

01/07/1998

Anwar: Daim's appointment should be viewed positively

Rashid Yusof

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today Tun Daim Zainuddin's return to the Cabinet would enhance the collective role in managing the economy.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said that while the speculation it stirred could not be avoided, Daim's appointment as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department responsible for economic development last week should be viewed positively.

"I don't see why the response (has to be) in the negative sense because his position in the Cabinet will enhance the collective role.

"We should view this positively, to be seen to be working together to stimulate the economy and solve problems," Anwar said when commenting on speculation that Daim's appointment had weakened his (Anwar's) position.

Anwar said he and Daim had been working together for some time, since the latter's appointment as executive director of the National Economic Action Council.

"In the NEAC, the Prime Minister is the chairman and I (am the) deputy and Daim is a permanent member in the Exco."

Anwar, who is also IIU president, had earlier chaired the International Islamic University's council meeting at its Gombak campus.

Asked whether people were reading too much into Daim's appointment, Anwar said: "I see that there have been too many interpretations, which cannot be avoided."

He said he was informed by the Prime Minister on the appointment of Daim.

He said he had been meeting Daim with officials or other members of the NEAC regularly, "in fact almost daily" and discussing ways to resolve the economic problem effectively.

Anwar said he, thus, viewed Daim's appointment positively. "We have been working in a team," he said, alluding to their roles in the NEAC.

To another question, Anwar said the question of overlapping of duties between Daim and him "did not arise at all".

Dr Mahathir, when asked by reporters last Thursday, had said that the interests of the nation would take precedence in the event that there were differences in policies between Anwar and Daim.

Daim, the Finance Minister from 1984 to 1991, was sworn in as a Minister on Friday. He is also the Economic Adviser to the Government.

(END)