

**Wan Azizah stays as president unopposed**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**May 26, 2007**  
**Beh Lih Yi and Andrew Ong**

Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail today retained her post as PKR president after contenders Anwar Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Othman pulled out.

PKR election committee head William Leong officially announced Wan Azizah's new three-year term at 3.10pm at a school in Seremban, where the party's second election and fourth congress were held.

The announcement came two hours after Anwar took to the stage to tell party members that he had to pull out for fear that the party could be deregistered ahead of the upcoming general election.

The party advisor then urged the emotional crowd of 2,000 delegates to pledge their full support for his wife, Wan Azizah.

"If you choose me as your leader, God willing I would lead the party. But we must follow the rules and regulations, so (Wan) Azizah must be chosen as president.

"Since the time I was released from prison (in 2004), this is how it is being done, (Wan) Azizah is the president but I lead the party," he said.

At this juncture, several delegates interrupted his speech and said that they wanted their view to be heard.

About 15 delegates made emotional pleas, urging Anwar to remain in the contest and become president.

They also said they would not be cowed by the ROS' threat and vowed to fight with the former deputy premier.

"We want you to lead this party, we want Anwar as our president!" Rozan Azen, a young Keadilan member shouted, followed by cheers of "Anwar for president!"

"If they threatened to de-register the party so what? We can always register a new party," Rozan later told AFP.

Anwar had been slapped with a five-year ban from active politics as a result of his previous conviction for a corruption charge. The ROS had officially rejected his application for a waiver.

According to Anwar, the ROS cited provisions in the Societies Act which stated that the party could be dissolved if he was elected president.

Apart from that, Anwar could also face a maximum three-year jail term and fine of RM10,000 if found guilty of violating the ruling.

"This threat is not just personal. They will use this rule to take action against the party, including de-registering the party," Anwar said.

After listening to the views of the delegates for about 40 minutes, Anwar, however, remained steadfast with his decision to withdraw but stressed that it did not mean he was submitting to pressure from the ROS.

"I am not compromising with the ROS, but we don't want a small technical point (which could lead to the party being de-registered). Who will become the leader of PKR is to be decided by party members and not the ROS," he said.

### **Rahman pulls out**

As soon as Anwar completed his speech, the third contender Rahman walked up to the stage and handed a letter to congress speaker Ismail Yusop and told him that he was pulling out.

When the speaker announced this, there was a thunderous applause from the floor. Rahman then walked towards Anwar and hugged him.

Speaking to reporters later, Rahman said his decision was based on the wishes of the majority of delegates.

"I took up Anwar's proposal (during his speech) that he withdraws and Wan Azizah becomes president," he said.

Asked if his supporters who had nominated him would feel slighted by this move, Rahman merely replied: "They will understand."

Meanwhile, Anwar said he would challenge the ROS decision and would file for a judicial review on the decision next week.

"While I am prepared to take a personal risk, I know the game of Umno. I don't want to risk the position of the party," he said, adding that a snap election could be called anytime soon.

"My problem is that the party comes first. 'Anwar' should not be the reason to sacrifice the position of the party," Anwar said.

As to whether he would take over the top post once his ban expires next April, he replied: "That will be left to the party but you can sense the spirit. Once I am able, technically, I will take over."

The opposition politician, however, appeared hesitant when asked when he had decided to withdraw. He paused and replied: "Well... very recent."

On Rahman's decision to pull out, Anwar said he was not surprised. "He has been a dear friend, he has taken some positions that we don't share, but I think he made a wise decision."

Wan Azizah, who was also present, was asked whether the latest arrangement would make her a "powerless president".

She replied: "I am the de jure president and Anwar is de facto president ... People will understand my predicament that I am in politics by accident."

### **Other results tomorrow**

Meanwhile results for all the other posts will be announced tomorrow (Sunday), which is the last day of the congress.

Early counts indicate that incumbents Azmin Ali, Dr Lee Boon Chye and Mustaffa Kamil Ayub had been voted in as the three vice presidents.

It was learned that Dr Xavier Jayakumar and Fuziah Salleh was returned fourth and fifth respectively.

Earlier another contestant, Sabah PKR deputy chief Dr Jeffery Kitingan withdrew from the contest for the vice presidency.

Dr Syed Husin Ali won the deputy president's post uncontested.

A total of 1,009 delegates from a total of 1,775 attended the meeting and took part in voting today.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/67762>