

## **Nicole Seah resigns from NSP to ‘grow in other areas’**

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Nine months after laying bare the frustrations her political involvement and activities had caused her, opposition politician Nicole Seah has resigned from the National Solidarity Party (NSP). In an email statement sent to the media, Ms Seah, who is based in Bangkok, said the decision was extremely difficult and painful.

Ms Seah, who shot to prominence in the 2011 General Election (GE), was the party's second assistant secretary-general. She said: "There was nothing which might have happened to trigger this departure. I started in politics as a fresh graduate wanting to make a difference, by bringing more political awareness and interest to young people ... It's reached a point where I feel that my job is done (for now) and I have to move on and grow in other areas."

Adding that she wished the NSP all the best, she said: "For myself, this is not a complete departure from politics ... I will just need to find a more suitable platform to contribute and give back."

Speaking to TODAY, NSP secretary-general Jeannette Chong-Aruldoss confirmed Ms Seah's resignation: "We take comfort that she has thought about it and it's not (on) the spur of the moment. We'll miss her, but we wish her all the best in her future endeavours."

At 24, Ms Seah was the youngest woman candidate in the 2011 GE. She was part of the NSP team that lost to the People's Action Party by a 13-percentage-point margin in the contest for Marine Parade Group Representation Constituency.

In November last year, she put up a lengthy and candid Facebook post about how her life took a "sharp detour" after the elections, including losing two jobs. Giving a glimpse into her personal battles, she described last year as the worst year of her life. She had also received rape and death threats against her and her family.

Ms Seah moved to Thailand in March to work at IPG Mediabrands' Bangkok office. Political analysts TODAY spoke to were not surprised at her resignation from the NSP, given her relocation and in light of the Facebook post.

Noting the impact Ms Seah made during the 2011 GE, Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene Tan pointed out that she had not built on the high profile and her political involvement has been on the wane.

The analysts did not rule out the possibility of Ms Seah returning to the political fray, be it with the NSP or another party. Still, former Nominated Member of Parliament Siew Kum Hong said it "remains an open question if she can have the same impact" in the next GE — which must be held by January 2017.

Following the stepping down of NSP's former secretary-general Hazel Poa in September last year due to health reasons — Ms Poa remains a party member — the analysts felt the resignation of Ms Seah is another blow to the opposition party.

Institute of Policy Studies senior research fellow Gillian Koh noted that the party seems to be in a state of flux after Ms Poa's resignation as party chief. But like the other analysts, she said there is still time for political parties in general to recruit more talent and prepare for the next GE.

Mrs Chong-Aruldoss rejected suggestions of a setback. "There's no setback unless the party comprises of only a couple of individuals ... obviously, the party is made up of more than just one or two persons .... (Ms Seah) has been working abroad and it's still business as usual (for the NSP)," she said.

During the 2011 GE, Ms Seah's political star rose to such an extent that some observers had called the NSP the "Nicole Seah Party".

Alluding to that, Mrs Chong-Aruldoss said: "There is more to the NSP than just Nicole Seah. And maybe her departure might enable people to see the NSP beyond Nicole Seah ... If you are describing this persona that sounds like it eclipses everything the NSP has done, then her departure would (be beneficial)."