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Mahathir-Winding (Poem)

DR MAHATHIR WINDS UP SPEECH WITH POEM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- In keeping to the style of other leaders at the 54th Umno General Assembly here, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today read out a poem in his winding-up speech.

The 11-verse poem by the party president was delivered at the end of his speech to other Umno leaders and more than 2,000 delegates.

His speech was also followed by thousands of people on closed-circuit television outside the conference hall at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC). The speech was also aired live by RTM.

Before reading out his poem, Dr Mahathir sought permission from deputy permanent chairman Datuk Seri Onn Ismail to follow in the footsteps of several leaders and debaters in reciting poems at the three-day assembly.

"I want to follow tradition by reading out a poem before I end (my speech)," he said.

Several leaders including vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz had earlier spiced up their speeches with poems.

Interspersing his speech with witty remarks, Dr Mahathir appeared calm and did not show any signs of sadness.

This contrasted sharply with his keynote address opening the assembly on Thursday, when Dr Mahathir choked with emotions while reciting a prayer for the Malays to be a respected and successful race.

The prime minister surprised many with his composure today as the occasion had been expected to be an emotional affair, given that he is making his final winding-up speech as party president before retiring in October.

However, Dr Mahathir's cheerful expression did not prevent a handful of people from shedding tears while listening to his parting advice.

-- BERNAMA

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