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Anwar: Ignore foreign media speculations

Patvinder Singh; Tony Emmanuel

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said senior Bank Negara officials have given an assurance to the Prime Minister and himself of their cooperation in continuing national policies to revive the economy.

Anwar said the senior officials had met him and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said the people should ignore foreign media speculation that a third senior executive had purportedly resigned from Bank Negara and a fourth was under pressure to leave.

"There is much to do ... let us not waste time paying heed to speculations in the foreign media."

He added that the nation should remain united and support the Prime Minister and the Government in carrying out measures to revive the economy.

The Agence France Presse report came in the wake of the tendering of letters of resignation of the central bank governor Tan Sri Ahmad Mohamad Don and his deputy, Datuk Fong Weng Phak, on Thursday. The resignations are effective Sept 1.

"Those (senior Bank Negara officials) remaining behind met the Prime Minister and myself, assuring us of their cooperation in continuing with all that is required in the central bank," he told reporters at the Selangor Turf Club Equestrian and Sports Centre in Sungei Besi.

Accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and their children, Anwar, who is Malaysian Equine Council president, officiated the National Horse Show.

In a report filed from here, AFP said Bank Negara consultant Wan Norhayati Wan Ibrahim had also decided to resign, with effect from Tuesday, returning to Malayan Banking Berhad where she was previously employed. (Wan Norhayati has clarified that she did not resign).

The report, quoting unidentified bank officials, said the focus of attention was now moving to associate governor Abdul Murad Khalid, following the appointment of Datuk Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz as acting governor.

"I have not received any information about such resignations," Anwar said.

Asked when a new governor would be appointed, Anwar replied that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar has consented to Zeti's appointment as acting governor.

"She would continue as acting governor and I have full confidence in her carrying out her responsibilities."

Pressed further to comment on possible candidates to take up the position as governor, Anwar said: "There is no new appointment ... we have given her our full support and have faith in her carrying out her duties."

Asked for his advice to those who interpreted recent developments as a political manoeuvre during the current economic problems, Anwar replied: "We cannot stop them from making speculations ... But we have to be focussed on reviving the economy."

Asked if Ahmad Don and Fong had given reasons for their resignations, Anwar said they had not.

"When the letters were submitted (and they were firm with the decision), I consulted the Prime Minister and we agreed that we should accept the resignations," Anwar said.

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