

By-election: Wanita Umno geared for battle
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Wanita Umno chief Rafidah Aziz today announced that the wing is geared up for a 'battle royale' between PKR and Barisan Nasional in the upcoming parliamentary by-election in Permatang Pauh.
MCPX

"Wanita Umno had long expected this. We have discussed it during our executive council (exco) meetings. Maybe he (Anwar Ibrahim) was eyeing Permatang Pauh all this while," she said.

rafidah aziz pc on permatang pauh by election 010808 06"But we are ready. We will try our best to help BN, specifically Umno, to win the seat this time around," she declared after an exco meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"We have to get our machineries ready. We have come up with strategies to aid our party in winning the by-election," she added.

The former international trade and industry minister said preparations for the by-election in Penang was one of the main agendas at the five-hour meeting, attended by 19 executive councillors at the Umno headquarters.

Another key issue discussed during the meeting was Wanita's special meeting with the prime minister this coming Monday to study the problems facing Umno and ways to strengthen the party.

'Hard to predict'

However when quizzed about BN's chances of securing the Permatang Pauh seat, Rafidah replied that "it is hard to predict."

"It is important to note who will be contending and another important detail is the ratio of Malays and non-Malays in the area.

"The area has a more than 60 percent Malay population but don't forget the large number of non-Malays. Therefore, it is important for us to work as BN," she added.

Yesterday, PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail resigned as MP to make way for her husband and PKR de facto leader Anwar to contest in Permatang Pauh.

Permatang Pauh was Anwar's stronghold prior to his sacking as deputy premier in 1998.

Meanwhile, Rafidah who has been Wanita chief since 1984 - apart for one term from 1996 to 1999 when she lost to Siti Zaharah Sulaiman - said no decision has been made on whether to allow contest for the post in the December party elections.

"We have not discussed that issue yet and I cannot hint on anything," she said.

Although the veteran politician retained her parliamentary seat in Kuala Kangsar during the March 8 polls, she was dropped from the cabinet line-up.

"When the time comes, we will see what has to be done," said Rafidah.

"I would like to advise all those contesting for posts to contest civilly. I hope no one would sow slander and break up the party from within," she added.

Money politics

Rafidah also commented on various allegations of money politics plaguing Umno divisions in the lead up to the party elections.

"If this goes on, the authority of the party will be destroyed. We have received many suggestions on how to tackle the issue but it is still inevitable," Rafidah lamented.

She added that any proof of corruption should be channelled to the right authorities.

"There was no need for ethical rules before but lately, values are eroding and there is a desperate need for ethics," she said.

"We are tired of this. Even when we advise them against it, it happens. If we want to serve the people, there shouldn't be a need to bribe them," she added.

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