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Wanita to ask for one supreme council seat

eed; Hizreen Kamal

WANITA Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz will submit an official letter to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, requesting the appointment of at least one representative of the movement to the supreme council.

"We are hoping for two representatives to be appointed but will be grateful even if only one is there," she said while commenting about the loss of all five Wanita candidates for the council post.

Rafidah also suggested that her deputy Datuk Shahrizat Jalil be the main Wanita candidate to be chosen for the appointment.

"She is obviously the best choice based on her being my deputy and our candidate with the highest number of votes," she said.

Rafidah blamed the loss of the Wanita candidates on the failure of the movement's former leadership to come up with a strategy to prevent a split of the votes.

"Our practice in the past was only to endorse two candidates and this was done by the executive council. The record shows that our candidates won because of this," she said.

The presence of the five Wanita candidates had meant that when the delegates voted no one got enough support to win a seat in the supreme council.

"It is not that the men were not willing to vote for us. It is just that they also had to consider giving their votes to others such as Menteri Besar, Cabinet Ministers and corporate leaders."

Rafidah added that although the result of the supreme council election was a loss to Wanita, the delegates had made a practical selection based on the composition of the candidates presented to them.

On whether there should be a change in the election process, she said, "My dream is for Umno leaders to be voted by the grassroots. Their support for a candidate is sometimes fantastic, but when we leave it to only four or 12 people to vote, it turns out to be a different story altogether."

Rafidah said she did not know how the change in election process could come about, but insisted that a leader could only claim to have the real support of Umno members if they were voted into office by the grassroots.

"The grassroots is far removed from those who come to the general assembly. I have been in Umno for 33 years and this situation has been the same over the years," she said.

She said the fact that there were candidates who had obtained a large number of nominations getting fewer votes at the election was testimony to the problem with the present system.

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