



A Sweet Union After 17 Years

Md Shahell bin Md Yusof and Rozihad binti Yahaya became legal husband and wife on 22 October, 2022. Theirs is not your straightforward boy-meets-girl love story. Theirs is a tale that spanned 17 years before it came to fruition.

Shahell, 41 and Rozihad, 51 first met as colleagues at the ACS Stepping Stone Work Centre in 2003. The Stepping Stone Centre, located in Balik Pulau, Penang, is a work place for people with intellectual disabilities specialising in artisan crafts such as batik, hand weaving, soap making etc. Shahell recalls that he took a liking to Rozihad at their first meeting itself.

*An Interview
with Shahell &
Rozihad*

by

Lee Soo Hoon

“At that time, I felt something... similar to liking (macam ada rasa suka),” he recalled in Bahasa Malaysia. Rozihad smiles shyly upon hearing her husband’s confession. She could not remember much of their first meeting except that her first impression of Shahell was “okay”.

The pair confirmed their feelings for each other after two years as colleagues and friends. A few years later, Shahell decided he wanted to wed Rozihad. The topic of marriage was received positively by his family members, but was rejected by Rozihad’s family. Another few years later, Shahell initiated another marriage proposal to Rozihad’s family through a staff from the Stepping Stone Centre. Unfortunately, he was rejected again. Not one to give up easily, in 2020 he summoned up the courage to ask for



Rozihad's hand in marriage again, this time by asking her brother personally.

"I was told we could be friends, but not get married. Her brother gave me many reasons why we couldn't marry. Among them was I will face many difficulties after marriage," he recounted sadly.

Earlier this year, to the couple's surprise, Rozihad's family started showing positive signs of consenting to their marriage. Her family arranged a meeting with the State Islamic Affairs Department to seek advice on the couple's union. Finally in early October, Shahell and Rozihad were given permission by the latter's family to marry after 17 years of courtship! The couple couldn't be happier. They finally had their akad nikah (marriage solemnisation) ceremony on October 22nd with blessings from both sides of the family.

Asked the reason for his persistence in marrying Rozihad who is a master weaver at the Stepping Stone Centre, Shahell shared:

"Because we are both the same, we are both OKUs (the Malay abbreviation for orang kurang upaya or people with disabilities). If we want to marry, there must be similarities. We are both a little slower compared to others, we match. Although I may appear quite bright, I do have my weaknesses such as my poor eyesight."

Another reason has to do with Rozihad's personality. Shahell observes that Rozihad has all the qualities a woman should have although she doesn't talk much. He was told that women tend to talk a lot.

"I like her (Rozihad's) less chatty nature. If she talks too much, I will get a headache (pening)!" he laughed.



Asked about the qualities that made her fall for her husband, Rozihad recalled that Shahell was always very helpful towards her when they were courting. He would escort her to collect her Disabled Worker's Allowance from the bank every month. He would also accompany her around Balik Pulau whenever she needed to buy anything.

Another quality she likes about Shahell is his diligence in saving money for their future. Despite having his marriage proposals rejected many times, Shahell started saving money for their marriage since 2020. Besides his job at the bakery of Stepping Stone Centre, he also works as janitor (Tok Siak) at a village mosque to earn extra income.

"Although it remained bleak that we will ever get married at that time (2020), I told myself I had to work hard and start saving. What if one day we are allowed to marry and I don't have the money?" he said.

Now that they are finally husband and wife, both confess to being very happy.

"Before this, our time together was limited. There were many barriers we couldn't cross. We had to be careful in our interactions with each other. Now those barriers are gone," explained Shahell.

Shahell praises Rozihad for being a dutiful wife who knows her responsibilities well. Rozihad notes that Shahell is a good husband who is patient and tolerant. Both share the responsibilities of taking care of the house chores such as cooking, washing and cleaning.

On their hope for the future, Rozihad wants to have their own home one day. The couple is currently co-renting a house with another tenant. They are saving money to build their own home on a small plot of land given by Shahell's



uncle. Shahell says he wishes to have children with Rozihad. Although this wish may seem impossible, he remains hopeful.

At the end of the interview, the newlyweds conveyed their gratitude to all those who have helped make their union possible such as their family members, the staff at the Stepping Stone Centre, and especially to God, the Almighty.

"We will do our best to be good husband and wife in spite of our weaknesses," Shahell ends the interview with conviction as Rozihad smiles happily.

For those who would like to contribute to the newlywed's house building fund, kindly direct your contribution to Maybank Account No. 157081346383 (Md Shahell bin Md Yusof).

Please inform Shahell of your contribution through WhatsApp at 011-14447379 or email to mdshahell1981@gmail.com.

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