would always stay active and alert. Now I'm used to it," he said.

Tajuddin, who graduated from Universiti Putra Malaysia and later attained an MBA at Ohio Univer-

sity, would eventually take charge of an entire trading room, handling domestic bonds, foreign bonds, money market, derivatives and futures trading.

"On top of that, I also dabbled with the stock market," he told the *New Straits Times* and *Berita Harian* in an interview at his office in Bukit Mahkamah here.

Tajuddin was with Bank Bumiputra for 17 years, including as treasurer/assistant general manager of the Treasury Division in Bumiputra Commerce Bank's New York branch. His last designation in BCB was senior vice-president, Treasury Division.

It wasn't long before his skills in

corporate planning, treasury, risk and operations management, and debt restructuring began to be noticed.

In 2002, Tajuddin was brought to turn around listed ActaCorp Holdings Bhd, where he served as managing director until 2004.

He later managed several other companies, including Chase Perdana Bhd (2001-2004), Bank Simpanan Nasional (2004-2007), Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd (2007-2009) and RHB Capital Bhd (2009-2011).

Tajuddin joined Bursa as chief executive officer on April 1, 2011, and is quick to dispel the misconception that it's a simple operation.

"Do you know that we run the biggest, fastest matching system in this country in terms of volume and speed?

"To me, it's as if I'm running a technology company. I'm also running a surveillance company. I'm also running an operations company and a marketing entity."

The powerful backbone that runs the trading system at Bursa, and interconnects with brokerages and other market participants, is what keeps Tajuddin up at night nowadays because failure is not an option.

"If (the trading system) is down or it doesn't start, all the positive things I've done in the past won't matter.

That's it," the 56-year-old said.

At Bursa, Tajuddin is also on a mission to overcome the challenge of foreign fund managers who can sell out of the market purely based on perception, not reality.

"Obviously, global investors are shrewd as they invest in emerging market around the world and, at times, can seem ruthless as they can sell out in two seconds without thinking twice.

"When I meet them and call them, I tell them: 'You can't blame me. I was one of you before. I know'.

"Having understood them, I now have this problem of how to deal with them. It's payback." **Additional reporting by Amir Hisyam Rasid**