

Ummi's tales of sex, money and scandals
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Emerging 13 years after appearing as a key witness in former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim's first sodomy trial, Ummi Hafilda Ali is back with a vengeance, this time sitting squarely in the BN camp in Merlimau.

Speaking at an 'expose' talk organised by the international bureau of Jasin Umno, Ummi Hafilda's rehearsed and emotive speech had the 200 or so attendees at the Kampung Chinchin event hanging on to her every word.

Preceded by the cheeky and often crass Seremban Umno leader Ishak Ismail, the night was set for a lot of what sells - sex, money and scandals.

For many in the audience, much of Ummi Hafilda's revelations - about Anwar's alleged sexual scandals prior to his sacking, and about her brother Azmin, who was then Anwar's personal assistant and is now PKR deputy president - were completely new.

And judging from their expressions last night, most believed all the lady in purple said, whose voice often quivered as if she was going to break down in tears when recalling what happened in 1997 and 1998.

Pulling at heartstrings

Tracing her story all the way back to the day she "found Anwar out" and to the day she met fourth premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Ummi Hafilda craftily painted a picture of herself as a victim of the "power and greed" of the de facto PKR leader.

"They sent 50 police officers, some masked, in a black maria with a loud hailer to my friend's house, where I was staying, calling me to come out.

"I refused and called my mother, asking her to pray for me... by the grace of God, the door couldn't be opened.

"The light strike force then entered through the roof, scaring my friend's young children who were screaming in terror," she said.

Pulling at the heartstrings of the eager listeners, she spoke of how she was "tortured" into signing a declaration to say she had lied about Anwar's transgressions.

All the same, Ummi Hafilda said, she was then 28 years old and frightened, but she emboldened herself for the sake of her "nation, religion and race" - the reasons why she was now back to "save Malaysia from Anwar".

She said: "I did not shed a single tear (when being tortured). Later, when I met with Dr Mahathir, his eyes were brimming with tears when I told him that everything was true.

"I asked him why he set the police on me and he very cutely said, 'Saya tak tau (I didn't know)'. That was how we were obsessed with Anwar."

Pakatan session not as sexy

Not a single person budged from his or her seat during the 90 minutes that she spoke. They all stayed until midnight, urging Umami Hafilda to 'expose' more.

She was treated as a celebrity, with members of the audience going up to shake her hand and take photographs with her.

BN candidate Roslan Ahmad, who graced the event during the tail end of Umami Hafilda's lengthy speech, also paid lip service to her.

"I am proud of Umami Hafilda. I have met her a few times before and look forward to meeting her more in the future," he said after shaking her hand.

Less than a kilometre away, Pakatan Rakyat attracted about 300 people at its ceramah, where PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang was the main speaker.

Unlike Umami Hafilda's sex, money and politics hardsell, the Pakatan lot, made up of PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar and popular PAS leader Mohamad Sabu as well, was sombre in comparison.

Speaking on the need for knowledge about government debts and corruption, Pakatan stayed the course, trying to drive home the message that only a strong opposition could keep Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam's government in check.

They also tried to dispel the 'myth' that only BN could bring development to the people.

"Malays, unfortunately, don't read much, so their knowledge of the world is what they hear and see. In their heads, Umno is the government and government means development.

"That is why when you reach the Kelantan border, which has been under PAS for 20 years, you will have to mount a bullock cart.

"There are no proper roads. There are also no hospitals, everyone uses shamans," Mohamad Sabu said to titters from the crowd.