

Newspaper	MALAYSIAKINI
Date	18 JULY 2017

From jeers to cheers, Dr M charms his way into opposition hearts

Malaysiakini – 18 July 2017

When Dr Mahathir Mohamad last attended an opposition function at the Ideal Convention Centre (IDCC) in Shah Alam, he was less than welcome. Though some at the Reformis Malaysia convention in February cheered for him, many still considered him the enemy then and heckled him.

But February was a lifetime ago in today's politics and things now appear to be very different for Mahathir. Speaking in the same hall he was jeered at previously, the former prime minister was met with adulation from the 400-strong crowd.

Though most of his material were the same as those who spoke before him, the veteran orator got the most laughs and cheers from the crowd - who gave no hint of what transpired five months ago. Unlike February's do, most of those in attendance last night were not hardcore Reformasi veterans who struggled alongside Anwar against Mahathir.

But even such veterans, like Daud Yusof, seemed to have warmed up to the nonagenarian. Clad in a black Otai Reformis T-shirt, Daud had nothing bad to say about Mahathir being Pakatan Harapan chairperson alongside Reformasi icon Anwar Ibrahim as the coalition's *de facto* leader.

"Anwar isn't around right now... So Mahathir is filling that leadership gap," the activist told *Malaysiakini*. For him, his animosity towards Mahathir began to thaw when the latter made a surprise appearance, in court last September, to support Anwar's bid to challenge the National Security Council Act.

Witnessed an iconic event

Daud said he was there to witness for himself the iconic moment, when the once bitter rivals shook hands for the first time in almost two decades.

"At that time my heart began to open a little. When you see someone you've called *mahafiraun* (great pharaoh), at his age, willing to come to court, it shows his change of heart. Recently, he was also at the Aidilfitri open houses of Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Nurul Izzah Anwar.

"Not every 92-year-old has that spirit to show up. The change (in him) is there," Daud said. In his speech, Mahathir acknowledged that he was not always liked by the crowd before him. They cheered him when he poked fun at himself, saying that the labels of *mahafiraun* and *mahazalim* (cruellest) were in the past, and should be forgotten.

He got an even louder ovation when he called on the crowd to support a united Harapan to ensure their victory.