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Why Puteri dropped controversial resolutions

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Mounting criticism as well as the Umno president's recent remarks on selfish members led Puteri Umno to decide against tabling at its general assembly next month the two controversial resolutions on automatic membership and proposed increase of the age limit for candidates for its chief post.

A Puteri Umno executive council member said they were initially in favour of the two resolutions when discussed at the movement's recent Exco meeting.

"Most of the executive members supported the two resolutions. However, we had to change our mind after Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad advised that one should not join Umno hoping to be a candidate.

"We do not want to be seen as being too hungry for power. Furthermore, Dr Mahathir had specifically referred to Puteri Umno and we have to prove we are sincere in our struggle for the party and not due to personal reasons."

Dr Mahathir had after the party's 57th anniversary celebrations on Sunday said that one should join Umno to contribute to the party.

The Puteri Exco members said this when commenting on Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said's statement yesterday that the movement's resolution committee had decided not to table the two resolutions.

Azalina today said the members were more focused on preparing for the general election than indulging in internal party affairs.

"The general election is important to us as it would be our first since Puteri Umno was formed. We do not want to waste time by concentrating on internal party matters during our general assembly.

"Instead, we want to discuss strategies on how to face the election and counter-attack the Opposition," she said.

Azalina added that with the resolution committee's decision, the members could now allocate more time to debate on the other resolutions on religion, economics and social aspects, in addition to preparations for the general election.

"After discussions with some executive members on Sunday, we decided to have an informal resolution committee meeting where the final decision was made."

Azalina said the movement's focus now, apart from preparation for the general election, was to increase its membership and to ensure that all Puteri Umno members are registered as voters.

"There are also many other issues involving young women which we need to address like unemployment. We have to work out strategies to overcome all these problems."

Azalina said the move should not be seen as bowing down to pressure from any quarters as what was important was to be fully prepared to face the general election.

The resolutions had received lukewarm reception from Umno leaders including Wanita Umno head Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz who said Puteri Umno should concentrate on efforts to attract new members and not be too "pre-occupied" in passing resolutions.

Party vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said today Puteri's decision not to go ahead showed that its members have "felt the pulse of senior party leaders".

"This is a very good decision and we welcome it. It shows that Puteri

Umno members are listening to what the others in the party feel."