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MAHATHIR RELIEVED WITH ANWAR'S LOYALTY PLEDGE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is relieved that his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has explicitly declared his allegiance and loyalty to him as Umno president.

Dr Mahathir hoped that Anwar's pledge would put an end to talk of their differences which at times "hurt his ears".

"I'm very pleased because after listening the deputy president's speech, just like all of you ladies and gentlemen, I feel relieved with his declaration of loyalty to me not as Mahathir but as party president," the prime minister said at the outset of his speech winding up debate on the last day of the 52nd Umno general assembly here today.

Dr Mahathir said much has been said about their relationship.

"Sometimes we tend to be taken in with so many people coming with all sorts of stories. These human ears, upon hearing it once, twice, thrice and 10 times make us want to believe what we hear.

"It's one thing we hear when we meet and it sounds some other thing when we part. This is the fate of politicians," he said.

Dr Mahathir also told the delegates that Anwar was relieved with party vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi's pledging support for Anwar.

"When I spoke to Datuk Seri Anwar just now he said when Datuk Seri Abdullah makes his speech, he is relieved that Badawi supports him, in particular relating to that 50 reasons or something or what-do-you-call that (the book discrediting Anwar).

"I told him in politics, an enemy is not forever, and no friend is forever either.

"We're friends today and enemies tomorrow," Dr Mahathir said to a thunderous applause of those in Dewan Merdeka of the Putra World Trade Centre, the venue of the three-day 1998 general assembly.

-- BERNAMA

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