

**Delegates ready to give their all**  
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ACT OF DEFERENCE: Najib thanks past leaders and Umno veterans

KUALA LUMPUR: LIKE a maestro preparing for the biggest night of his life, Umno party president Datuk Seri Najib Razak strode to the rostrum at 6.15pm to begin his speech.

His tone was measured and controlled. He knew how to work the crowd. He started off slowly, pausing, to drive home the points, peppering his presentation with bouts of humour. With every passing paragraph, he built up the tempo until it reached a deafening crescendo.

By the time he was done, there was nothing the Umno delegates wouldn't do for the party, for Najib and the country.

The packed Merdeka Hall yesterday witnessed another significant moment in Umno's history when the party president set the stage for the electoral battle that would determine the people's and nation's destiny.

Najib, who looked resplendent in brilliant orange Baju Melayu, started his winding-up speech at the Umno general assembly by offering thanks to past leaders and Umno veterans. His act of deference to the past leaders struck a chord with the delegates. It was a stroke of reconciliatory brilliance.

Those inside the hall also gave a standing ovation when the prime minister thanked his predecessors Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for their continued support and trust in him.

In one of the many light moments, Najib, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, had the floor in stitches when he said that his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, would not be angry if female Umno members carried around the "I Love PM" mini posters. He said she knows who has his heart.

There was no ambiguity in his address to the delegates. From rallying the troops for the 13th general election, to uniting for the sake of the party, and defending the rights of the Malays and non-Malays, Najib drove home the point that Umno and BN were the best bet for a secure and dynamic Malaysia. A vote for anyone but BN would lead to the country's destruction, he said.

The clarion call for party members to put aside their personal interests and deny the opposition every single vote, fired up the delegates. This will be a fight where every single vote will literally count.

At one point during the address, Najib, the party leadership and delegates, with fists clenched on their chests, took an oath to defend the people and the country. The crowd also joined him to recite a prayer for Umno and BN to continue governing.

Those who watched or listened to the live telecast of his speech, from remote villages to Felda schemes and urban areas, were also touched by his sincere and emotive pledge to help bring Malaysia to a higher level and achieve developed-nation status by 2020.

"I couldn't help it but shed tears while listening to his speech. If he is willing to work hard for us and our children, why can't we do the same for him?" said a Wanita Umno member who

joined hundreds to watch Najib's speech on a giant screen at the Putra World Trade Centre lobby.

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