

Standing ovation NST 29 OCT 1988 moves Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was moved by the standing ovation given to him after he delivered his opening address at the Umno Baru special assembly today.

The Umno president said he had never experienced this kind of applause before and was pleased by it.

"But I feel it is not just because of the speech but the strong spirit of wanting to unite among members," he said in response to questions at a Press conference here.

He said today's gathering was different from previous Umno assemblies, the crowd being much bigger "as though everyone wants to show they are united."

Nevertheless, the mood was typically Umno, he said.

"It is a typical Umno gathering. I see typical Umno faces, the same reaction, like interrupting my speech, the laughter ... that is typically Umno."

Dr Mahathir said the Malays, if they wanted to unite, must urge groups attempting to split them to unite.

"If there are many groups that are encouraging the Malays to split, then it is difficult to unite."

He said Umno was open to all Malays who subscribed to its ideology and aspirations but would be meaningless

to a Malay who did not accept its struggles.

"Everyone should realise that Umno is the biggest party for the Malays," he said. "It is not logical for the majority to join the minority but the other way around."

Commenting on Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's idea of a Malay Congress, Dr Mahathir said too many meetings would cause further splits.

"We should have only one. We are holding one, but they do not want to attend but instead propose another. This is the cause of disunity."

Resolve problem

"If only one group works to re-register Umno and everyone supports it, we will not be split."

Dr Mahathir said too many people were jumping on the bandwagon, but referring to a group of prominent Malay academicians and professionals, he said they were only calling for the opposing groups to meet and discuss ways to resolve their problem.

Asked to comment on the absence of former Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Hussein Onn from the assembly, he said: "Many people did not attend. We have invited them. Perhaps they are ill. We cannot have bad thoughts about them because they did not attend."