

Wan Azizah wins unopposed

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Challenger Abdul Rahman pulls out from race at 2pm

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SEREMBAN: In a dramatic turn of events, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail won the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) presidency uncontested.

It came after her husband Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was denied the right to contest by the Registrar of Societies (ROS) on Friday and Abdul Rahman Othman pulled out of the race at 2pm yesterday.

Anwar is barred from entering politics until April 2008 but had applied to the ROS for an exemption. The ROS letter came at 4.30pm on Friday.

The former deputy prime minister, who was sacked from Umno and jailed for corruption, was released in September 2004.

In a special address to the delegates at the party's fourth national congress, Anwar said he would be the party's de facto leader.

"If you want me to be legitimate, then give Wan Azizah the president's post but I will lead the party.

»If I follow my heart and feelings, I would tear up the ROS letter«

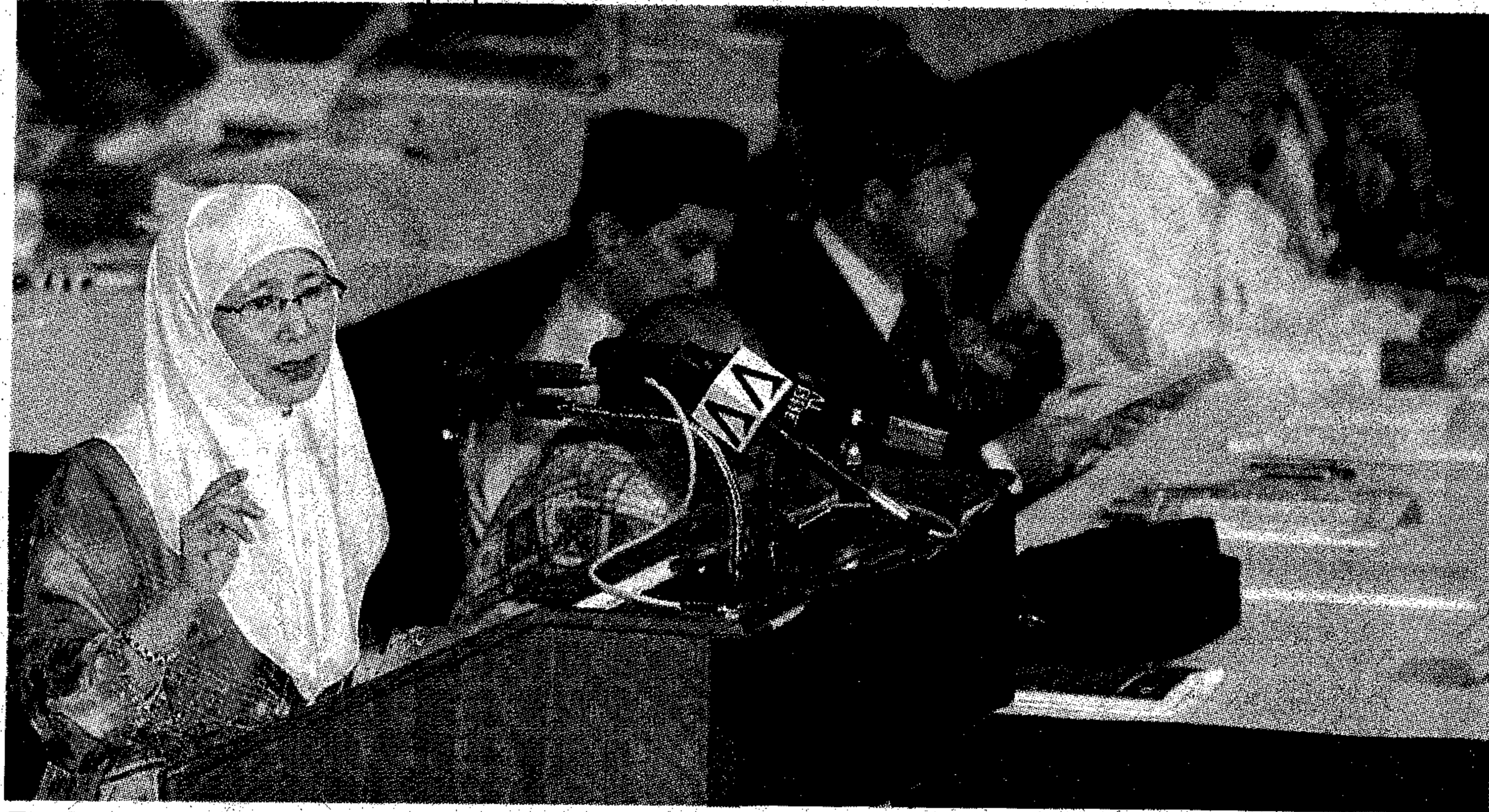
DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

"Dia (ROS) main silat, kita main silat (They want to play silat with us, let us also do the silat). We have to make a wise decision," he said.

Lambasting the ROS for purported dirty tactics, Anwar said he could not risk the party being deregistered if he stood in defiance of the ROS ruling, in light of the coming general election.

He said he would seek a judicial review on the matter.

"If I follow my heart and feelings, I would tear up the ROS letter," he said, claiming that the ROS reply was deliberately given at the last minute



Back at the helm: Dr Wan Azizah stressing a point during her policy speech at the fourth national PKR congress in Seremban yesterday.

to prevent him from appealing since it was a weekend.

Stunned delegates created a ruckus and emotionally appealed to Anwar to reconsider his decision to pull out of the presidency race. Anwar has the highest nominations among the three candidates.

He told the delegates that he

planned to assume the presidency in April 2008 and this could be done through an extraordinary national congress.

Dr Wan Azizah said she had to carry the burden for another nine months until Anwar takes over.

"If given a choice, of course, I'd rather be a grandmother," she said

referring to her eldest daughter Nurul Izzah's pregnancy.

Former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur, was among the guests at the congress.