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Mahathir-Australia

DR MAHATHIR HAPPY AUSTRALIA WANTS TO BE FRIENDLY

KUALA LUMPUR, April 7 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is happy that Australian leaders want to be friendly with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said he was certain that Australian Prime Minister John Howard wanted to be friendly with Abdullah and described the move as good.

"I was reading the statement of Foreign Minister (Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar) this morning and he said we should be friendly with Australia," he told reporters here when asked on Abdullah's ongoing three-day official visit to Australia, the first by a Malaysian leader in 21 years.

Syed Hamid had told Malaysian journalists covering the trip in Canberra yesterday that the visit would provide the opportunity for both leaders to discuss with frankness all relevant issues in efforts to establish a more meaningful understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

Dr Mahathir said that during his premiership, he wanted to be friendly with the Australian leaders but they were not friendly with him.

"But now, as we want to be friendly, maybe we should give a pat on the back," said Dr Mahathir who handed over the premiership to Abdullah on Oct 31 2003.

However, he said that with the developing friendly atmosphere, it does not mean Malaysian views on certain issues should be changed.

"We should be friendly with Australia but that does not mean our views of certain issues will be changed," said Dr Mahathir who earlier opened the 30th annual general meeting of the Kuala Lumpur branch of Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

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