

02/11/2002

Dr M's advice reflects high hopes for Puteri

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

CLEARLY Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad harbours deep hopes for Puteri Umno to make a difference in Umno and its politics.

Opening the Puteri Umno inaugural general assembly yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he had high hopes for this young movement to become strong and a key player in advancing the nation, the Malay race and religion.

Indeed, will Puteri Umno grow to be such or will it give in to weaknesses of political parties? Will its members, who now number 93,000, become power-crazy and allow the party to degenerate and follow the ragged path that will eventually cause its destruction?

Dr Mahathir and Umno leaders certainly do not want this to happen. This is the reason the Prime Minister reminded the more than 600 Puteri Umno delegates attending the assembly to reject the negative traits which have plagued older party members.

Puteri Umno has proven itself an effective component of Umno. The Opposition does not take the young movement lightly. To them, the movement is a big threat.

Dr Mahathir knows for a fact that this political malaise was not widespread in the year-old movement but since this cannot be allowed to grow, he feels it is his responsibility to remind the young members.

If Puteri Umno members allow themselves to be afflicted with the malaise, then we can all forget about its raison d'etre.

Puteri Umno is an entity to prepare young politicians to continue the Umno struggle.

The movement was mooted to enable young Malay women to join Umno and to have political awareness and understanding of Umno.

Having been at the party's helm for more than two decades, Dr Mahathir realises that slanderous accusations can disunite members and weaken the party.

For these reasons, Puteri Umno members must reject such culture before it is too late.

The movement is after all still a "white cloth", being officially declared as Umno's new entity only on June 20 this year.

The members and nobody else will determine whether that cloth will turn black, become multi-coloured or remain white.

The road from now will not be smooth. The general election is impending and its chief Azalina Othman Said has a mammoth task ahead. With the new line-up, Puteri Umno is ready to play its political role.

But one thing all the members should remember - they have to balance their roles as politicians, mothers and wives.