

When asked how she keeps herself busy now that she is alone after her husband's death last year, Fatimah rattled off her week's schedule quite easily, naming the different religious classes she attends every day and the names of the different teachers she listens to. She also has homework to do after the classes.

SHE jumped when asked if she was still interested in politics.

"Of course I am interested in politics. After all, I am a citizen of this country and I still want to know what's going on. But I am no longer actively involved, that's all," she said.

After she resigned from her Kaum Ibu post in 1973, which she held for 16 years, Fatimah continued as the president of the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) until 1989.

"I felt that I had served society and the nation and wanted to spend more time serving God," Fatimah said.

On hindsight, she is glad for this decision for it also gave her time to be with her husband, who died three years later.

During the years since she resigned from active public duty, Fatimah, in her own words, "have been relearning religion" through the classes that she attends at the nearby Bangsar mosque as well as those she helps organise in her own home.

Everyday, there are classes and ceramah to attend, and about the only day she has free is Wednesday, which she reserves for appointments with the doctor.

Fatimah's experience as a national woman leader was an important consideration when she was approached by the neighbourhood women to help revive the Bangsar Muslim Women's Welfare Association or Perwiba. Today, she holds the position of founder and adviser in Perwiba which has been recognised as an active group and has been asked to recite Quranic verses at many local functions.

Twice a week, Fatimah holds Quran-reading sessions for her grandchildren in her home under the guidance of a religious teacher. On these days, the children as well as their parents who send them there will perform the Maghrib and Isya prayers together.

The special close relationship which she had with her husband is common knowledge and Fatimah was asked if she misses him now that he is gone.

"There is no question of missing him. I am a Muslim and we must have faith in the will of Allah. He is gone forever and nothing that we can do will bring him back. The only thing to do is pray for him," she said, adding that her busy schedule helps her get through the days without feeling sorry for herself.

"I also read the Quran a lot to help me get over any loneliness I may feel."