

Nurul Izzah explains why she takes neutral stance
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The first thing Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah sees as she steps into her second-floor walk-up office is the newly hung-up Hari Raya Aidilfitri decorations.

On the walls of the reception area are Hari Raya greeting cards, and one that has the federal crest printed on the front stands out.

teoh beng hock memorial night 160710 nurul izzah"Oh no, why is the ministry's card here! I got a Hari Raya card from (Defence Minister) Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, a day after he called me a traitor. I threw it out. (laughs) No, I'm kidding," Nurul Izzah (left) said when met by Malaysiakini for an interview yesterday.

Early into Ramadan, Zahid had labelled the plucky parliamentarian a traitor for telling Indonesian publication Kompas that the first submarine purchased by his ministry could not dive.

But as the first-born of PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and party de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, she seems to have been able to take such attacks in her stride.

Having perhaps entered politics in her parents' shadows, Nurul Izzah is slowly but surely pushing to be known in her own right.

Family ties

Family ties, however, may have put her in a pickle lately especially when it comes to choosing sides in the heated contest for the deputy president's post.

"I share the views of Zaid who is also the leader of Federal Territories PKR, (where Nurul Izzah is vice-chairperson) and we have had very good frank discussions on the way forward in the Federal Territories (but) I grew up with (vice-president) Azmin Ali as my father's private secretary," she said.

azmin ali pc in parliament 020709 02Her absence at the press conference by 20 PKR parliamentarians and senators to announce support for Azmin (left) for the post on Monday speaks volumes.

"I didn't attend the press conference. That's quite a clear (signal of) my neutral stance... I think the decision should be taken by Lembah Pantai and my team over who we will nominate," she said.

The open declaration on Monday was followed by another statement by 13 PKR state assemblypersons from Selangor and Negri Sembilan who also joined Azmin's camp.

For the first-time parliamentarian, it may not be outright wrong to declare support, but it does influence votes in this first-time direct election - something which she would like to avoid.

"It's not that (the elected representatives are) trying to push their weight around, it's more like declaring who they think should be the leader to take charge. There's nothing wrong with that... you can put it down to slick campaigning.

"(But) it is still too early to declare. It's a direct election, every member has a right to choose. I don't want to influence that somewhat," she said.

Daggers out

In fact, she said, much of the hullabaloo over the declaration of support has been far too sensationalised. And to some extent, media spin too has contributed to such high tensions.

"I was there during the dinner (where Anwar was said to have undermined Zaid's standing in favour of Azmin).

"There was no directive to toe any line. To a certain extent (there was media spin), for this matter in particular. There was no such thing. (Anwar) didn't openly declare his support," she said.

All the same, she admits that there has been quite a bit of excitement over the PKR election this time around, mainly due to the new format.

"This could be the high point where the daggers would be let loose...But somehow it could take a more nuanced tone as the weeks go by. I am still hopeful," she said.

NONEBackstabbing notwithstanding, Nurul Izzah is also hopeful that the party will close ranks once the votes have been counted, but only if any mudslinging is kept in check.

Early on Monday, Zaid (right), the only candidate who has announced his intention to contest the post, claimed that a blogger was offered money to slander him.

"The leadership and disciplinary council should investigate (such claims). It's important. But how do you influence 400,000 people? It's not going to be easy. At least, we have that as a safeguard," she said.

For now, the 'Puteri Reformasi' has got her eyes on the 4,200-odd votes she has to swing her way at the Lembah Pantai division election, where she will lead her team of hopefuls.

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