

**Umno bids farewell to Pak Lah, placates Ali Rustam**  
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The Umno 59th Annual General Assembly closed its curtain today with prominent leaders giving winding-up speeches to the delegates and recalled the "good old times" under the tenure of former Umno president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

But the one who is most likely to feel Abdullah's absence is none other than his son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin.

In his debut speech as the Youth chief, Khairy said "although there were ups and downs in his (Abdullah's) political career, he has never put himself above the party".

"I would like to thank him for all his contributions and sacrifices he had made to the party, and thank you for having faith in the Youth wing," said Khairy, who appeared calm in bidding farewell to his father-in-law.

He then shifted his focus to his former rivals, Mukhriz Mahathir and Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, who lost in the race for Youth chief post.

mukhriz mahathir 290508 "To Mohd Khir and Mukhriz, even though they have left the Youth era, I need your advice and I beg both of you to help me strengthen the Youth wing.

"I am standing here as an Umno Youth chief, but then I am only a human being with many flaws. As a young person, I have limited knowledge and lack experience.

"To be honest, I feel so insignificant and I know that I need to learn a lot... if I do anything wrong, advise me, so that I won't detract from the party's aims," said Khairy.

Shahrizat: Even Najib might have doubted me...

Meanwhile, newly-elected Shahrizat Abdul Jalil as the head of the Wanita wing admitted that it would be "tough" for her to take over the task from her predecessor Rafidah Aziz.

"Berat mata memandang, berat lagi bahu memikul (it is easier said than done)," said Shahrizat in her debut winding-up speech, adding that Najib might have doubted her capabilities in leading Wanita.

"But with all the support given to me and my deputy and other exco members, I vow to fight with the president and the top leadership to open a new chapter in our political landscape," said Shahrizat.

However, vice-president's new face Hishammuddin Hussein Onn touched more on education in his winding-up speech in his capacity as the education minister, and assured that he would defend Malay language as the national language.

Responding to delegates' debates on the teaching of maths and science in English, he promised to make an effort to upgrade the status of the Malay language, not solely-based on maths and science.

The five-day event has seen some intense debates from the delegates arguing the benefits of teaching maths and science in English, where most of them were opposed to the idea.

### **Ali Rustam still popular**

Mohd Ali Rustam, even though he was disqualified a week before the Umno election for alleged money

politics, preventing him from running for the deputy president post, he was nevertheless still popular among the Umno members.

In an unusual move, he was invited to give a winding-up speech on the final day of the general assembly and as soon as he finished, all the delegates gave him a standing ovation and thunderous applause as a sign of respect.

Even new vice-president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi acknowledged Mohd Ali, who is also Malacca chief minister, for his contributions and asked the delegates to give him standing ovation.

Mohd Ali was seen as the favourite to win the deputy presidency post, but his hope was dashed after the Umno disciplinary board found his agents guilty of money politics.

This allowed Muhyiddin Yassin, the new deputy president, to score an easy win over underdog Muhammad Mohd Taib.

Speaking in a calm tone, Mohd Ali, who accepted the decision to bar him with an "open heart", urged other candidates who were handed the same fate as him to focus on strengthening the party.

"Don't be saddened... not all winners win everything, not all losers lose everything. The world has not ended and tomorrow has yet to come," said Mohd Ali drawing cheers and applause from the delegates.

Today is also the day of Abdullah's final speech as Umno president before transferring his power to Najib Abdul Razak.