

**Nurul Izzah - Target of next Umno 'Madness'?**  
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COMMENT In what her supporters slam as a bald attempt to dampen the rising popularity of Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah, the daughter of Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's mainstream media has launched an onslaught of reports that insinuate she is a traitor to her own race and wants to abolish the "special rights" of the Malays.

"This will be their next madness. Since when did Nurul or Pakatan question the special position of the Malays? The only people Nurul has questioned are Perkasa and Ibrahim Ali," PKR strategic director Tian Chua told Malaysia Chronicle.

"This is a clear attempt to tarnish Nurul and to make her unpopular with the Malays because Pakatan has reiterated countless times it is committed to defending the existing federal constitution. Umno is afraid she will become as popular as her dad especially with the Malay youth."

Indeed, the Umno press have pushed out a slew of reports from top leaders right up to Prime Minister Najib Razak warning against "anyone" who questioned the "social contract" established by the country's founding fathers in 1957.

A line-up of experts was also roped in to criticize Nurul for her widely-praised two-part article Malaysia or Malaysaja that questioned the domineering politics championed by the Umno government. But her words were spun into an outright challenge of the Malay position in society.

"The special position of the Malays started since a long time ago and based on the system of government existed then. In the peninsula, nine Malay kingdoms existed since 1895, and continue to exist until today. They don't understand the constitution and are ignorant of what they can or cannot do. There shouldn't be any debate on the constitution because what is important is to follow what has been in use for so long," Bernama reported Prof Emeritus Dr Khoo Kay Kim as saying.

Indeed, it appears that the 30-year old Nurul may have finally come into her own as a political force to be reckoned with. Her article marks her entry into the still-roomy centre stage of the next-generation of Malaysian leaders.

Due to Umno's elitist system, there are few potential prime ministers that can be identified in the party other than Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin - who first catapulted into national politics after marrying the daughter of former premier Abdullah Badawi. Since then, he has built his own small following.

But despite Nurul's lesser political experience, she may have chalked a lead over Khairy in the popularity ratings. Her supporters say she is tougher than her delicate beauty suggests and she is just starting to show her steel. An excellent speaker, she is said to be a chip off the old block.

Comparisons are already being drawn between her and the 34-year old Khairy, who has so far dominated the news flow. Both are married with children but neither has allowed their private commitments to distract their political careers.

Both leaders also realize that to lead Malaysia's 28 million multi-racial population, they have

to champion all races and not just their own community. The question is how serious and impartial are they really especially in face of political bullies such as Ibrahim Ali, the chief of ultra-Malay rights groups Perkasa, who has blasted both of them for betraying their race.

Khairy's minders have pitched his Oxford-background but despite his brilliance, Khairy has a tainted track record with corruption and racist allegations dogging his career. Many of the younger Malaysians especially the Generation-Y or those born between 1980 and 2000 see him as part of the older wheeling-and-dealing set of Umno leaders, rather than their earnest picket-carrying reform-minded peer.

And this is significant because Generation-Y is already and will become an increasingly large part of the Malaysian electorate.

Nurul's strengths are that she comes without the baggage that Khairy carries. She is admired for her simplicity and courage to stand in the line of fire from seasoned veterans including Ibrahim Ali, whose red-hot rhetoric has turned off many of the better educated Malaysians.

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