

21 JUN 2003

Umno-Assembly

54TH UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY MOVES INTO FINAL DAY

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- The 54th Umno General Assembly resumes today, its third and final day, at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Today's session began at 8.30am with Negeri Sembilan delegate Zainudin Ismail continuing the debate on the motion on economy, which was adjourned at 6.30pm yesterday.

Another motion, on education/religion, would be tabled today.

Over 2,000 Umno delegates are attending the 2003 Umno General Assembly, opened by Umno President and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Thursday.

Thousands of people thronged the PWTC since morning, for the eagerly-awaited winding up speech by Dr Mahathir, his last as Umno president after leading the party for 22 years.

With today being an off day for civil servants and many in the private sector, the public are taking the opportunity to gather at the PWTC to accord their respect and appreciation for Dr Mahathir - a statesman who has contributed and sacrificed greatly for the people and nation.

Many are expected to be moved and unable to check their emotions when Dr Mahathir delivers his winding up speech at the Umno general assembly today.

Meanwhile the arrival of the Umno President at the PWTC was greeted with a 100m-long pink banner strung across the building's compound.

The banner, held by Puteri Umno members, carried signatures of thousands of people who thanked the Prime Minister for his contributions and services to the country.

Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, who arrived at 8.30am, spent some time to view the banner.

As Dr Mahathir edged towards Dewan Merdeka, the venue of the Umno general assembly, he was mobbed by Umno members and the public who greeted and shook hands with him.

The public, who came with cameras even asked the prime minister to stop and have his pictures taken with them.

Some were seen wiping away their tears.

Dr Mahathir, sportingly obliged the many requests made by the public and his "journey" from PWTC's level four to Dewan Merdeka, which usually takes a few minutes, lasted almost half an hour.

Dr Mahathir will step down from his party and government posts after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit here in October.

-- BERNAMA

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