

Dr M: My style is to be direct

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(P) mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today managed to diffuse what had been a heated atmosphere at the Umno general assembly with jokes, analogies and quotes from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* to explain the true message

of his blunt opening address.

And he served notice on the delegates that the frankness and bluntness will not stop as that was his style and habit.

"I don't want to talk behind your backs and then send lieutenants to talk to you. I want to see your faces and your reaction."

On criticisms that he

had openly endorsed Datuk Musa Hitam, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he did not speak in support of Datuk Musa, but it was because there was a lot of talk that the No. 1 and No. 2 men were not on talking terms.

"Datuk Musa was confused," he said to the thunderous laughter of the delegates when he remarked on Datuk Musa's

earlier comment that he was touched at the open show of support from the party president.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there were people who went to the divisions to spread stories that there were differences between him and Datuk Musa, "that I wanted to Look East, he wanted to look to South America, that I wanted Islamisation he didn't want, that I wanted to change attitudes, he didn't agree."

"Why spread these stories that defame my relations with the person who has to work with me to promote Umno's struggle? We were chosen to do a job. If we don't do it we can be dismissed.

"But for as long as I hold strongly to Umno's struggle and others want to slander and destroy this party and Government, I'll fight to the end," said the Umno president to the cheers of the crowd.

Explaining his stand on team spirit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he did not mean just a team of two persons (him and Datuk Musa) as some delegates had accused him of. What he meant was the whole Umno Supreme Council and the Cabinet.

He said no Cabinet could function if there was no team work. "Every Minister has his role to play. If you're a fullback, you play the role of a fullback. But just because you see the goalkeeper isn't so good doesn't mean you should take over to catch the balls."

In a placating tone, he said he was speaking openly because he was addressing delegates from 114 Umno divisions and this opportunity came only once a year. "After all, this is an important year as very soon it will be 1984," he said to much laughter.

For as long as the Umno general assembly was as lively and as critical as this one, "then Umno is safe."

"But if there comes a time when a general assembly only listens to the leaders speak and no one has the courage to criticise or attack the leaders, then Umno is a write-off. There is no autocracy in Umno. In Umno, all sides can speak," he stated in a reference to the United Kingdom Umno Club president who had remarked that the era of democracy in Umno had ended and an autocratic era had begun.

He asserted that all that his 90-minute presidential address contained were exhortations

to work hard, to be honest, sincere, united, to set good examples — values that were compatible with Islam.

"I speak very frankly. Some say I should be subtle. But that's not my style. Some people like it, some don't. But in Umno nothing is permanent.

"We struggle together, only I play the role of the captain and the members play their role."

"Umno is the biggest political party in the country. If we cannot set a good example, if we can't assimilate Islamic values, who then can do it and give guidance for the country's well-being," said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir as the delegates stood up in ovation.