

LIFE&TIMES PEOPLE

Texting dreams into reality

Three young Malaysians who are showcasing their dream jobs in a series of weekly webisodes talk to **Aneeta Sundararaj**

(From left) Sufiz, Nurita, Hanie, Haziq and Raeesa. PHOTOS BY ROHANIS SHUIGRI



THE appointment has been fixed for next Monday at 11am. Venue: A nearby cafe. On Monday morning, at 10.02, you text your friend: "c u @10."

He replies: "k."

At 10.53am, you text: "am here. where r u."

At 11.03, he replies: "otw."

At 11.18, he saunters in. The meeting continues for the next hour with both of you checking your phones every 10 minutes for updates. Now, imagine what would happen if neither of you has a phone.

Sufiz Allatif, 29, a chef, finds it impossible to do so. But he says there was a time recently when he couldn't use his phone for a while and was forced to resort to what he feels is a novel method of communication: Telepathy.

"We were in a plane. My girlfriend was sitting in front and the trolley was between us. I couldn't shout either. I wanted her to buy the nasi

lemak. So I projected my thoughts to her. 'Turn around. Turn around'. And, guess what? It worked. She turned around."

Sufiz is one of a few young Malaysians featured in an online mini-series about how the BlackBerry Q5, the third BlackBerry 10 smartphone, empowers and connects five individuals to help them achieve their dreams. The other two are Haziq Zikri Ella (rising local football star) and Raeesa Sya (web content developer and illustrator).

The mini-series is part of the company's Empowering Ambitions campaign which allows Malaysians to identify their career aspirations with the greater aim of mobilising youth to be more proactive and vocal about their dreams.

The two others who are in the group are fashion designer Nurita Harith, 31, and lifestyle blogger Hanie Hidayah, 26, (www.Haniehidayah.com).

SIBLING SUPPORT

Sufiz says the principles he lives by are inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who said: Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.

Many in his generation believe that the traditional career route — going to university, getting a degree and then a job with a secured pension — isn't the only route to financial success.

Born in Kuala Terengganu, he says that some of his happiest times were spent in Australia where his father was in the army and the family was stationed in Kanangra, Gold Coast. He says: "We lived in a single storey bungalow. There was a bike track and my sisters, brother and I used to have a lot of fun. We had to

be independent as well."

It's clear that his siblings have an enormous influence on him. He tells the story of how one of his sisters discouraged him from smoking. "She said she would give me RM2,000 if I didn't smoke until I turned 18. Now, I realised that by not smoking, I saved more than RM2,000," he says.

When the time came for him to make a career choice, his father agreed to pay for any course he chose to pursue but only once. "If I failed," says Sufiz, "I would have to figure out the rest."

So Sufiz trained at KDU in Petaling Jaya and obtained a diploma in culinary arts.

But even with his family behind him, it didn't mean Sufiz didn't face challenges. He recalls: "I was

in Germany for a few months and I knew very little German. One of the first things I remember was that there was a blizzard outside. When I went into the kitchen, the chef told me to clean the kitchen. It was -4°C outside and -10°C inside the freezer. One time, I got yelled at. I was sure they were swearing at me, but I didn't know what they were saying since I didn't speak German. But all these had given me a wake-up call. I realise now that if I hadn't faced it all then, I wouldn't be the chef I am now."

DESIGNS ON HER FUTURE

Unlike Sufiz, Nurita was not as lucky when it came to parental support. After completing her studies in Malaysia, she moved to Surrey in the UK to be with her mother.

"She said she couldn't give me money and that I had to work for whatever I wanted," says Nurita. "I worked at McDonalds and knew that if I wanted something, I would have

Checkout the series of weekly webisodes that follows the story of these young people who are already living their dreams at www.youtube.com/user/EmpoweringAmbitions.



Machu Picchu, a memory that's hard to forget for Hanie.



Hanie carrying a baby alligator during her visit to a Nubian village.

PICTURE BY HANIE HIDAYAH

to do it on my own. I learnt that nothing in life comes easy. I had to work really hard for everything. I had to earn money to buy shoes even adding, she says: "I'd always been into arts. An introvert, I'm happiest when I'm designing. I express myself through my work. I have a personal motivation for success. I remember my dad telling me 'You're not going to make money'. He never wanted to support me financially. I had to learn to believe in myself."

Today, Nurita runs her business in Jalan Telawi, Bangsar, KL. The first three years, she recalls, were a struggle. "Then came social media. I've always used BlackBerry and that helps."

They all say that they no longer see the need to speak to someone on the phone to relay a message. Today, if you need to speak to someone, the norm is to send a text message first seeking their permission to call them. You should call someone only when it's very important, says Sufiz says "When someone keeps calling, it irritates me."

To add to the discussion, Hanie says: "I need to know what's happening all the time. What people like. What's in, what's not. I get to determine all this with the help of connectivity. I can relate to people more."

BLOG RESPONSIBILITY

While Sufiz and Nurita have traditional brick and mortar businesses, Hanie's vocation is in cyberspace. She says: "I started the blog while I was still in college. I was following the trend. It was just for friends."

However, the posts have evolved from merely ranting to proper writing and storytelling. She explains: "It's still a personal opinion, but it's

different. Instead of saying 'I went to this restaurant and it's terrible,' I now say something like 'I went to a new place. While the ambience is good, the food wasn't very interesting, taste-wise or aesthetics-wise'."

Now, she feels, she has a responsibility not to write nonsense. "I think I'm more mature in that sense," she concludes.

Hanie, who has a degree in international business and business law also biogs about her travels. The three places she loves the most are Egypt, South America and Bali.

She says: "These are places you'll never see elsewhere. My family and I were on a cruise down the Nile. In Abu Simbel, it was 4am and we had to climb a hill. I managed to take a picture of the

sun just as it was rising. The desert is something else. It's geographically different in terms of terrain and climate. There's a never-ending horizon.

"And instead of the usual city tour, we chose to visit a Nubian village. There were Sudanese children and we were invited to their school and to see some of the people who lived there."

There is one curious thing about these hospitable people though, adds Hanie. "They keep pet alligators. I was given one to hold. It's not really slimy. Just that its belly is cold and wet." In South America, the challenge was, mainly, to find halal food. Still, she does have interesting stories to blog about. One place she feels blessed to have visited is Machu Picchu in Peru.

Where to next? With a twinkle in her eyes, she says: "Iceland. My husband and I want to see the Northern Lights."

The newlywed adds: "It's going to be our honeymoon."

Hanie biogs about the fashion industry too and has a day job running an online store called Fabsp. With relative ease, she rattles off names of local designers — Alia Bas-tamam, Nurita, Innai, Syaiful Bahar-im, Silas and Joe Chia and adds: "The fashion industry is a very close-knit community, though. If you try to write about it, it's as though you're an outsider trying to get in."

As for how BlackBerry has helped these three young Malaysians define who they are and their lifestyles, Sufiz sums it up best: "My friends and I started out by sending messages to each other. It was something personal. Then, it was to get together every Friday night... to have a party, a barbecue or simply to hang out. Now, we've started a restaurant together. Who would have known that the act of sending each other messages would have led to this?"



Nurita learnt the value of hard work.



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