

# Rafidah: Mahathir and I merely hugged

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**SHAH ALAM:** "No, no, there wasn't an apology. We just hugged, that was it," said Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Despite publicly hugging Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and weeping, Rafidah maintains that she did not apologise to him during the tearful embrace after the National Day parade in Putrajaya on Wednesday.

The International Trade and Industry Minister was responding to newsmen yesterday who asked if she had apologised to her former boss in the Cabinet at the public show of reconciliation.

Contrary to eyewitness reports of her speaking to Dr Mahathir in her usual rapid-fire style while Dr Mahathir listened attentively, Rafidah claimed she did not say anything to the former prime minister.

"No need. There is no need for us to say anything," Rafidah, who attended a presentation ceremony of ISO certification to a plastics manufacturer here, told newsmen who pressed her for details of the exchange between her and Dr Mahathir.

The Wanita Umno chief stressed that

there was no need for her to explain her act of publicly embracing Dr Mahathir, right after she had similarly held his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"*Tak payah ulas* (no need to explain). It's just something we - he and I - wanted to do.

"*Kita sama sama peluk, bukan saya seorang saja* (we hugged each other, it was not just me)," she said.

Asked why she had cried, Rafidah retorted: "Why did I cry? Well, I've told you, I've always felt very close to Tun, and I hugged Kak Hasmah (Dr Siti Hasmah).

"We hugged for a long time; it's like that *lah* when you feel close to someone.

"You should understand, you are human beings."

She added that Dr Mahathir had assured her, "It's okay," when he saw her tears flowing.

Rafidah had come under fire over issues brought up by Dr Mahathir pertaining to Approved Permits (APs) for car imports given out by her ministry.

She had locked horns with Dr Mahathir, who is Proton adviser, when he alleged that the indiscriminate

issuance of APs had adversely affected Proton.

He also called for the list of AP holders to be made public.

Various quarters who viewed her hard stand as being disrespectful to the statesman had called for her to apologise to Dr Mahathir.

Asked if she and Dr Mahathir had arrived at an understanding, Rafidah said no such thing had transpired.

"No understanding. Nothing," said a visibly irritated Rafidah who was beginning to lose patience with the newsmen when their barrage of questions relating to the public embrace continued.

"Come on, you all must seek beyond all this news. There's nothing to it. It's like you *jumpa* (meet) for the first time. I've not met him, you see, since we had been away overseas," she explained.

Rafidah also said that she and Dr Mahathir would be in Penang next week, but did not elaborate.

It is understood that they will be there for the meeting of the International Advisory Panel for the Multimedia Supercorridor, of which Dr Mahathir is also adviser.