

DAP candidate: I'm underdog in Teluk Intan
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TELUK INTAN DAP's Teluk Intan by-election candidate Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud today admitted that she is an "underdog" when compared to Gerakan president Mah Siew Keong, her opponent.

Dyana, 27, is new to Teluk Intan, while Mah, 53 has served the constituency for close to 20 years, including nine years as its MP previously, between 1999 to 2008.

"I am an underdog, I am very well aware of that. But the party has given me this task, and I am offering myself to the rakyat - and it is up to them to decide," Dyana told Malaysiakini in an interview at her operations centre today.

With nominations due tomorrow, Dyana is already running around a tight schedule as she aims to make her presence felt against the well-known Mah, and the fact that DAP is fielding her, a young Malay woman, as a candidate in a Chinese majority seat is, by her own admission, a "risk."

"We are trying to break racial barriers, to show the people that they do not need to vote according to race. A Chinese does not necessarily have to take care of a Chinese constituency," she said.

"We are doing our best to educate the people and sell this idea," she added.

But Dyana said she is not cowed by the risk and challenges posed in this by-election.

"There's a Malay saying- 'pantang berundur sebelum berjuang' (do not give up without a fight). Of course this is a tough fight, but I am assigned to this task, I am passionate," she said.

Dyana said that she was an "adrenalin junkie", and challenges like the one is facing in Teluk Intan is something she would enjoy.

Greenhorn in politics

Resonating with her acceptance speech when announced as the candidate for the by-election yesterday, Dyana said that what she feels strongly about is indeed racial unity.

"If I'm elected, my forte would be youth participation and women issues. But above all that, my biggest passion would be racial unity," she added.

The UiTM law graduate, while being a greenhorn in politics and by-elections, is being ably assisted by some top DAP national leaders, mainly Tony Pua (right) and Teo Nie Ching.

"I have these leaders to assist me, they are always readily available," she said.

Their presence somehow seems to negate the apparent unhappiness of some local Perak DAP grassroots over her candidature in a Chinese majority seat.

Despite the reality of the task ahead of her is well understood, Dyana is still brimming with excitement about being named the candidate.

"I am still very thrilled, very excited. When in university, I used to tell my lecturer that I wanted to become a MP. I did have that ambition, but I did not know it could happen at this age," she said.

But quickly, she stresses that age is just a number.

"Former Batu Gajah MP Fong Po Kuan was 26 when she was elected. Teo (Nie Ching, Kulai MP) was 27 when she won the Serdang parliamentary seat in 2008. Even our PM, Najib Razak, was only 29 when he became Menteri Besar of Pahang. So age is not a factor," she said.

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