

# Puteri leaders support Azalina as chief

By SHAHANAAZ HABIB

KUALA LUMPUR: All Puteri Umno state chiefs and exco members of the pro tem committee support Azalina Othman Said as the movement's chief.

They made the unanimous endorsement at the exco meeting yesterday, pledging to support her at the movement's maiden elections on Nov 1.

"Puteri has been moving with our programmes for the past year. People can see for themselves the programmes done under Azalina's leadership.

"As for the leadership of (challenger) Mastina, even I don't see any (programmes)," its pro tem information chief Bibi Sharliza Mohd Khalid told reporters after the meeting.

Mastina Abdul Hamid, Puteri's former information chief, recently said she was ready to take on Azalina for the Puteri chief's post, citing democracy and offering a choice to delegates as reasons.

Bibi Sharliza said although Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said contests for posts were part of democracy, the movement believed that if someone came forward only to grab posts during elections (and did not serve the party before that), this would not be healthy.

"We want Puteri at the divisional level to think of this."

She said the exco would not force divisions to nominate Azalina as the chief, but "we would persuade them based on the track record under her".

Pahang Puteri pro tem head Shahaniza Samsuddin said the decision represented the voice of all states in the country.

Any challenge to the movement's top post needs only two nominations from any of the 165 Umno divisions.

Azalina, who chaired the exco meeting, said she believed contests were democratic but that candidates should have the interest of the party at heart.