

Saturday, November 1, 2003

HOME

• THE WEEK THAT WAS IN PARLIAMENT

# TOUCHING LAST SESSION FOR DR M

MM 1/11/2003 - 9 PRECISE

By RITA JONG

AS he entered the House on Thursday just as the clock struck 10am, all eyes were on him as it was his last Parliament session as the Prime Minister.

Loud and thunderous thumps were heard even before the session began, indicating the respect Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad commands and deserves from all Malaysians.

Taking his seat, he was smiling as he spoke to his successor, the then Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (and since yesterday the nation's fifth Prime Minister). One can only wonder what they were talking about.

But as Dr Mahathir stood up to take questions fired by the Opposition, there was no denying the charisma that Dr Mahathir, the master politician, has as he calmly addressed the House with his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, sitting just across.

Dr Siti Hasmah was accompanied by the next First Lady, Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood, who was clad in bright green kebaya. It was impossible to miss them as Dr Siti Hasmah herself was in purplish pink attire.

Many took the opportunity to



**FINAL ADDRESS: Dr Mahathir tabling the motion for the mid-term review of the *Eighth Malaysia Plan* on Thursday**

rush out to shake the hands of these lovely ladies outside the lobby when the session went on a break.

It was an expected full turnout by BN backbenchers and Ministers on Thursday to show their full support to the great leader.

And as Dr Mahathir tabled the motion for the mid-term review of the *Eighth Malaysia Plan* that took slightly more

than two hours, the members were all seen attentively listening to his speech.

Aside from his voice, the House was silent, only to be filled with the clicking and flashing of cameras in between his pauses.

The atmosphere seemed normal as the changeover - the first in 22 years - grew nearer by the hour.

But it was obvious that

almost all the Ministers were saddened by Dr Mahathir's departure as some were seen dabbling their eyes with handkerchiefs.

Some had politely declined to comment on Dr Mahathir's second last day as Prime Minister, as they were afraid that they would not be able to hold back the tears when they speak.

It was also apparent as to how everyone wanted to savour every last minute they had with Dr M, as they asked for his autograph, a handshake or have their pictures taken with him.

They even rushed to get to take a group photo with him.

Dr Siti Hasmah was also asked to take a photo with a chair seated right beside Mahathir. And it was a touching sight to see how he tapped the chair, as if to say, "Come, sit here with me..."

It was also nice to see how one of the most powerful men in the world who had made great changes to the country, was deep down inside, just like everyone else.

Now, his life will go through a total make-over as he will lead a normal life with his wife, children and grandchildren.

But the sense of pride that he had instilled among Malaysians will never be forgotten. After all, he is *Mahathir*, the great warrior.