

PKR: Don't use religion to block women leaders

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PKR CONGRESS Newly re-elected PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar today urged "reformasi" for women in politics, to dispel the notion that they becoming leaders is foreign and taboo in this country.

She singled out those who use religious arguments to stonewall women from leadership positions.

"Some people still think that it is foreign and 'taboo' to have women as their leaders.

"Worst of all are those who use religious arguments to prevent women from becoming leaders," Nurul Izzah said in her speech when opening the PKR Wanita congress this morning.

Nurul Izzah, who is also Lembah Pantai MP, has won her second term as one of the party's four vice-presidents.

Her remarks come amid PKR's bid to install party president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail as the new Selangor menteri besar in the face of resistance from several quarters, including some in PAS.

Nurul Izzah said history has proven that women have been a major influence in the shaping the country as it is today.

She cited leaders such as leftist activist Shamsiah Fakeh, former minister Aishah Ghani as well as her mother, Wan Azizah, as among the women who have contributed to the country.

'Not taking aim at PAS'

"We might not fully agree with some of their political beliefs, yet, no one can dispute their contributions to our country," she said.

Nurul Izzah pointed out that PKR was the first major political party in Malaysia to have a woman president and praised her gender for their role in politics.

Meanwhile, at the opening of the PKR Youth congress, outgoing Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, too, echoed similar sentiments about female leadership.

Shamsul (left) quoted famed Islamic cleric Syeikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and went on to stress that women are qualified for any position, including that of prime minister.

"Fair chance must be given to youths and women to play a prominent role in the leadership structure.

"The opportunity to become a candidate or offer one's services must be based on capability and not on skin colour, age or gender," he said.

At a press conference later, Shamsul played down speculation that he is directing his criticism at PAS.

"It's a message to everyone, because PAS has yet to officially take such a stance," he said, adding that such notion about women appeared to be prevalent in the social media.

Despite Pakatan Rakyat finally endorsing Wan Azizah as the candidate to take over the post of Selangor menteri besar last Sunday, Selangor PAS openly declared that it did not think the state palace would accept her.

However, the Islamic party has insisted that its reluctance to back Wan Azizah is not due to her gender, but it refused to elaborate on this.

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