



Singapore 'selects' 1st Female President

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NIGERIA: -

Singapore has named a former parliament speaker from the Muslim Malay minority as the country's first female president, drawing criticism for her selection without a vote.

Halimah Yacob was named president on Wednesday without having to face an election for the mostly ceremonial position after government authorities concluded her rivals did not meet the presidency's eligibility criteria.

The 63-year-old Yacob, who was a lawmaker for the ruling People's Action Party for nearly two decades before resigning to run for presidency, challenged the doubts about the selection process in an address before a cheering crowd after she was formally named president.

"I'm a president for everyone. Although there's no election, my commitment to serve you remains the same," she said, adding that she would "start working immediately" to bring the country together.

Former parliamentary speaker Halimah Yacob (R) waves to supporters as she arrives at the nomination center in Singapore on September 13, 2017. (Photo by AFP)

She said her status as Singapore's first female president was "not just tokenism," pointing out that "every woman can aspire to the highest office in the land when you have the courage, determination and will to work hard."

The development came as government authorities decided to only allow candidates from the Malay community to run for the presidency, a bid to foster harmony in the city-state of 5.5 million people that is dominated by ethnic Chinese.

Singapore's president, who is the head of state, has limited powers, which include vetoing senior official appointments.

This was not the first time in Singapore that the government disqualified candidates for the presidency, making a poll unnecessary.

But there was criticism of the process this time as it was the first time the presidency had been reserved for a specific ethnic group — the Malay community — and the decision to hand her the job without a vote only added to the anger.

Yacob is the first Malay president of Singapore in five decades. The last such president was Yusof Ishak, who was in office from 1965 to 1970, the first years of Singapore's independence.

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