

06 AUG, 2025

FUELLED BY GRIT, POWERED BY YOUTH

The Star, Malaysia



By LEE CHONGHUI

EACH dull thud of a cement bag hitting the boot transports Mohd Zulfakar Mohd Zain back to a core memory.

He still remembers how his mother, shoulders hunched and brow damp, heaved cement bags, one after another into his old family car – a secondhand Proton Gen2 – until the suspension sagged.

“She was once a clerk, with no formal education or industry experience. She stepped up to provide for the family after my father fell ill, starting a small construction business called *Roda Emas Bina*.”

“She challenged herself in the construction industry, learnt the trade by doing, and made things work. She has been my greatest inspiration ever,” says the 43-year-old from Muar, Johor, his voice thick with pride and sentimentality.

It was this unshakable resilience – this fierce determination to rise above hardship – that shaped how Mohd Zulfakar approaches life and how he leads and lifts others up.

Inspired by his mother’s grit and determination, the former oil and gas professional left a comfortable, high-paying job and founded *Roda Emas Industries Sdn Bhd (REISB)*, a Bumiputera enterprise built on the same principles of hard work and resilience.

“My mother was my biggest supporter. When I told her I wanted to leave oil and gas and start my own company, she did not hesitate. She told me she had always known it was something I wanted to do – let’s go do it.”

Electrifying progress

Founded in 2014, REISB became fully operational by 2018, guided by a clear mission: to deliver sustainable energy solutions while empowering the next generation of Malaysian talent.

“We saw the opportunity and vast potential in Malaysia’s energy sector – not just to build a business, but to create a platform for young graduates who often don’t get a chance with multinational companies or government-linked companies.

“In oil and gas, the cake is big – but so many are scrambling for a slice. We wanted to do something niche, impactful, and new,” says Mohd Zulfakar.

Today, REISB focuses on three pillars: energy efficiency, renewable energy, and e-mobility. It has since grown into a trusted name in Malaysia’s EV infrastructure landscape.

From a modest team doing hands-on installations, REISB now counts among its clients **Tenaga Nasional Berhad, BMW Malaysia, Malaysia Green Technology Corporation (MGTC), and Sime Darby**.

So far, the company has deployed over 150 EV chargers nationwide, including in Sabah and Sarawak.

A standout moment came in 2022, when REISB helped BMW Malaysia roll out DC fast chargers across its dealerships – supporting MGTC’s national EV roadmap.

That same year, REISB co-developed Malaysia’s first certified EV charger installation training module with MGTC, helping set standards for the growing sector.

In 2023, REISB launched its

FUELLED BY GRIT, POWERED BY YOUTH

UEM Group is helping Bumiputera companies shape a future of lasting impact and meaningful change through strategic support



Mohd Zulfakar (in white) with his multi-talented team at REISB’s own EV charging hub at Cyberjaya’s Rekaspace. — Photos by YAP CHEE HONG/The Star.



Amran Hafiz says UEM Group, the infrastructure arm of Khazanah Nasional Bhd, is mandated to spearhead domestic investments in infrastructure and sustainable development across Malaysia.

own EV charging hub at Cyberjaya’s Rekaspace and introduced the Go To-U app, a reservation and charger management platform built in partnership with a US-based firm.

“Unlike companies that only install chargers, we also operate our own backend system – allowing remote monitoring, maintenance, and reservations. It’s a rare full-stack offering in Malaysia,” explains Mohd Zulfakar.

REISB currently owns and operates three EV charging hubs, with plans to launch three more in 2025 – further strengthening its full-suite EV infrastructure capabilities. Still, the road hasn’t been easy.

“We face a lot of challenges – location, electrical load availability, and capital. You may have the site but not enough power.

“Or you may have power but no strategic location. And then there’s the investment – everything is upfront. But we push through.”



Harman Faiz says UEM Lestra cultivates homegrown green champions and drives Malaysia’s transition toward a greener, smarter future, with Bumiputera industry leaders at the forefront.

People over profit

On what sets REISB apart, Mohd Zulfakar doesn’t point to the company’s portfolio of successful EV infrastructure projects. Instead, he highlights what he considers REISB’s greatest asset – its people.

“We believe raw talent, when given the right guidance and training, can grow into something extraordinary,” he says.

From the beginning, REISB made a deliberate choice to hire young graduates – often fresh out of school, and frequently overlooked by larger companies due to lack of experience.

To date, the company has trained over 200 young talents, from smart meter installers to EV charger technicians.

“Many started as SPM leavers or diploma holders and are now pursuing degrees, MBAs, and industry certifications. We train them from scratch.

“Even our account and admin teams know how to maintain EV



Mohd Zulfakar says REISB believes that raw talent, when given the right guidance and training, can grow into something extraordinary.

chargers. Why? Because I told them – you must understand the business end-to-end.”

Mohd Zulfakar, who once mixed cement by hand on his own project sites, believes in building holistic skillsets across the board.

“I don’t just hire people to do one job. They’re willing to learn everything and upskill themselves. And if your staff are being poached, that means you’ve trained them well.”

His deep commitment to youth empowerment was cemented during a past oil and gas project in Terengganu, where he encountered two junior technicians overwhelmed by a complex job they had been left to manage alone.

“That was when I realised there are many young people who just need someone to believe in them – and to show them how.

“We bring them in with just diplomas or degrees. Many come in unsure, with limited practical knowledge. But we invest in them – just like how UEM Lestra

invests in us.”

Powering up with UEM Group

In 2023, REISB caught the attention of UEM Lestra, the green technology arm of UEM Group Bhd, which is wholly owned by Khazanah Nasional.

Recognising REISB’s potential to be a key EV infrastructure player, UEM Lestra acquired a 49% stake in 2024, bringing financial strength and strategic depth. Before the involvement of UEM Lestra, Mohd Zulfakar admits REISB operated like many SMEs – focused on execution rather than forecasting.

“It was just bid, win, and execute. With UEM Lestra lending us their expertise through guidance and constructive advice, we’re learning the value of structured planning, proper cash flow projections and long-term business strategy. We now have a five-year plan,” he says.

This strategic investment is part of UEM Group’s broader vision to develop Malaysia’s green economy by uplifting Bumiputera communities and businesses in strategic sectors.

It is aligned with the fundamental pillar of the “Raise the Floor” initiative under the Government-linked Enterprises Activation and Reform Programme (GEAR-up).

This momentum is also in step with the Malaysian government’s commitment under the 13th Malaysia Plan (RMK13), which outlines an expanded push for EV adoption – including a significant scale-up in the development of public charging infrastructure nationwide.

UEM Group managing director Datuk Amran Hafiz Affudin notes that UEM’s mandate, as Khazanah Nasional Bhd’s flagship infrastructure arm, is to drive its domestic investments in infrastructure and sustainable development in Malaysia.

“Nurturing homegrown Bumiputera talent, such as REISB is part of this mandate as we aim to create a vibrant, sustainable green ecosystem within the country by empowering talented local entrepreneurs with the right resources, expertise and market access.

“This will accelerate Malaysia’s transition to e-Mobility, while also positioning the nation as a regional leader in green industries,” says Amran Hafiz.

UEM Lestra chief executive officer Harman Faiz Habib Muhammad says REISB exemplifies the kind of innovative Bumiputera business the company aims to support – one that combines technology, sustainability and resilience.

“Through this collaboration, we foster green champions from within the country and drive Malaysia’s shift towards a greener, smarter future with Bumiputera industry leaders leading the way,” says Harman Faiz.