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Dr M launches Puteri Umno

Firdaus Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially launched Puteri Umno tonight, with a call to its members and everyone else in the party to look after and nurture the new movement together.

The party president said this was because "women's role in Umno should be noted and enhanced, and that they should also be given more roles in our struggle.

"They have proved to be a force to be reckoned with within the party," Dr Mahathir, who is the Prime Minister, said to loud applause from thousands of Puteri members who filled the Dewan Merdeka of Putra World Trade Centre.

In other words, Umno recognised the untiring contributions of women in the party, Dr Mahathir added.

He called on Puteri members to strive towards strengthening resilience of the movement to enable it to attract and motivate the younger generation to direct their struggle along Umno's.

He said it was Puteri's responsibility to help nurture the younger generation of women into leaders who could cope with future challenges, both socially and politically.

"Puteri should prepare future leaders, not only for the Wanita movement but also for Umno," Dr Mahathir said, adding that Umno had recognised the importance of women's participation in the party's struggle.

In his 45-minute speech, the party president said although Puteri was still at its infancy, it had already attracted 84,372 members, which proved critics wrong in many ways.

"Some said the younger generation shunned Umno, while others questioned Umno's relevance in present-day politics.

"But today, they can see for themselves that thousands of young bright women are with us (Umno) to struggle for the race, religion and the nation."

Dr Mahathir advised Umno leaders and members to assist and nurture Puteri Umno so it could emerge as a strong arm of the party.

"Women are very courageous and they cannot be easily swayed by any mischievous attempts, and they have proven this."

He advised the Puteri leadership to carry out training for members so that they could be enlightened on the actual struggle of the party.

"Some feel that if you join Umno, then you can get contracts ... we must discard this notion and inculcate in them that the actual struggle is not for personal gains, but solely for the race, religion and nation," he said.

He called on Puteri members to be disciplined and be cautious in what they do so that their actions did not go against, and tarnish the image of the party.

"You must be very, very careful because there are parties out there who are all out to discredit us."