

ROYAL TREATMENT

Princess Raja Adlina's slimming tale comes with a beautiful ending - in the form of a Prince Charming



► Karl Ho

SHE is a graceful swan now, but there was a time when Malaysian princess Raja Adlina was an ugly duckling.

The 32-year-old royal, who is the niece of the Sultan of Perak, lets on that she piled on the kilos and was spotty from her late teens to her mid-20s.

She says it was a result of her "meat and potatoes every day" diet as a student in Melbourne for eight years, with intermittent visits to her relatives in London.

Standing at 1.64m, she tipped the scales at 65kg then.

She then embarked on a beauty programme with Singapore beauty salon Cristalle de Paris.

Under Cristalle owner Micheline Ong's ministrations, the princess' complexion cleared and her weight dipped to 49kg within a few months.

The now radiant beauty has since met her Prince Charming, a 36-year-old oil industry engineer of Malay and Swiss parentage. They were married last June.

While a healthy diet and exercise did wonders to her appearance, Princess Adlina was quick to heap praises on Madam Ong during an interview at the latter's salon in Temple Street last week.

Despite rushing in 1½ hours late — her perspiration adding a glossy tint to the high cheek-



GRACE AND FAVOUR: Malaysian royalty are not encouraged to appear in ads (see inset), but Princess Adlina did it for free as a favour to beauty salon owner Micheline Ong.

bones of her small, heart-shaped face — there are tell-tale signs of a genteel upbringing.

For one thing, her hand gestures have an understated gracefulness to them while her ramrod-straight posture hardly wavers throughout the 45-minute interview.

She has come a long way from her days as a tomboy teenager.

"When I was young and running around like a boy, Madam Ong would make me sit next to her and talk to me about being a lady," she says of the salon owner, whose services her parents also use.

"My Mum had a lot to thank her for," she adds with a laugh.

The princess has since found a way to repay Madam Ong in kind — by appearing in a TV advertisement for the latter's beauty salon.

The ad has been airing on Channel U and the now defunct Channel i from last month. It shows Princess Adlina in a Rolls-Royce on her way from the Suntec City area to the Cristalle de Paris salon in Temple Street for a facial treatment.

After quick cuts to Madam Ong — and her honking jewellery — the ad ends with the princess prancing around in a tiara and lavender evening gown.

It is only when you read the caption at the bottom of the TV screen that you realise her pedigree.

Of that, the princess — who was not paid for the ad — says: "Malaysian royalty are generally not encouraged to appear in ads. This kind of mainstream exposure and attention are seen to diminish the family's stature."

Still, she adds: "But I thought it'll be a good way to show appreciation to Madam

Ong... She has taken care of me and my family for years."

The princess says her family members go to Madam Ong's salon for treatments once every two weeks when they are visiting relatives in Johor Baru.

In fact, her father, Raja Mohamed Kamil, who tagged along for this interview, had a facial while waiting for his daughter to finish her chat with LifeStyle.

In person, the princess looks smaller than her goggle-box persona. Her hair, worn in a neat French twist, frames a narrow, pretty face.

With that and her shiny brown Anne Klein shirt, black tailored trousers and sleek Gucci bag, she cuts quite an immaculate figure.

But while she has a friendly demeanour, she is a woman of few words.

Madam Ong's husband, Mr Albert Choo, who sat in on this interview, had to interject quite a few times — in loud and rapid-fire Mandarin — to explain her replies.

The princess herself admits: "I've never liked public scrutiny and am camera-shy. Which was why I was very nervous while shooting the ad."

She is currently keeping herself busy with good works, such as raising funds to build schools in Malaysia. She is also learning Mandarin so that she can help her younger brother import Chinese-styled furniture from China to Australia.

She will return to Singapore this Saturday, this time to help promote Madam Ong's beauty products, which will be sold at the Watson's store at Ngce Ann City.

Madam Ong says the princess will grace the products with her presence.

As the reticent princess puts it: "I'm not doing any more ads, but I'll help promote Madam Ong's products."

