

# Mahathir impresses with low-key address

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presidential address yesterday was well received by Umno leaders who felt that his low-key speech was a sign of "good things" to come.

They noted that Dr Mahathir did not criticise those opposed to him and said this augured well for party unity.

Veterans and young leaders shared the view that the Umno president's speech reflected the maturity of Umno leaders and members who wanted party unity to be maintained at all times.

Foreign Minister and Kota Baru division chief Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen said the speech was very good.

"Dr Mahathir had shown a positive attitude in his speech. There was no criticism of the other side and this is a good sign," he said.

Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen said Dr Mahathir was conciliatory and this went down well with the assembly.

He said that Dr Mahathir's call to the people to work hard and uphold good values should be heeded.

He noted that Dr Mahathir had touched strongly on foreign relations and spoke well on the nation's foreign policy.

Kok Lan division chairman Datuk Abdullah Ahmad was another Umno leader who was impressed by the speech.

## Conciliatory

He said it was not hard-hitting as expected by many people.

"It was a good speech though it was not in tune with his normal style.

"The message was conciliatory with Dr Mahathir calling for party unity," Datuk Abdullah said.

He added that there was no need for Dr Mahathir to criticise his opponents as what needed to be said had already been said earlier in closed-door meetings with party members.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amar Haji Wan Mokhtar Ahmad was also happy with Dr Mahathir's speech.

He said it was good that it was a mild one after the intense campaigning of the past weeks.

"This shows that Umno members will stay united despite all that has happened."

However, presidential candidate Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, incumbent deputy president Datuk Musa Hitam and vice-president Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi declined comment.

Also declining comment were Wanita Umno leader Datin Paduka Rafidah Aziz and former Umno Youth head and vice-presidential candidate Encik Anwar Ibrahim.

Deputy Home Affairs Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub said Dr Mahathir's speech did not dwell on the personal affairs of the contestants and felt this was just what was needed for the present situation.

He said the president's address today and Datuk Musa's speech at the joint opening of the Wanita and Umno Youth assemblies yesterday had helped ease the tension.

Umno Youth permanent chairman

Haji Khalid Yunus agreed with the Prime Minister that the party was more important than an individual leader.

He said this showed Dr Mahathir was sincere in wanting Umno to remain united and continue its struggle to safeguard the welfare and future of the Malays.

Umno veteran Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah said the sincere and constructive speech could foster unity.

He said he had expected Dr Mahathir to "cool" the heat of the campaign.

Former Umno secretary-general, Datuk Haji Mustaffa Jabar, echoed the Prime Minister's call for unity in the interest of Islam, the race and the nation.

Parliamentary Secretary to the National and Rural Development Ministry, Encik Alias Ali, said Dr Mahathir should be commended for not using his speech to campaign for himself.

## Sincerity

Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamad Isa Samad said the Prime Minister's speech was fair to all.

"It was a mature and appropriate speech for the present situation at the general assembly," Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Mohamed Yaacob said.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Dr Yusof Noor, said he was impressed with Dr Mahathir as a statesman and a world leader.

Federal Territory Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said he was not surprised that Dr Mahathir had given priority to current issues rather than hit out at certain candidates.

Foreign Minister Datuk Rais Yatim said the speech was aimed at easing the tension among delegates.

"He raised only important issues and there was no attempt to influence delegates."

The Prime Minister had probably anticipated a highly-charged atmosphere and had opted for a restrained speech, Datuk Rais said.