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Anwar: There's no basis to rumours that I'm quitting

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today there was no basis to rumours that he is resigning, maintaining that the appointment of any member of the Cabinet was the sole prerogative of the Prime Minister.

Anwar who is also Finance Minister, reiterated that he met Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on a daily basis for the Exco meeting of the National Economic Action Council along with Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, during which views were expressed frankly.

It is also normal for Anwar to have a chat with the Prime Minister every morning before the NEAC meetings to discuss non-NEAC matters including politics.

Anwar was commenting on rumours surrounding his position, his relations with Dr Mahathir and whether he still had full control over the Finance Ministry, which were questions brought up at a Press conference on the corporate debt restructuring held at the Treasury.

He said question of sphere of influence and delineation of tasks and responsibility should not be raised, as given the difficult economic situation, there was a need to involve the entire Cabinet in making decisions.

"It is a joint effort to discuss and deliberate on major issues together and the focus should be on economic recovery," he said.

In this context, he said, it was only to be expected that the Prime Minister be involved in decisions involving the economy and Finance Ministry.

When the questions at the Press conference turned to speculation concerning his position, Anwar light-heartedly sought clarification from the reporter asking him, whether the rumour concerned his position as Deputy Prime Minister or Finance Minister. He was told it was about the latter.

Anwar then said: "The first rule is don't entertain rumours. Secondly, I have heard this going on for some time ...

"I don't know whether this is good news or (it will) disappoint you, but the fact is there is no basis."

On his relationship with the Prime Minister, he said questions persisted despite both having clarified repeatedly.

"I want to reiterate that we meet on a daily basis, decisions are made together. Of course, as Prime Minister and chairman of the NEAC, we take cognisance of his (Dr Mahathir's) views and concern."

Asked whether speculation on the rift between him and Dr Mahathir would affect efforts to revive the economy, Anwar said: "If there is no rift in the first place, I don't think it will affect (economic recovery's efforts).

"But of course, you can't stop people from spreading or creating rumours or uncertainty. For example, I called the Press conference on the corporate debt restructuring, but I hear some people believe that it could be related to my position as Finance Minister."

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