

01/09/1997

Anwar: Latest rumour another bid to slander me

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PENANG, Sun. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the rumours that he had resigned as Finance Minister was another politically-motivated attempt to slander him.

He said he had discussed the rumours with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

He was asked whether he had met Dr Mahathir on the matter after attending a wedding at Kampung Sama Gagah, Bukit Mertajam, one of the eight he went to today.

Asked whether it was correct to say that Dr Mahathir had taken charge of the country's economic management following his strong warning to currency and share market manipulators on Thursday, Anwar said he personally discussed the matters touched by the Prime Minister during Cabinet meetings.

"Since the widespread attack on the currencies of this region, Prime Minister's involvement in the matter will of course be greater.

"I don't see why people should make an issue of the Prime Minister's involvement in economic and financial matters. As Prime Minister, that is his right".

Asked whether he believed there would be more attempts to smear his image, Anwar, who is MP for Permatang Pauh said he would not dismiss such a possibility.

On whether these attempts were the work of local or foreign elements, he said he believed they were local.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir quashed rumours that Anwar had resigned as Finance Minister and dismissed the notion that he had taken over the management of the economy.

Stressing that there had been no change to the finance portfolio, Dr Mahathir said Anwar was now doing all he could in dealing with foreign funds driving down the stock market and the speculative attacks against the ringgit.

"I think these are people who have no national interest at heart," he said. "Anwar is not resigning ... he is going to be there".

"I do not know what to do with these people (rumour-mongers) ... we should shoot them," Dr Mahathir quipped.

Speaking at a Press conference after opening the 44th MCA annual general assembly at Wisma MCA yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he had regular meetings with Anwar and were working closely to tackle the problems.

Dr Mahathir criticised rumour-mongers for being only interested in making money for themselves.

"They don't care if this country goes to the dogs," he said. "If the (share) prices go down, everybody will suffer ... the brokers will have smaller margin because they will deal with shares which are cheaper."

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