

# Dr Mahathir scoffs at second deputy rumour

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today denied that he is going to appoint a second Deputy Prime Minister, saying the talk was news to him.

The Prime Minister even laughed off the matter, telling reporters who sought his comments: "I do not know... any candidates?"

"This is the first time I am hearing about it. Would you like to pay for his salary? We (will) have an honorary Deputy Prime Minister."

The Singapore's *Business Times* had reported last Friday that the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange composite index plunged the previous day "after a rumour started circulating that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was about to appoint a second deputy prime minister."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing ceremony of a joint venture agreement for the RM1.2 billion Second Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge at the Bukit Kiara Equestrian and Country Resort.

The signing was between the Berjaya Engineering & Construction (HK) Ltd and the Second Nanjing Bridge Office of the People's Government of Nanjing Municipality.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, when asked, described the rumour as the work of irresponsible people.

"I would like to strongly urge and appeal to Malaysians to ignore such a rumour," the Deputy Prime Minister said in response to

Press queries after he opened the 1994 National Outlook Conference organised by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) at the Shangri-La Hotel here.

He said he had met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning and they discussed the rumour which they had also heard.

"We have reached a decision on this... to completely ignore such an irresponsible rumour," he said, adding that it had surfaced before, that it was now being spread anew and it would surface again in future.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, said both Dr Mahathir and himself felt that such a rumour could have been generated by frustrated people, who

have an axe to grind or those who want to see the stock market being disrupted.

"We have information that part of the rumour was deliberately started in foreign countries to cause some problems," he said, adding that it would not have serious repercussion on the relationship between Dr Mahathir and himself.

To a question on whether it was planned by certain groups, Anwar said he could not be certain.

"This is why I strongly urge and appeal to Malaysians to ignore this rumour," he added.

On his meeting with Dr Mahathir this morning, Anwar said both of them communicated every other day... "that is when we are both in Kuala Lumpur".