

From hardcore politics to 'plain mama'
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PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said she is ready to quit politics for good in order to resume her role as a 'plain mama' for her children.

MCPX

wan azizah interview about her resignation as mp for permatang pauh 010808 03In an exclusive interview with Malaysiakini at her Bukit Segambut home this morning, Wan Azizah said she will step down as party president in the next PKR elections slated for 2010.

However, she added this can happen earlier if requested by party members. She did not elaborate when but it is believed that she was referring to the upcoming PKR congress this December.

"The party elections is coming, when the time comes, I will do that (relinquish the post)," she added.

Yesterday, Wan Azizah announced her resignation as the MP for Permatang Pauh to pave the way for her husband Anwar Ibrahim to contest in the seat.

'A tinge of sadness'

Wan Azizah, 56, has held the seat since 1999 after her husband's unceremonious sacking from government in 1998 as deputy premier. He was subsequently jailed for six years.

She retained the seat in the last general election with a thumping 13,388-vote majority after defeating Umno's Pirdaus Ismail for the second time.

The Malay-majority seat of Permatang Pauh in Penang is widely regarded as a stronghold for PKR as it was held by Anwar on an Umno ticket for 17 years before his sacking from the party.

Despite her decision to resign as MP, Wan Azizah said yesterday that she will stay on as PKR president.

The soft-spoken mother of six, who always described herself as an 'accidental politician', said she was not heavy-hearted at all to quit as a MP and leave politics.

However, she conceded there was a "tinge of sadness".

"I feel relieved that the burden I have been holding on to for all these years (is finally lifted) although there is a tinge of sadness to leave them (her supporters and electorates). But I say I am not leaving them, I am just stepping aside," said the ophthalmologist-turned-politician.

wan azizah wan ismail biodata 310708On her 10 years in politics, she said: "I matured a little bit, I learned a little bit. Basically I am still the same person, reticent to go into the limelight, I prefer to be outside (of the limelight)."

Wan Azizah noted that sometimes she was 'tired' of being a politician and vowed that she

would now dedicate her time to her children, two of whom are still in school.

"I sent a SMS to (youngest daughter Nurul) Hana yesterday and said 'I am now jobless, I don't have anything, no more, I am just plain mama and she said 'so ma, you have more time with us, you can see our homework or can go to school (to see us)."

"There will be more time for myself. I like to try my hand at cooking now, I miss those days when I was quite relaxed," said Wan Azizah, who likes to bake cinnamon raisin bread and banana cakes.

Not ready for another arrest

On the upcoming by-election in Permatang Pauh, Wan Azizah opined that the voters' mood was with PKR and expressed confidence that the electorates will give Anwar a chance to return to Parliament.

wan azizah resign permatang pauh by election for anwar 310708 07"I won probably due to his popularity and of course sympathy (over Anwar's arrest). I had to carry the torch then but now the man himself is out," she said.

She also said the party has taken into account that Anwar's intention to contest may be affected if he is arrested over the sodomy allegation, a claim which the latter has denied.

"Since this is politically motivated, he may be charged, detained and denied bail, but our laws say that he can still stand for elections so we are going to go on that (basis)."

Despite the intense speculation of her husband's imminent arrest, Wan Azizah said she was not prepared to see him detained again.

"You can never be ready for your spouse to be taken away from you just like that, not just for my husband but for someone else also like (Kota Alam Shah state assemblyperson M) Manoharan," she said, referring to the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) leader currently held under the Internal Security Act.

"Having been in politics now, being the opposition leader and given that little bit of 'training', I think I could handle (Anwar's possible arrest better) but I don't want to," she said.

Asked if Anwar discussed with her their plan should he be arrested, Wan Azizah replied: "We have discussed a bit of that, he said he will still contest as he doesn't need to be there and we just go ahead with the by-election."

'I deserve my rest'

With PKR emerging as the largest opposition party after the March 8 election controlling 31 seats in Parliament, Wan Azizah was named as the parliamentary opposition leader.

wan azizah interview about her resignation as mp for permatang pauh 010808 01She set the record as the first female opposition leader in the House but with her decision to quit as MP, she has also made another record for being the shortest-term opposition leader.

On that note, Wan Azizah said she has not achieved all her goals during the brief tenure.

"(But) as the wife of Anwar, I will give him reminders and advice to continue (holding the post)," she quipped.

Wan Azizah also said the party will meet with two other opposition allies, DAP and PAS, on appointing an acting opposition leader. The next Parliament sitting will resume on Aug 18.

"We have to talk about it, (PKR) still has more seats than the rest but our MPs are also a bit more junior if we were to compare with (DAP stalwarts) Lim Kit Siang and Karpal Singh," she said.

Asked if there is a possibility of her going back to her all-time passion, the medical field, Wan Azizah said this would be difficult as she has left the profession for quite some time.

"Your full-time dedication has to be there and I think I deserve my rest," smiled the accidental politician, who looked charming in her floral-print baju kurung and beige headscarf.

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