

PM ATTENDS MCA'S CNY OPEN HOUSE

Anwar says he discussed a lot about nation's development, economy with Wee

HANA NAZ HARUN
AND QISTINA SALLEHUDDIN
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.lny

I AM happy to meet old friends." This was how Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim described his feelings after attending the MCA Chinese New Year open house at the party's headquarters, here, on Sunday.

He said his relationship with old friends did not end even though he and other leaders from MCA were in different parties and had different ideologies.

"I would like to thank MCA and (their president) Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong for inviting me and Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

"I think it has been about 25 years (1998) since I last stepped foot in (Wisma) MCA," he said.

Anwar, who is also Pakatan Harapan chairman, said he felt the warmth from MCA leaders.

"Before this, I was sacked from

Umno. Then, I was forced to fight and sent to prison, so I could not attend (festive gatherings).

"Now we are not just cordial, but also like-minded in many opinions and issues.

"I discussed a lot about Malaysia's development and economy with Wee."

Anwar joined Umno in 1982 after his activism during his university days caught the eye of then-prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He then rose rapidly through the ranks and was deputy prime minister from 1993 to 1997, and also became Umno deputy president during the period.

However, in September 1998, Anwar was sacked as deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president after being accused of corruption and sodomy.

His sacking saw thousands take to the streets in *reformasi* (reformation) marches and Anwar, who maintained the charges were politically motivated, was detained.

In total, Anwar spent some 10

years behind bars before he was pardoned and released in 2018.

By that time, he had once again joined forces with Dr Mahathir under the Pakatan Harapan banner in a bid to oust Barisan Nasional from power.

Also present at the MCA Chinese New Year Open House were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil, Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, and MIC deputy president Datuk Seri M. Saravanan.

This is the first festive gathering of the unity government after the Nov 19 general elections.

Meanwhile, Zahid hoped that the Year of the Rabbit brought prosperity and that all Malaysians would come together and be united.

"As we know, a new political landscape has been built. This is a good indicator and we hope MCA will invite the prime minister every year.

"We have to accept the reality that Malaysia must be rebuilt post-pandemic, which is quite difficult but something not impossible to do if we are united."