

As Malaysia turns 50, Nurul Izzah fights for inclusive politics
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BY DINA ZAMAN

Future Prime Minister of Malaysia. Mother. Wife. Friend. Daughter of the mercurial and charismatic Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Nurul Izzah is all these and more.

How she has grown up. When she started out in politics, and started speaking publicly, she came off as shy. It is not a burden many want on themselves: shouldering the future of a country and dealing with the imprisonment of a parent. But she is extremely intelligent and has become a fantastic orator. She has grace. That grace has seen her blossoming into a very sharp, and at times, hard-nosed politician.

The brief telephone interview The Malaysian Insider had with her was proof that Nurul Izzah was no longer Anwar's daughter. She is her own woman and proud of it.

For many Malaysians sympathetic to her family's public humiliation, Nurul Izzah was like a daughter to them. It had not been easy for anyone to witness the barrage of slander and slurs hammered at the family.

She was supposed to have that life most privileged young women have: graduate, marry, have children and disappear into the sunset. She was not supposed to become a threat.

Last general election saw her campaigning hard in Lembah Pantai against Umno strongman Datuk Seri Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin, and winning. She has not yet rested on her laurels. The past month has seen her slugging it out with her aides and foes on current affairs, and Malaysia has had many hair-raising moments in the space of a month.

In light of Hari Malaysia on September 16, what were her views about her country?

Nurul Izzah was probably just a bit older than these children when she started out in politics. Nurul Izzah was probably just a bit older than these children when she started out in politics. "I want inclusive politics. Right now we have a democracy governed by one ethnic race, and the national agenda is about that. We must unite everyone. In the next five years, (the) leadership must realise the importance of unity across races. Then Malaysians can feel optimistic, more positive."

She is not disillusioned about her country.

Malaysia is "... still diverse, and moderate in temperament. For example, in three days, I can find myself at an Indian function, then a Malay event and next, a Chinese dinner. Now, this goes beyond food - we have so much diversity! Culture, language, traditions."

She is upset about the state of politics in Malaysia. "Look. Racial politics happens everywhere. But the government of the day must not support racial politics. These are two different things altogether. We have a racist and bigoted view supported by the national agenda."

With that, the interview was over. Her day had just begun, and there were many things to

do and places to go.

She had a Pakatan Rakyat launch in Sungai Penchala to go to, and a meeting with all the PKR heads to attend. There were many more meetings and functions to go. In between all these, there is family to attend to.

She would not be doing all these if she did not love Malaysia. - September 3, 2013.

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