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Wanita Umno against open-air rallies

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Wanita Umno will submit its objection to the proposal allowing public rallies in the next general election, to the party's headquarters so that it could be forwarded to the Election Commission.

Its head, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, said today Wanita Umno members had their reservation about public rallies as these could threaten public security, pointing out that such activities would be held in open places and crowds could be hard to control.

"Why take the risk when we know that it can be difficult to control the crowd? Anyone including foreigners can attend public rallies and situations may get out of hand ..."

Rafidah was speaking after chairing the monthly Wanita Umno meeting at the party headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Asked whether the Umno headquarters would accept Wanita Umno's reservations regarding public rallies, Rafidah said: "Our members make up half of the party. If half of party members feel that way, then Umno cannot ignore our views."

Rafidah said this in response to a statement by the EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman last week that political parties would be allowed to conduct open-air rallies during campaigning in the next general election provided they obtained police permits to do so.

Regarding Pas' hudud in Terengganu and Kelantan on sodomy, Rafidah said that Wanita Umno would intensify its campaigns to educate the people that these laws were not in accordance with Islamic teachings.

"From our surveys, we discovered that some people do not even know what sodomy is. There is no point in explaining why it is wrong when people do not know its meaning."

Rafidah also said that Wanita Umno would organise a one-day seminar on Sunday to brief members on the 2004 Budget tabled by Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the Dewan Rakyat on Sept 12.