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RAFIDAH QUESTIONS WAN AZIZAH'S PATRIOTISM

By: Salmy Hashim

SAN FRANCISCO, April 29 (Bernama) -- UMNO Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz Wednesday questioned Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail's loyalty to the country for turning to other countries in fighting her cause.

Rafidah criticised Wan Azizah for turning to countries like the Philippines and Indonesia for support and questioned her patriotism.

"What kind of patriotism is that? When others run down your country, your first instinct is to stand up for your country. If something is not right you should criticise internally."

Rafidah said this in response to a question from an American businessman here who wanted to know about the political situation in Malaysia and asked if the KeADILan party led by Wan Azizah was a formidable opposition to UMNO in the upcoming general elections.

The International Trade and Industry Minister, who wrapped up her nine-day trade and investment tour of Phoenix, Salt Lake City and San Francisco Wednesday, said that KeADILan was not a formidable opponent for UMNO as it did not have enough grassroots support.

She pointed out KeADILan had a long way to go and she urged Wan Azizah, wife of jailed ex-Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, to learn from the experience of the now-disbanded Semangat 46.

Led by former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, S46 had strong grassroots support and the backing of several "big guns" or senior cabinet members but had failed to topple the UMNO leadership.

Rafidah said, "It all came to naught. He's (Razaleigh) now back with us . He can't do it from the periphery. He's now back in the fold."

Rafidah noted that Anwar, who was hand-picked by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad as his successor, did not emerge from the grassroots and was now alone with the backing of his personal staffers and several branch members.

Rafidah urged American businessmen to understand Malaysian politics. "This is not a one-man show but what we have is a collective cabinet. Should one person die or is dropped, the policies continue for the good of the country."

Rafidah bristled at the portrayal by Western media of Malaysia's cabinet as a bunch of "yes-men."

She disputed the description and said that she would rather resign than become a "yes-person" in the cabinet.

She reminded the audience that media hype could "make a mountain out of a molehill" and pointed out that Anwar had often been described as an "economic whiz" by the Western media.

She said in jest that she should then be dubbed the "Superwhiz" because she taught Anwar an economics subject when he pursued Malay Studies at University of Malaya.

Rafidah said the country was now moving towards recovery and it would be regrettable if the activities led by one person could disrupt the aspirations of the rest of the people who wanted stability and success for the country. -- Bernama

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