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Umno-Puteri (Roundup)

PUTERI UMNO'S PARTICIPATION CREATES HISTORY AT UMNO ASSEMBLY

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- The curtain raiser for the Umno general assembly 2003 here tonight not only creates history but is also unprecedented.

For the first time since its inception 57 years ago, the opening ceremony for the Umno wings, namely the Umno Youth and Wanita movements, this time involved a new wing, that is, Puteri Umno.

Since its inception was first mooted three years ago, this is the first time that Puteri Umno, which now has more than 100,000 members, has been placed on par with Umno Youth and Wanita Umno.

The one-day meeting of the three movements was opened simultaneously by Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister.

The presence of the Puteri Umno delegates clearly gave a new look and brought cheers to the assembly this time around. At least, it had brought back a gay atmosphere to the delegates who were clearly saddened by the impending retirement of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in October.

Although the delegates appeared to be conscientiously following Abdullah's speech which took their thoughts to ponder the future of the race, religion and country, the issue of Dr Mahathir's withdrawal still seemed to weigh heavily on their mind.

The same issue was also expected to dominate the assembly hall tomorrow and during the subsequent three days when the Umno general assembly starts on Thursday.

Dr Mahathir had announced his intention to relinquish the post of Prime Minister and Umno president in October at the general assembly last year. He had also named Abdullah as his successor.

The sentiment that truly struck the emotion of the delegates and all Umno members present at the general assembly this time is the fact that the general assembly on Thursday will be the last where Dr Mahathir will deliver his policy speech and message in his capacity as party president and Prime Minister.

After more than 20 years at the helm of the party and standing on stage at the general assembly in both capacities, the reaction displayed by every Umno member is certainly understandable.

They must learn to accept the fact that Dr Mahathir's withdrawal certainly does not stop the continuity of Umno's struggles.

Based on his highly constructive and visionary speech at the simultaneous opening of the Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri Umno assembly, Abdullah is undoubtedly capable of continuing the party's struggles.

-- BERNAMA

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