

Tears speak louder than words

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KUALALUMPUR: The battle-scarred ironman finally cracked. And for about 10 minutes yesterday, the tears flowed.

After days of declaring that he would not cry, and moments after ending his speech by saying, "See, I didn't cry", Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik's emotions got the better of him at the Gerakan extraordinary delegates conference.

Dr Lim's eyes began to glisten at 12.30pm when Sungai Siput division vice-chairman Ong Kah Khoo was halfway through paying tribute to the outgoing president.

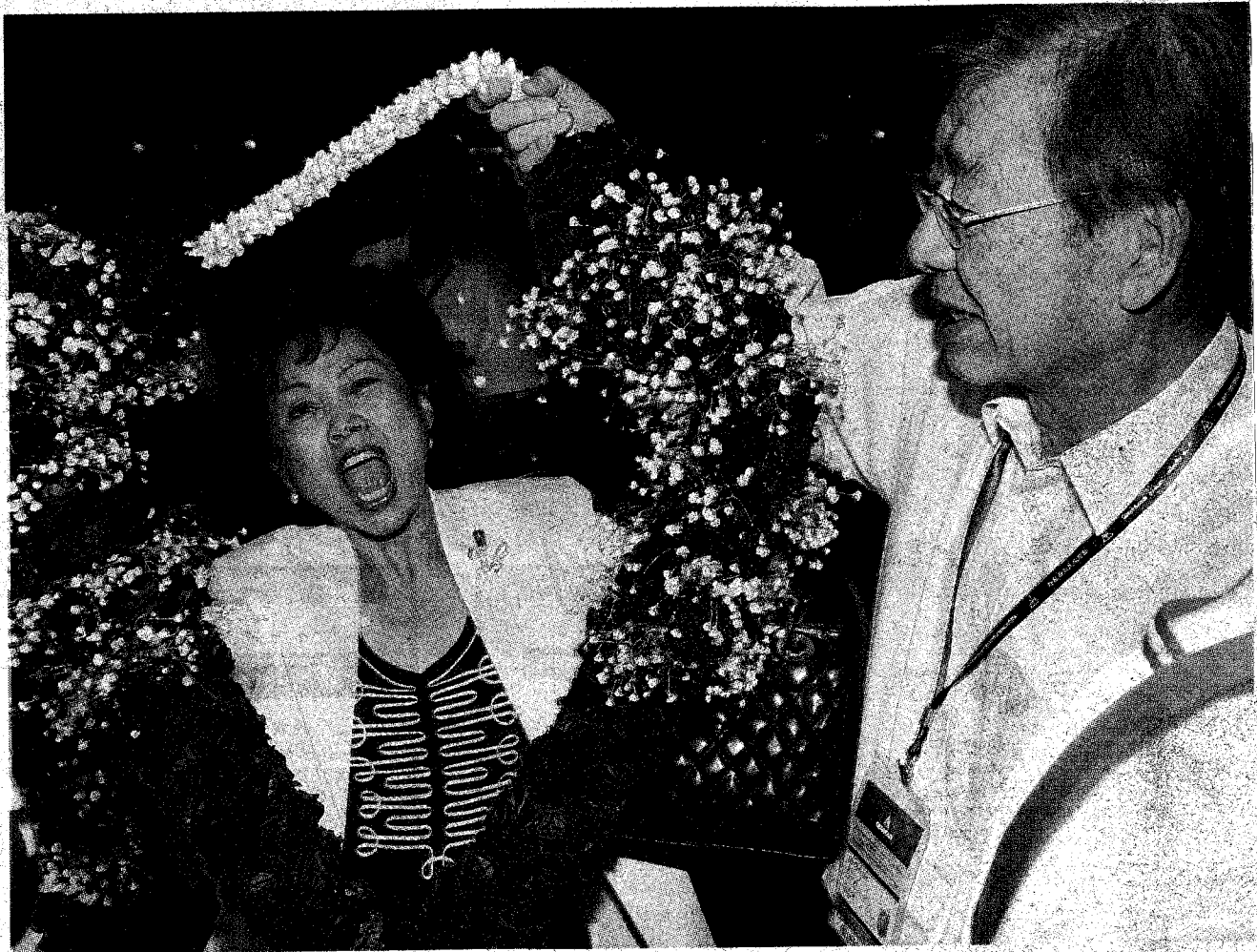
The Tapah-born doctor surreptitiously took out his handkerchief and tried to wipe away the tears. But he could not stem the tide of emotions rocking him and tears began streaming down his face.

By the time he removed his spectacles to wipe away tears, everyone was aware that the ironman was crying; the battle-hardened politician was showing another, unseen, side.

Delegates craned their necks to take a better look. This, after all, was history in the making and it would be a subject of conversation at party gatherings for years to come. It was also something to take home and talk about.

Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and party secretary-general Datuk Seri Chia Kwang Chye were seen trying to console Dr Lim. But Koh could not keep his solemn look for long as he broke into laughter as a delegate cracked a joke about Dr Lim's leadership style.

Koh and Chia offered Dr Lim a cup of Chinese tea and biscuits. After sipping the tea and eating a biscuit, Dr Lim appeared to have a hold over his emotions. He kept looking down as he nodded his head, acknowledging points made by Ong.



Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik surprises his wife Datin Seri Wong Yoon Chuan by offering her a garland at the Gerakan extraordinary general meeting at Menara PGRM yesterday.

At 12.50pm, Dr Lim walked out of the hall only to return five minutes later, looking composed but pensive. He remained that way until the end of the EGM about 2pm.

Later, at a Press conference, Dr Lim joked that he had only been rubbing his tired eyes.

"Yes, I was a bit emotional as Ong and I had struggled together for more than 35 years. When he reminisced about our time together, of course it stirred my emotions.

"Although I'm strong, I'm still human. I have feelings and as a result, a bit of my tears came out," he said,

adding that it was "a good nostalgic" feeling.

Yesterday's EGM passed resolutions to accept Dr Lim's resignation and to appoint him as party adviser. It also endorsed Koh as the acting president until the next party election in 2008.

The resolution was proposed by Chia and passed by the 1,800 delegates at the party's headquarters in Menara PGRM.

On his new post, Dr Lim said he would only give advice if it was sought, either privately or within the central working committee.

"My first advice to him (Koh) is, no need to ask for advice. Go and do what you think is right," he said, adding that he had full confidence in Koh's leadership.

He said he would like to meet the grassroots and talk to them about the party's ideologies and political struggles to ensure they did not become complacent.

Earlier, in his last speech as party president, Dr Lim had a message for all politicians: Drop racialistic mindsets.

He said they could not become national leaders if they continued with such thinking.

To the delegates, he said he had come to the end of his journey. Dr Lim added: "While it is time to pass on the baton, I would like to remind you that the journey for the party is far from over."

The indomitable politician expressed hope that current and future party leaders and members would continue to uphold, support and defend multiculturalism and abhor racialist thinking.

Dr Lim added that the party must be vigilant in its efforts to promote a non-racial approach within the Barisan Nasional and national politics.