

Walking in PM's shoes

Long-time volunteer is first female prime minister for mock Parliament organised for students



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SINGAPORE received its first female prime minister last week, as Ms M. Premikha was selected for the role in the 4th Singapore Model Parliament (SMP).

Organised by REACH Singapore and held at the Arts House on July 20, 23 and 26, the SMP allows students to take on the roles of Members of Parliament and try their hand at national policy-making through rigorous debate.

Ms Premikha's decision to partici-

pate in the SMP stemmed from her passion for volunteering.

The 20-year-old, who will be starting her second year at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine next month, has been doing volunteer work since she was 17.

Her experiences include volunteering with the Animal Concerns Research & Education Society, tutoring children from low-income families, teaching autistic children and visiting palliative-care patients in hospitals. She is also part of the National Youth

Drawn to politics... Ms Premikha speaking at the SMP.

PHOTO: REACH SINGAPORE

Council's Youth Corps Singapore and is a youth ambassador for REACH Singapore.

In fact, it is her passion for service that led to her going into medical school. But she felt that "being a doctor allows you to serve in just one aspect, whereas service has many aspects".

Politics in particular is something that she is drawn to because of its top-down approach, that "allows you to change things from the top".

Through the SMP, Ms Premikha was given "a platform to explore and gain more exposure to the political scene".

Finding out that she had been selected to take on the role of prime minister was a proud moment.

"My friends and family were all very happy," she said. "Everyone was messaging me and tagging me on Facebook. A lot of them were proud because I'm female and from a minority race."

The Raffles Institution graduate admitted that it was daunting walking in the prime minister's shoes.

"The responsibilities of a prime

minister are very heavy," she explained, adding that as it was her first time participating in the SMP, she was unsure what she was supposed to do.

One of the biggest challenges for her was that as prime minister, she needed to have a bird's eye view of all the ministries. She felt that she was more well-versed in only the ministries of education, health and social and family development, so it was a challenge for her to answer questions from the opposition.

But with the help of her benchmates, who were mostly former participants or students with strong backgrounds in law or political science, she rose to the occasion and overcame the challenges.

She realises that she needs to increase her knowledge about the various ministries and that it is important to know how things work in each one.

While she can't say for sure if the SMP experience has inspired her to go into politics, it is still something that she would one day like to do.

"There is a need in the long run to make a difference," she said.

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