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One up for the sisterhood

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WHY do I get this feeling that finally, we're being noticed? That finally, especially, these past few weeks, what we say and do are getting due attention and recognition?

I'm not saying we've been left completely in cold storage, but methinks more comfortable conditions await us?

Then again, and being the pessimist I love to be (it's a defence mechanism, I hate to be disappointed) that it may only be the effects of this rah! rah! fever of having been feted to one of the grandest national women's celebrations ever. Cecil B. DeMille would have approved.

I sincerely hope not. For hangovers, not necessarily alcohol-related, are nasty and leave a foul taste in the mouth. And it would be a terrible shame if after having succeeded to get so many women from all walks of life to come together in a concerted effort to discuss, dissect, debate and demand that all that should then be shelved in the archives of KIV-land. Fallout of yet another giant PR exercise.

The 300-odd women who turned up for the roundtable sessions (24 groups in all) were some of the country's finest, committed and most active. Successful in their own careers they were concerned enough to answer the call to help make the necessary changes. Not to forget the many others who silently came forth to pledge their faith in this journey for the betterment of womankind.

Their recommendations, suggestions, aspirations and dreams, they were told, would be forwarded/considered for inclusion into the Eighth Malaysia Plan. That was why they had all turned up.

And it was worth it, wasn't it? For we did have the whole works, didn't we? No holds barred. And it wasn't just all work. Nobody can accuse us of not knowing how to party. It's a dreary Minah, Mei Mei, Mary and Meenachi who does not know how to work hard and play hard. But mind you, this was not the yahoo, shake your booty and go home still ecstatic kind of shindig. This was a solid show of support for the sisterhood.

And the brothers did too. That's what made this year especially significant. That we didn't work and party alone. That mad as it threatened to be at times, it was a commendable mammoth effort by Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, and her gang from the Women's Affairs Department (Hawa), the National Advisory Women's Council (Naciwid), and the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO).

And we did get the attention of none other than our Prime Minister didn't we? Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said at the culmination of the celebrations on Aug 28 that our requests and recommendations weren't unreasonable and had pledged to look into them seriously.

So God willing, we may have our very own Ministry to look after our needs. God willing, the various other requests ranging from providing for creches and flexible working hours to humanising the execution of syariah laws and granting us the rights as equal working partners will finally see the light.

Let's hope that everyone will be enlightened to respect us for being who we are, and who we choose to be.

And let's pray that soon our daughters will inherit these wonderful changes and additions to the constitutions to make them hold their head up high and say, perhaps even with a slight tremor in their voice, I am a

Malaysian woman.

Love, salam and a wonderful 43rd Merdeka Day to all.

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