

Making 'Baby Reformasi' proud
Malaysiakini.com
April 5, 2007
Beh Lih Yi

Like any mother-to-be, Nurul Izzah Anwar wants her child to be proud of her. Unlike most others, she has chosen an unusual path to fulfill her wish.

A visibly glowing 'Puteri Reformasi'- as Nurul Izzah is fondly known - has chosen to enter active politics to ensure that she "does something" for 'Baby Reformasi', who is due by the end of the year.

Asked how she feels about becoming a mother, the eldest daughter of ex-deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim said: "I feel that I am accountable in some way. I don't want to disappoint my child, I do want to make sure I do something that will make him or her proud (of me).

"It gives me a lot of pressure in the sense (of deciding) what I will leave behind."

Nurul Izzah, 26, was married three years ago to engineer Raja Ahmad Shahrir Iskandar. This will be their first child.

She said her parents were elated when they were told that "she had put on a bit of extra weight" and to expect their first grandchild soon.

"You have to ask my mom (Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail) what she prefers being called, whether it is grandma or granny [...] We haven't discussed it," she laughed.

However, when asked when she would be delivering the baby, Nurul Izzah demured.

"God willing, at end of the year. I can't tell you more, because then the other 'party' will make preparations," she quipped.

Indeed, should the general election is called at the end of the year, both father - who is still serving a five-year ban from active politics - and daughter would not be able to contest.

Nurul Izzah said her husband - whom she described as a "soul mate" - has been supportive of her decision to take up full-time politics.

"He has supported me, comforted me every time I've faced difficulties, it will be okay," she said.

She appeared bashful when pressed on how she fell in love - she met Shahrir at a meeting in London in 1999 where he was a student after giving a speech about Anwar's incarceration.

"Do I need to (tell you)? Both of us are very shy and our eyes met [...] The rest is history."

'Hurtful rumours'

On rumours that current Umno Youth vice-chief and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin had tried to woo her in the past, she appeared amused.

"Unfortunately, he didn't have the privilege to do so. No."

However, she said such rumours have been hurtful, including one that alleged a "relationship" between her and ex-Parti Keadilan Rakyat Youth chief Ezam Mohd Nor seven years ago.

"I really didn't know how to face (the allegation, and thought), is this going to be my future? I was so young at the time and I didn't even have a boyfriend," she said of the 'terrible lies'.

Nevertheless, being an optimistic person, she felt that the allegations and the sudden change in her status - when her father was sacked as deputy premier and jailed on charges he claims to have been politically motivated - have made her a tougher person.

"It was (difficult) being the daughter of the deputy prime minister because you never really knew what people's real intentions were or why they wanted to talk to you or befriend you," she said.

Recollecting her 18 months in the United States as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, she said: "It was a breath of fresh air because people cared about whatever we said.

"In class, we were really encouraged to speak up which was difficult for me at first. I was not used to that in the Malaysian education system."

Before pursuing her Master degree overseas, Nurul Izzah was educated at local public schools and obtained her bachelor degree in electrical and electronic engineering from the Universiti Tenaga Malaysia.

Like her, most of Nurul Izzah's five siblings attended local national schools and universities, with the exception of the two youngest who are currently studying at the Mont Kiara International School mainly because they were overseas with their father in recent years.

In the conclusion of a two-part exclusive interview, she also elaborates on her time as a student in Kuala Lumpur's Assunta Secondary School and a young Muslim woman in the US from 2005.

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