

Dr M's remarks steal the show

Comment by
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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's sober remarks that the leadership change-over within Umno should be done smoothly and without any dispute seemed to have pushed all other matters into the background yesterday.

The Putra World Trade Centre, the venue of the Umno general assembly, was abuzz as discussions on the topic were not only confined to the proceedings in the Merdeka Hall but also along the corridors by members and observers.

The party president made the remarks during his opening address and the eight speakers who took part in the debate on his speech all touched on the matter significantly.

Senior party leaders said the party president had expressed his sentiments on the leadership issue, in a clear and sincere manner.

They felt that efforts should be made to ensure that the advice was heeded to negate rumours of a rift

between Dr Mahathir and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Very significant was the fact that the motion of thanks on the presidential speech was made by Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar, the Deputy Chief Minister of Penang, Anwar's home State.

Shariff, who is Tasik Gelugor division head, proposed that all Umno divisions nominate Dr Mahathir for the president's post and Anwar for the deputy president's post in next year's party election.

He said this was necessary to ensure solidarity and stability in the party.

"We in Penang love Anwar and we also love Dr Mahathir just as much. We love them both," he said to the applause of the delegates.

Applause and cheers, in fact, were the order of the day as these came from the floor each time a speaker mentioned about the need for a smooth transition of power, signalling that Umno members at least wanted to be seen to favour

such a move.

An equally notable speaker was Datuk Azman Atar Othman, who seconded Shariff's motion.

Always known to be vocal on controversial issues, the Batu division chief urged Dr Mahathir to make efforts to ensure that members do not claim to be the president's or deputy president's men.

He said such claims would only cause rifts and misunderstandings and every effort must be made to prevent this.

"Federal Territory Umno fully supports Dr Mahathir for the presidency and Anwar as his deputy and holds firmly to the philosophy which I have reiterated, namely *Berbudi membalas budi dan mengenang budi* (To do good will bring about good)."

Six other speakers who took to the rostrum yesterday were Shariff Shamsuddin of Pahang, Husni Hasnafa of Perak, Senator Zaleha Hussein of Kelantan, Azmi Ahmad of Terengganu, Datuk Musa Aman of Sabah Mastika and Junaidi Hussin of Per-

lis.

The party's management and disciplinary committee came in for a lot of flak from some of the speakers.

Zaleha claimed that the committee had acted without giving those affected a chance to reply to the allegations made against them and said this was unfair.

Azman was also dissatisfied with the panel, taking exception to branches bypassing the party hierarchy by forwarding complaints to the committee.

"If this is the case what is the point of having divisions and State liaison committees?" he asked.

He said petitions and reports which did not come from branches, or even individuals, were given consideration.

(Azman had been issued a show-cause letter by the party headquarters for working against party interests during the general election).

The debate on the presidential address continues today, to be followed by motions on education and religion.