

# PM launches Puteri Umno

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the Puteri Umno wing last night by cautioning its members to be careful in their actions as there were many out to plot their downfall.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Prime Minister, said the Puteri wing was formed at a difficult time when many people think that Umno is no longer relevant.

"There are many who feel the party is no longer relevant and is contributing nothing to the race, religion and country. There are also many who believe that the party does not appeal to the younger generation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno was saved by women who make up more than half of the party's membership.

Since its inception four months ago, Puteri Umno has garnered 84,372 members with Johor contributing the highest number at 10,325 members and Selangor second with 10,000.

Dr Mahathir said it was not enough to just get a large membership within such a short period.

"Numbers don't mean a thing

unless the members understand the true struggle of Umno and contribute to the party.

Dr Mahathir, who mooted the idea of Puteri Umno on July 10 last year, appointed lawyer Azalina Othman Said to the Umno supreme council and later made her its pro tem chief.

"Women have proven over time that they are committed and seri-

ous to any struggle they undertake and it is this that has propped Umno up," he said.

He said the same was true for the female Malay students in universities.

"If not for women, who have the perseverance and strength to overcome all obstacles to better themselves and advance academically, the percentage of Malays in

the universities may only be 40%; and that is based on the current selection process," he said.

Dr Mahathir, however, extended his apologies to young Malay men for his hard-hitting words against their academic performance.

"My apologies to them but this I must ask: How long more are you going to hide behind the Malay women?"

He stressed that they should be more serious if they wanted to contribute to the country.

Dr Mahathir also cautioned the new wing on the need to consolidate itself and not to be involved in smear campaigns or "write poison pen letters to the president trying to ruin anybody's reputation."

"A leader will never have 100% support from the members but no one is perfect. We must work together and ensure that we sacrifice for the party," he said, adding that those who joined Umno must never think that Umno is the gateway to contracts or business projects.

Dr Mahathir reminded the boisterous Puteri members to be equally spirited in registering as voters and exercising their voting rights in the general election and by-elections.