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Team A and B in Pas women's wing

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THINGS look fine on the surface in the Pas women's wing, or Dewan Muslimat.

The members are celebrating the wing's 50th golden jubilee and the programmes lined up at Muassassah Darul Ulum have received overwhelming support from the Pas faithfuls.

Thousands of men, women and children converged on the field beside the religious school on Thursday night to listen to a fiery speech by Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

The ceramah was to kick-start the celebrations which Hadi officially launched, also before a big crowd, yesterday.

But a closer look at those seated on the stage at the opening ceremony saw several faces among the Muslimat leaders missing.

Among the obvious ones were former Dewan Muslimat chief and elected central committee member Senator Jamilah Ibrahim, another elected central committee member, Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud, and deputy Dewan Muslimat chief Kalthom Othman.

"This is the Team A and Team B problem in Dewan Muslimat," said a young Muslimat member.

She said she did not know how serious the problem was in Dewan Muslimat, but she strongly believed that it could lead to destruction.

"We are just gaining recognition.

This is a sad thing."

Yet, Dewan Muslimat chief Toh Puan Fatimah Ibrahim is defensive, repeatedly stressing that the Muslimat leaders who were not present had other engagements and, therefore, could not participate in the celebrations.

This may be true although it is rather difficult to swallow that a person who has been working for the wing would want to miss a big event like this.

Dewan Muslimat only celebrates its golden jubilee once!

What is even more alarming and which needs immediate attention is the presence of elements of sabotage.

People received news through the short messaging system (SMS) that the programme had been cancelled.

A reporter from a foreign wire service had to call a Pas Youth division leader to confirm whether the programme was taking place after he was told by someone from the party that it was cancelled.

It is not that Pas leaders are unaware of the goings-on in the women's wing. They had heard complaints, especially on the lack of co-operation between Dewan Muslimat and the Muslimat's central committee, and were hoping that those involved would set their priorities right.

Hadi was not just making a general statement when he stressed in his speech that Dewan Muslimat must be united and properly managed.

"Dewan Muslimat must be a model of unity. Unity must prevail, at least on matters related to principles," he said.

It is widely believed that a group in Dewan Muslimat supporting Jamilah is not keen to participate in the celebrations.

The presence of some of her supporters like elected central committee member Dr Lo'Lo' Mohd Ghazali is a "can't be avoided" case.

The rift in Dewan Muslimat became wider after Fatimah took over from Jamilah in 2001, after winning by just three votes.

Jamilah, who held the post for 15 years, was later appointed to the party's central committee but continues to get the support of some Dewan Muslimat leaders.

At last year's Dewan Muslimat muktamar (assembly) in Kelantan, a Muslimat leader called Fatimah a "soft fish head", which would eventually turn rotten, all because of her lack of enthusiasm in making a firm stand on women's candidacy.

Some Muslimat leaders are uncomfortable with her handling of party matters as they believed decisions were greatly influenced by her husband, Datuk Harun Taib, who heads the conservative Dewan Ulama.

In the final analysis, there is very little difference between the politics of leaders of Dewan Muslimat and their counterparts in Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno.

Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno, however, always take heed of the advice given by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Will the Muslimat leaders listen to Hadi?