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(In all the winding-up ... )

Ahmad A. Talib

IN all the winding-up speeches that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has delivered in previous Umno assemblies, Saturday's was by far the most compelling.

It was an extremely important and serious speech, blended with humour, despair, anger, provocative. But most of all, it was a speech that gave hope and confidence to delegates, observers and party members.

Speaking off-the-cuff, the party president demonstrated an oratorical skill that had his audience in stitches and at times spellbound with his clear argument, articulated in a manner that only he can.

It was obvious that Dr Mahathir spoke from the heart, backed by strong and forceful and crystal clear arguments.

Delegates who had listened to several other speakers before him and had appeared restless, took immediate notice when Dr Mahathir opened his speech with a simple reference to a joke made by one of the delegates the day before.

Thereafter, it was vintage Dr Mahathir all the way. He had the audience rapt in attention, especially when he spelt the way forward not only for Umno delegates, but also for the Malay community as a whole.

It is not wrong to say that he actually spoke for all Malays, regardless of their political affiliation. The standing ovation he received was nothing new, but the manner in which it was accorded was overwhelming.

One gets the impression that the audience would not have budged from their seats if he had decided to go on and on.

At the end of the presentation, grudgingly or otherwise, every single Malay in the crowd had to acknowledge that Dr Mahathir is the boss or the party torch-bearer with a clear vision of where he intends to lead his people to.

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