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Drama may unfold as movement takes shape

FINALLY the much-debated Puteri Umno has received the green light from Umno delegates.

However, the issues surrounding its formation are far from over. Instead, a new drama may take centre stage soon.

Wanita Umno, which initially wanted Puteri Umno to co-exist as a club and not as a separate entity, will decide on Puteri Umno's structure.

Will Puteri Umno be allowed to operate independently or will it end up having its activities closely monitored by their kakak and makcik in Wanita Umno?

But Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz gave the assurance that it would work closely with its progeny and guide them to be future leaders.

Despite the assurance, some Wanita leaders are sceptical about Wanita Umno's role in Puteri Umno.

They said since Wanita Umno had been given the task to outline Puteri Umno's structure, the movement might keep Puteri Umno under its control and not give it much freedom.

Said a former State Wanita leader: "This is not suprising as Wanita Umno had made a commotion when the party president announced the formation of Puteri Umno last July."

Dr Mahathir had said that Puteri Umno would attract young professionals uncomfortable with Wanita Umno which they perceived as catering for older women.

Wanita leaders' initial opposition was due to the fact that Puteri Umno was proposed by supreme council member Azalina Othman, who submitted a working paper to Dr Mahathir without consulting Wanita Umno.

And now, these same people have the power to shape Puteri Umno.

"Isn't this ironic? How can you be assured that Wanita Umno would not take steps to prove that they are a step higher than Puteri Umno?" the former leader said.

A Wanita divisional leader said whether members were willing to share their power and position in the party with Puteri Umno members needed to be ascertained.

All this while, Wanita members have been clamouring for honours, saying they have played a big role in the party. But now, they are no longer the only women representatives in the party.

"For instance, in the next general election, would Wanita members have the big heart to hand over some of the parliamentary and State seats which have been allocated to them to Puteri Umno members?" the Wanita divisional leader asked.

Supreme council member Azimi Daim said Wanita members should set aside their differences and close ranks to ensure Umno's continued strength.

"This is not the time to prove who is more powerful than the other," said Azimi, who is also Umno Youth information chief.

Tambun division chief Datuk Husni Hanadzlah said Wanita members should look forward to Puteri Umno's formation as their "baby".

"They should put a stop to all the nonsense which prevailed over the past few months. Otherwise, they will stand to lose and end up as laughing stock."

He believed Wanita Umno was sincere in welcoming the formation of Puteri Umno and in expressing interest to work together.

Wanita Umno exco member Senator Melati Ali said she looked forward to

Puteri Umno and was glad that senior members were given the say to chart Puteri Umno's future.

"Since it is our responsibility now, we have to sit down and plan properly," Melati said. "We have to ensure the target group, particularly professionals, will be attracted to join Puteri Umno."

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