

Inspiring youths to make a change

Fledgling politician aims to instil leadership spirit in youngsters through his public talks

By GRACE CHEN

gracechen@thestar.com.my

DO NOT confine yourselves to Facebook. Get out there. Meet more young people from different backgrounds to open your mind.

This is the message Home Affairs Ministry special officer Mohd Rizmel Nazrin Abdul Malik wants to drive home at his public talk circuits.

"Go out there and make a change. Social media is one way, so is getting into leadership programmes organised by the Government. Look for them. They are in the web and social media," he urged at a recent talk in Universiti Putra Malaysia which was attended by 300 students.

Rizmel, formerly of the Youth Parliament and Perdana Fellows Programme, was the only Malaysian political intern to be part of the Obama re-election campaign while pursuing a double degree in Economics and Politics at Drake University, Iowa in the United States.

Back in Malaysia, the 27-year-old is using his public speaking skills to inspire youths to embrace the aspirations of the National Transformation (TN50) blueprint.

The TN50 agenda is an ambitious one. Nanotechnology chip implants that will clean arteries and fight cancer cells; power generation by the sun and wind; the death of the office where work equals to working from pods at home.

The responsibilities of realising these ambitions will fall on the youth of this generation. And they only have 30 years to do it starting from 2020.

In his talk, Rizmel said the first step to realising the end goal was to instil the spirit of leadership in our young.

"By no means does it imply that young, inexperienced graduates can have the audacity to ask for RM6,000 as starting pay. Neither is it a code of conduct that is confined to the head of an organisation.



Transformasi Nasional 2050

"Even if one is a secretary or an usherer, you can play a part by giving your very best to the task given. It's the little things that connect everything together," said Rizmel.

On future trends involving society, governance, environment, economy and technology in the next three decades, he said it was crucial for youths to understand that leadership should come from within themselves.

As the son of former Perak Legislative Assembly speaker, the late Datuk Abdul Malik Ahmad, politics is in Rizmel's blood. His father had been an Umno member before joining the now-defunct Semangat 46.

"I have always seen myself as wanting to make a change and I believe the fastest way to do it is to be a politician. I am sure there are lots of other ways but in this country, it is through politics," Rizmel said.

"One thing I learned from my father about leadership is to take care of your own family first because they are the most important people in your life. Only when you can take care of that small group of people will you be able to grow to become a community leader," he elaborated.

Leadership is also about being tenacious, he pointed out.



Rizmel (front, in printed shirt) with participants of his talk at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

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Mohd Rizmel Nazrin Abdul Malik

"We are a spoilt generation in the sense that everything is given to us.

"The older generation, on the other hand, had to earn their way up in life. This may explain their never-give-up attitude. My father,

for example, did not have a degree yet he could speak Mandarin, Hokkien, Tamil, Arabic and Javanese," he said.

It was for this reason, he said, that youths should learn from their elders.

"I follow my boss, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, as his special officer. I have seen what he has done and witnessed his ups and downs.

"I learned that it is important to be strong, patient and responsible, especially in the face of criticism. You may want to be popular but when you're not that popular, you just need to continue with what you need to do," said Rizmel.

He is also urging youths to share their thoughts on the TN50 website.

Currently, quality of education heads the list as one of the top three areas in Malaysia's goal to become among the Top 20 countries in the

world by 2050. The other two are innovation and environmental preservation.

"Our education system has come under much criticism but it is also important for young people to sit down and think about how they can make things better. Like in all things, we can begin with ourselves, such as paying attention in class and doing your homework," he said.

On changing gender roles that sees increased participation of women in the workforce and in leadership positions, Rizmel said anyone with the right talent and opportunity could be a leader.

"There are so many women leaders in the business world. I don't see why there shouldn't be more female politicians.

"I feel leadership comes naturally to women. My mother, for example, is the boss of the house," he added.