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Mahathir-Umno (Surprise)

NO SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT BY MAHATHIR AT UMNO ASSEMBLY

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivered a one-and-a-half hour presidential address at the 53rd Umno General Assembly today but did not make any surprise announcement.

The Umno president left the 2,034 delegates, the media and observers at the assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here and millions who followed his televised address still guessing which part of the speech was the surprise, if at all there was any.

Some at the assembly thought the part of his speech relating to the controversial book "Shit" written by National Laureate Negara Datuk Shanon Ahmad was the surprise.

This deduction was based on the distribution of a 20-paged addendum relating to the matter separately to the media later.

However, a Teluk Intan Umno division delegate thought there was indeed a surprise announcement in Dr Mahathir's address.

Dr Mohd Ismail Maulut said that by his reckoning the surprise announcement was Dr Mahathir's frankness in explaining the issue relating to the sacking of Datuk Seri Ibrahim Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president.

Anwar, who is serving a six-year jail term for corruption, is currently being tried for sodomy.

In the absence of a real "shocker", the delegates, observers and the media were still looking forward to hearing the surprise announcement over the weekend.

The surprise announcement was yet to come, if a hint by Barisan Nasional secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat was anything to go by.

When approached by reporters after the presidential address, Mohamed, the former information minister, said: "The surprise is coming soon. Let's wait for it."

He said he did not think Dr Mahathir's explanation on the Anwar issue in his speech was the "surprise".

Political analysts said Dr Mahathir could still make his surprise announcement when he winds up the assembly debate on Sunday.

In an interview with CNN yesterday, Dr Mahathir declined to give a hint of the surprise except to say that "if there is no surprise, that would also be a surprise too."

Dr Mahathir also ended today's presidential speech without giving any hint as to when the next general election, due by June next year but widely expected to be called earlier, will be held.

-- BERNAMA
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