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Azalina: Set the agenda for Puteri

Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Umno supreme council member Azalina Othman Said said it was important to establish Puteri Umno's agenda and its role in attracting young women into Umno.

Sincerity, she said, would be the key in the approach to form Puteri Umno.

"If Puteri's main objective is to be a junior version of Wanita and just a forum to train young women, then it would be a welcome move for Wanita Umno to place Puteri Umno under its wing and look after them.

"But again, one has to question whether this method would be received well by young women and attract them to join the party.

"Would these young people agree to join a movement which gives them limited independence and freedom?"

Azalina said this was important as the original intention of forming Puteri, as suggested by party president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was to cater to young women below 40 who wanted to join Umno but were not comfortable with Wanita Umno which they perceived as made up of older women.

During the one-day special assembly on Saturday to amend the party constitution, the delegates passed a resolution to form a new entity called Puteri Umno.

However, the movement's structure and regulations have yet to be decided.

Wanita Umno has been given the task to submit recommendations on Puteri Umno's structure to the party's supreme council.

"Puteri Umno members who are much younger would surely have different views and perspective on issues concerning women than Wanita Umno members who are more mature.

"It is important to give these younger women freedom to express their views and to act independently."

Azalina said perhaps a solution would be for all components in Umno - the supreme council, divisions, Wanita Umno and Umno Youth to look after Puteri Umno collectively.

"Perhaps what we can do is to appoint a representative each from the divisions, Wanita Umno and Umno Youth to sit as committee members in Puteri Umno divisions."

On the age limit, Azalina said she felt it was only appropriate to open up Puteri Umno's membership to those below 40 as is the case with Umno Youth.

"Some quarters have expressed the views that Puteri Umno membership be opened to those below the age of 30 or 35 for those above that are no longer considered puteri.

"Since its creation, Umno Youth has been catering to those below 40. So, why should there be a different standard when it comes to Puteri Umno.

"Even in our constitution, youths are defined as men and women who are below 40."

Azalina added that many of the current supreme council members and those holding high positions in the party and Cabinet were from Umno Youth which had groomed them.

"Thus, there is no reason why Puteri Umno should not adopt a similar structure to that of Umno Youth."

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