

# Joy at olive branch offer

(7)

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The last day brought the hottest news to delegates, observers and the public at the Umno general assembly today.

It came in an unexpected announcement at the end of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's winding up speech to delegates.

Having already spoken for about half an hour, the party president and Prime Minister, replying to points raised during the debate on resolutions, paused, cleared his throat, looked straight at the delegates and said:

"I'm going to make an announcement which might upset some of you. I hope you won't be upset with my decision.

## Atmosphere

"In the interest of unity, I would like to extend an invitation to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Datuk Musa Hitam to join my Cabinet as Ministers without..."

At this stage, the delegates and observers roared and applauded, preventing Dr Mahathir from proceeding with his speech.

It was a stunning announcement.

"...as Ministers without portfolio," Dr Mahathir continued when the noise settled.

The delegates and observers then gave him a standing ovation — the second in three days. While many looked stunned, others wept unashamedly at the magnanimity of his invitation.

Some with tears streaming down their faces continued clapping while others hugged each other as the announcement began to sink in.

Later, when Dr Mahathir walked out of the Merdeka Hall, observers and the public who were monitoring the proceedings on closed-circuit television applauded

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him time and again. Many hugged him while others kissed his hands.

One woman hugged him as he walked towards the Press conference area, crying: "Sir, how can you be so good?"

In his winding up speech, Dr Mahathir said that he was happy with the atmosphere of the assembly which was peaceful, calm and brotherly.

## Observer

He said the atmosphere was completely different from the last year's general assembly, which was tense and filled with suspicion.

"It was as though it was not an Umno assembly at all but an assembly of enemies. It appeared as though we came to the assembly not to improve the status of the Malays but to face an election. We did not have trust in the secretariat.

"It was as though we feared one another. That is why we had wanted to send observers to Stadium Negara to monitor the proceedings on close-circuit television because of fear of riots.

"Is this Umno?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the group was now expounding the spirit of 1946 as though they understood the meaning of such a struggle.

In this context, he related his experience as an observer at the congress of Malay organisations at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in 1946 when there was unity. The atmosphere was free of tension and filled with a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to the party and nation.

No one had tried to project himself for posts.

Hence, he wondered whether the group now talking of the spirit of '46 had the right to do so.