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Rafidah: Give Abdullah free hand

WANITA Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said party deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should be given the freedom to choose his deputy when he takes over.

Rafidah said that no one should question Abdullah's decision and it should be accepted by all members.

"I urge all party members to accept whoever is appointed by Abdullah without questioning his decision," said Rafidah in her winding-up speech at the closing of the Umno general assembly.

She said it was the responsibility of all Umno members to respect Abdullah's choice.

"We should support and give our undivided support to whoever is selected by Pak Lah."

Rafidah, who tried hard to hold back her emotions, said Wanita Umno was fully behind Abdullah and supported whoever was his choice for the number two post.

She also expressed her confidence that Abdullah would get the support and blessings from all party members.

"Pak Lah, you should choose your deputy and team members from among those whom you feel comfortable and able to work with. We will stand by you to continue with the excellent achievements of Dr Mahathir."

Rafidah also expressed her apologies to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for interrupting his speech when he announced his resignation as Umno president and the Prime Minister at the general assembly last year.

"I would like to apologise to Dr Mahathir for interrupting his speech and asking him to stop continuing with it. However, the fact is that all Umno members and I were not ready and prepared to accept Dr Mahathir's resignation both from the party and the Government.

"We pray the best for Dr Mahathir, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Pak Lah and Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood. May they be protected by Allah forever."