

13/08/2001

Welcome, Puteri Umno!

Sofianni Subki

GIRL power never echoed louder at the Merdeka Hall. Amidst a flurry of pink scarves and high-pitched cheers, the launch of Puteri Umno, held at the World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, took off with a bang before hundreds of ecstatic members last week.

The applause grew even louder as Puteri Umno chief Azalina Othman Said announced the much anticipated number of women who have joined the four-month-old movement.

"I wish to inform the party president that as of today, we have roped in 84,372 young women from various States who are ever willing to spearhead Umno's struggle."

Speaking before pink-clad Puteri members representing 12 States and the Federal Territory, Azalina led them in pledging the movement's support to play a leading role in Umno's cause.

"As the younger generation who has not forgotten the history of Umno's struggle, let us pledge that we will not forget the deeds of Umno, that we will not forget that the future strength of Umno is our responsibility and that we will not forget that we are the mechanism for change."

Equally in "sync" in pink, Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who officiated the launch, urged Puteri Umno members and everyone else in the party to work together in nurturing the new movement.

"Women play an important role in Umno," he said. "Their contributions should be recognised and enhanced. They have proved to be a force to be reckoned with within the party."

In his 45-minute speech, Dr Mahathir urged Puteri members to strive towards strengthening the movement to enable it to attract and motivate the younger generation to contribute towards Umno's struggle.

He said that 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," he said.

It is a call that Puteri members believe they can fulfil.

"With the training that our movement offers combined with the dedication instilled in us, I think we can live up to the Prime Minister's expectations," said Sabah Puteri head Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin.

"The rest of the party is also behind us, giving us support and encouraging women to participate and become leaders. I don't see any reason why we can't do it."

Federal Territory head Azlinda Mohd Rashad, agrees. "We definitely have what it takes to prepare future leaders. Puteri was formed to recruit new blood for the party. We aim to get as many members as possible representing all levels of society and cultivate leadership in them.

"As we represent the voice of tomorrow, our approach is different. Our programmes are tailored to attract the young to contribute to the society in terms of service, health and education."

The launch ended with a poetry recital by one of the Puteri members who pledged the movement's dedication to its role in working towards the betterment of the community.

The Puteri Tidak Lupa poem was later put in a traditional gift-box and handed to Dr Mahathir.

