

Nurul tells Sharizat : give villagers their keys
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With the clock winding down to decision time in the furiously contested Lembah Pantai parliamentary ward, challenger Nurul Izzah Anwar of PKR upped the rhetorical ante against incumbent Shahrizat Jalil of BN-Umno. MCPX

nurul izzah ceramah 050308 talking Izzah, daughter of reformasi icon Anwar Ibrahim, de facto leader of PKR, called on her ministerial opponent not to wait until after the election to fulfil a promise on Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin (Low Cost Flats for Hardcore Poor Scheme) for Kampong Kerinchi residents.

More than half the 3,008 low cost flat units in Kerinchi are unoccupied because squatters in this area are unable to afford the RM124 monthly rental that goes towards payment of cost of ownership of the units under the PPRT scheme.

Last Tuesday, in a ceramah that saw Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi make an appearance, the Umno minister told the villagers that if she were returned for the fourth time as their MP, she would work to see that the 1,973 unoccupied units be taken up by hardcore poor families.

My father's initiative

"Don't wait until after the election," chimed Izzah. "Give the squatters the keys now and allow them to rent the units until they have cleared the ownership costs. Leverage all the publicity that gesture gains you but give them the keys."

Izzah said the issue was close to her family's heart because it was her father who initiated the PPRT project when he was finance minister in the 1990s.

lembah pantai nomination day 240208 hands "Kampong Kerinchi squatters remember my father's initiative and now I want to see that their long wait to own the low cost units built for them become a reality. Let's not make this issue a political football, thumped here and there for electoral advantage. Let Shahrizat do the right thing and help the long deprived obtain their due."

The electoral allegiance of residents of this poor precinct in the Lembah Pantai constituency is a bellwether of sorts among the poor of this Malay majority seat: if you win their vote, you win the Malay ground.

The gauntlet hurled by Izzah comes just as reports were received of a neck-and-neck battle between the incumbent MP and her newcomer opponent who carries one of the more cachet laden names in Malaysian politics.

Izzah also had a reply to the indirect attacks on her leveled by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, one of several BN luminaries, who have come to Lembah Pantai to shore up Shahrizat's campaign.

PM makes by-election inevitable

On Wednesday night, Najib had urged voters to plump for experience in their choice of MP and cautioned that a vote for the challenger would be an exercise in futility because Izzah may quit later to force a by-election for the temporarily disbarred Anwar to contest.

lembah pantai nomination day 240208 anwar"Yes, I lack experience if you mean the experience of corrupt practices, of silent complicity in the corrupt acts of colleagues, of tacit collusion in the acts of suppression of those who struggle for justice, of apathy in the blighting of the judiciary, and towards a host of other deviations by the strong and powerful," answered Izzah, once the symbolic queen of the reformasi movement.

On the question of her quitting, she said: "It is Prime Minister Abdullah who has forced this early election and made a by-election anywhere PKR wins all but inevitable. Now they say my election and that of presumptive PKR winners would be futile.

"They want to have their cake and eat it too. They say my father is nothing and then they call an early election. We say my father's re-entry into Parliament is more important than any of us sitting there. This early election is confirmation of our estimate of his importance. Their reasoning is facile, ours is factual."

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