

'Shocked' Rafidah will not quit
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Rafidah Aziz said she will not relinquish her Umno Wanita chief post in the wake of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's decision not to include her in the new cabinet line-up.
MCPX

"I will not resign, I will continue to head the Wanita (wing)," she told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

rafidah pc 190308 rafidah aziz "It is the will of the Wanita (members) that I head the movement and as long as I have the support of the movement, I will remain as its head," she added.

Earlier, speculations were rife that the 65-year-old politician would quit her post.

The former international trade and industry minister said she would have considered quitting if she had lost in the March 8 polls. Rafidah had retained her Kuala Kangsar parliamentary seat.

Rafidah also expressed shock for being excluded from the cabinet line-up and wished Abdullah had informed her about this earlier.

"If I was allowed to contest (and won the seat), why was I not included in the cabinet line up?" she asked and added that she only learnt about Abdullah's decision on the day of the cabinet line-up announcement at 9am yesterday.

She also said that the prime minister had only said that it was time that the ministry needed a "new face" as the reason for her discharge. She was replaced by Muhyiddin Yasin in the key cabinet post which she had held since 1986.

Private letter to PM

The veteran politician also confirmed that she had penned a 16-page letter to the prime minister after Barisan Nasional's disastrous performance in the elections.

"Whatever I wrote in the letter is personal. If I had wanted the letter to be public I would have done so. It is unethical to dive into one's personal matters," she told the reporter who had queried her on the matter.

rafidah pc 190308 laughing No matter what the outcome was, an upbeat and spirited Rafidah said that she accepted Abdullah's decision as "God had willed it" and would now concentrate on strengthening the party.

"I have never been the vindictive type. This is God's will and it is also part and parcel of politics. One day you're up there, one day you're not," she answered when she was asked if she was angered by the discharge.

Moving on, she further said that she will do her best to serve the country through the party

and will concentrate on moving forward to rebuild the party and return its popularity among the people.

When quizzed on whether or not the party can make a comeback after suffering its worst defeat since 1969, Rafidah confidently said "Umno ada, tapi terduduk sekejap, (Umno is always present but it is merely temporarily shocked)."

Umno's battle of the sexes?

Rafidah also said it was up to Wanita Umno members if they wanted to send a protest note to Abdullah on the absence of any female leaders in the new cabinet.

"You should ask the Wanita members what they think of it. It is up to them," she said and added that the wing will not fight against the party president's decision as they have to tow the party line.

Rafidah has been the Wanita chief since 1984 - apart for one term from 1996 to 1999 when she lost to Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

Rafidah's deputy Shahrizat Abdul Jalil was defeated in her Lembah Pantai parliamentary seat and had her cabinet post at the women, family and community development given to Dr Ng Yen Yen.

abdullah ahmad badawi 2008 cabinet line up 180308 03However Abdullah yesterday named Shahrizat as his special adviser on women and family matters, giving her the same status as a minister.

This means that it is the first time the Wanita wing has no representatives in the cabinet.

Not elaborating on what she thought of it, Rafidah only said that "without Wanita, Umno's performance would have been worst" and did not explain further.

Asked if she would accept any cabinet post if she was suddenly offered, Rafidah gave a typically sharp reply by saying that she does not want to answer speculative questions.

She then ended the press conference by thanking the ministry's staff and said that she appreciated the experience she had gained as a minister there and she has no regret but felt proud instead.

She also thanked the media, saying that the ministry and she could not have functioned properly without the assistance of the media.

"Negative or positive report, I thank you. I hope that we all would work towards building this country towards a better future," she said.