

Puteri serious

Net 1 6 APR 2002

Top leaders flock to show

CLAD in their official white and pink outfit, the 500-odd Puteri Umno members sang the Umno song *Bersatu* at the end of their five-day inaugural brainstorming session on Sunday.

Those present at the closing of the wing's 'Kursus Perdana Generasi Wanita Prihatin' by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Universiti Tenaga Nasional hall in Bangi will affirm that this group of young Malay women is serious about fighting for Umno's ideals.

The fact that over 1,000 members from all over the country took time off from work, some leaving their children and husbands behind to learn more about politics, showed how seriously committed they were.

Barely a year into its official launch last August, Puteri Umno members look set to contribute to Umno's re-engineering process.

Indeed, Umno leaders believe with the

level of political awareness they possess, plus the kind of commitment and enthusiasm that have come to be associated with them, it will be a matter of time before Puteri Umno becomes a component the party cannot do without.

Of course, they owe this success to the guidance of party leaders who are their 'fathers' as well as their *ibu* (mother) and 'elder sisters' in Wanita Umno and brothers in Umno Youth.

Why is there so much attention and emphasis given to Puteri Umno, which has yet to be formalised?

Party leaders said this is an indication the party has faith in Puteri Umno to continue the party's struggles.

The wing's pro-tern chief, Azalina Othman Said, said Dr Mahathir has not once turned down an invitation to attend the wing's activities.

Other leaders, too, were also ever willing to provide guidance whenever Puteri Umno

about party struggles

support, guidance for fledgling movement

COMMENT

By Zubaidah Abu Bakar

needed assistance.

The leadership, during an unscheduled dialogue at the end of the ceremony, has even expressed confidence in Puteri Umno's role in the coming general election, especially in helping to attract voters in Kelantan and Terengganu.

Dr Mahathir had offered himself to the floor and to the surprise of Puteri Umno exco members on the stage, fielded questions from 13 participants.

"This was not on our agenda. But we are glad our members did not waste the opportunity and had asked good questions.

"We gained a lot of knowledge from the dialogue as Dr Mahathir gave invaluable

advice to us," said Pahang Puteri Umno chief Shahaniza Shamsuddin.

Among the important advice from the party president were to 'be thick-skinned when being called names by the enemies' and 'do not defend but attack and fight back when accused of things which are untrue'.

With this much help, Puteri Umno ought to be grateful to the party leaders who had made its existence possible.

It is thus important that while it strives to champion the Malay race, it must maintain its integrity and credibility to ensure the continued struggle of Umno.

Without these two elements, the struggle that Umno has been upholding since its formation in 1946 will be meaningless.

Party vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, who had a three-hour session with the participants, said Puteri Umno members are ready to take on the responsibility to transform the Malays into

a developed race.

"They are the right people to prepare the minds, soul and emotions of the Malays."

Vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin spoke on membership and regulations respectively.

Others who shared their experiences included Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who explained the strategies that led Barisan Nasional to victory in the Indera Kayangan by-election, and Wanita Umno Information chief Datin Paduka Seripah Noli Syed Hussein, who spoke on Wanita Umno's 'Ketua 10' concept in vote canvassing.

Azalina may have the confidence that Puteri Umno will continue to survive but struggling to remain relevant in Malay politics is not as easy as being able to sing *Bersatu*.

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