

# Razaleigh, Musa get invite

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has invited former Umno leaders Datuk Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah to join the Cabinet as ministers without portfolio.

Announcing the surprise decision before winding up his adjournment speech at the Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it is a sincere invitation aimed at promoting Malay, and Umno, unity.

The Prime Minister, who is also Umno president, said: "I as Prime Minister would like to make an announcement which might upset you. But I hope you won't be upset with my decision. I like to extend an invitation to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Datuk Musa Hitam to join the Cabinet as ministers without portfolio."

The announcement was greeted with a standing ovation. Some delegates described the Prime Minister's invitation as a brave, sincere and magnanimous effort towards Malay unity and is re-

flective of his leadership qualities.

Speaking at a news conference later, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he had discussed with Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba about inviting the two former party leaders back to the Cabinet fold, but there was no prior consultation with other Cabinet members.

He said he hopes with Datuk Musa and Tengku Razaleigh joining the Cabinet, it will be the end of any remaining misunderstanding in Umno for the sake of the party's solidarity.

"I will send a letter of invitation and I hope they will accept for the sake of Malay, and Umno, solidarity. I hope the invitation will overcome the split in the party and in the Malay community," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

The invitation for the two to join the Cabinet comes just two weeks after an invitation to them for a reconciliatory meeting with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and Encik Ghafar, and the announcement that all Malays are invited to join Umno.

The Prime Minister noted that the followers of Datuk Musa and Tengku Razaleigh appeared to have an air of suspicion about the earlier proposal for an eight-eyed meeting.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that there will be no Cabinet reshuffle if the two former leaders accept the invitation. Their respective duties will have to be worked out.

"The invitation has no conditions attached to it. If the two turn it down, I will have to look at what to do next," the Prime Minister said.

In his adjournment speech, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir called on the Malays to believe in themselves and their abilities to compete on equal terms with the other races in the country, especially in the economic sphere.

He noted that some delegates had complained throughout the three-day assembly that he had been pushing the Malays too hard towards this objec-

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tive, but he reminded the delegates that time may not be on their side.

Touching on court cases — about 300,000 are pending throughout the country — the Prime Minister said the Government wants to see court procedures speeded up.

He said lawyers and the Bar Council should also be looking into this matter as the backlog is so serious that it may not do justice to some, such as the 3,000 remand prisoners still awaiting trial.

Meanwhile, Encik Ghafar told the assembly that the share system introduced in Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) land schemes since 1985 will be scrapped.

The Cabinet decided recently that each Felda settler will receive an individual title to his plot of land once he has fully paid his debts to the authority.

Encik Ghafar said despite the advantages of the share system, which ensure that the estates will remain economic in size, the settlers themselves prefer land titles.

However, he added, Felda and other relevant agencies will be urged to direct their efforts towards ensuring that productivity of the plantations remain high, and that marketing of the produce is well looked after.

Encik Ghafar said he and other Government leaders will be meeting the settlers to inform and to clarify the decision. He promised to meet Umno members on their home ground as he would be visiting the various states.