

The man who takes on Khairy
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 07, 2008
Terence Netto

For a start, political allegiances have long been unconventional in the family of Badrul Hisham Shaharin, PKR's parliamentary candidate for Umno stronghold of Rembau in Negri Sembilan.
MCPX

His mother, a hospital amah, used to vote in the 1980s for DAP's Hu Sepang in the Rasah constituency while his father, an employee of Tenaga Nasional, was a dyed-in-the-wool Umno man in Rembau.

"There was no trouble in my family because of differences on who to support," said the 30-year-old former schoolteacher. "We were left to our preferences."

cikgu badrul hisham pkr candiadte rembau 020308 01The odd political preferences have carried over into Badrul's life of activism. He is popularly known by the moniker 'Chegubard', in no small part because of his admiration for Che Guevara, the Argentine doctor who fought with Fidel Castro in the Cuban uprising of the 1950s before choosing to foment revolution in Bolivia where he met with a violent end in 1967.

"The first person I revere for his defence of the poor and underprivileged is Prophet Muhamad, peace be upon him," emphasised Badrul.

"I also admire Che Guevara for his sacrifices on behalf of the poor in South America," added Badrul who wears his hair, facial and cranial, in the style of the Argentine who enjoys mythical status in the annals of modern political revolutions.

Badrul has been arrested 14 times since he became active in the reformasi movement nine years ago. He has had to run a gauntlet of obstacles because of his scrapes with the law on illegal public gatherings.

rembau parliamentary seatBadrul's time at a teachers' training college in Seremban from 1997 to 2000 was a period of ferment on account of his involvement in reformasi agitation.

Despite the frequent interruptions to his studies and the array of obstacles he had to face with the authorities at the college where he trained, he passed out to teach science and mathematics.

Predictably, his years in a secondary school in Mambau, which is in the Rembau constituency, were tumultuous simply because he did not desist in his engagements with reformasi.

Anytime there was demonstration for a human rights cause, Badrul would find time to be involved. He was also active in Gerak, the NGO concerned with fighting to abolish the ISA and combat corruption.

He had to leave the teaching service in early 2004 to contest in the 11th general election where he came up against Umno's Mohamed Hassan, in the Rantau state seat. He was beaten by Hassan who went on to become the new Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar.

Homeboy vs Umno rising star

Odd political couplings in Badrul's personal history apparently go with electoral contests against stellar opponents as for the March 8 poll, this ex-teacher is up against Umno's rising eminence, Khairy Jamaluddin, 32.

khairy jamaluddin interview 011107 poisedOf Khairy (right), Badrul said: "I like him to see the poor here in Rembau who have long been staunch supporters of Umno and the BN. They struggle with their little incomes and small expectations while an elite take hold of their party and appropriate for themselves the wealth of the nation.

"My involvement in reformasi was an effort to open the eyes of the ordinary people to the actual state of the nation where the rakyat are allocated the crumbs while a steadily contracting circle of cronies and kinsmen help themselves to the caviar.

"This is an astonishing deception foisted on the people by an elite aided and abetted by a controlled media. It has to stop but first we have to open the eyes of the ordinary citizen."

Has his father been awakened to the son's theology of liberation?

"It was hard for him because leaving Umno is as repugnant as religious apostasy. But he has come round," said Badrul, who was the top student at the Asian Human Rights School in Kwangju, South Korea, to which he won a scholarship last year.

He was adjudged best student from among 20 human rights activists from the rest of Asia selected for the course. If he bests Khairy Jamaluddin in tomorrow's poll, he will have added another stripe to his list of achievements in a life of pressure-filled political engagement.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/79311>