

17/05/2000

Respect my decision on appointments, urges Wanita chief

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today all quarters should respect her decision in appointing new Wanita State heads and deputies, as announced on Sunday.

She said she had briefed Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday on the line-up which featured a balance of those who were appointed by former chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman and those whom she wanted.

"When Siti Zaharah dropped those seen as my supporters after she won in 1996, I did not make any comment, no one commented, not even the Prime Minister.

"Furthermore, the newly elected exco members have agreed to co-operate with me and I am happy with the outcome of the Wanita exco meeting on Sunday as it showed that everyone was willing to unite and work hard for Umno."

Rafidah, who is also International Trade and Industry Minister, said this when asked about her 45-minute meeting with Dr Mahathir after witnessing the launching of accounting and financial service provider Accountants Online Sdn Bhd.

Rafidah and the new exco members are scheduled to meet Dr Mahathir tomorrow.

Defending her move, Rafidah said in Siti Zaharah's previous line-up, those appointed by her were dismissed, including herself.

"I did not mind as it was her prerogative to do so. But now, when I make the appointments, many have voiced their dissatisfaction...saying that I am too hasty.

"I advise `friends' to reserve their comments if they do not know the real situation as it will only make things worse.

"It is up to me. I have my own reasons. I had to do this quickly as I will be going to the United States on Thursday and I do not want party work to be delayed.

"If the appointment is not done, none will know who is in charge and this will slow down preparations for the Telok Kemang by-election next month. I will only be coming back on June 2. It would be irresponsible of me to go without naming the State heads."

Rafidah said she had discussed the appointment not only with the State Wanita heads but also with the respective State liaison chiefs, with the exception of Sabah and Terengganu.

Rafidah said she had also briefed Dr Mahathir on the financial problems faced by the movement.

"Barely two days after I was elected, I was informed that the movement had a debt of RM1.3 million.

"We also owe the Malaysia Agriculture Research Development Institute RM14,000, for a course conducted two years ago.

"This was among the matters which I had informed Dr Mahathir about."

She said Dr Mahathir had asked her to submit the accounts immediately.

"I have instructed the treasurer (Azizah Samad) to prepare the accounts as I was told that they did not update the accounts for the past three years. She claimed that she did not know where the cheque book was."

"I understand that the movement does not have money. This is an internal problem and I have to explain this to Dr Mahathir. We will try to settle whatever the outstanding amount."

Rafidah also announced the appointment of Wanita exco member Khamsiyah Yeop as the new Perak Wanita head, replacing Ainon Khairiyah Mohd Abbas who lost in her bid for the deputy Wanita post. The Perak Wanita deputy head will be Senator Faezah Abu Kassim.

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