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Anwar quashes talk of him quitting as Finance Minister

DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday quashed rumours that he was stepping down as Finance Minister.

"I have this (rumours) going on for some time now from the media... there is no basis to them," he said.

On his relationship with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar said he meets the Prime Minister every day to discuss wide-ranging issues, including measures to address the problems faced by the economy.

"There is no rift between us. We meet on a daily basis and decisions are made together. As Prime Minister and chairman of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC), we take cognisance of (Dr Mahathir's) views.

"The NEAC executive committee, comprising the Prime Minister, (Special Functions Minister) Tun Daim Zainuddin and myself, meet to discuss issues frankly. Normally, I would also have a chat with Dr Mahathir on issues not related to NEAC," he said.

"I assure you... there is no rift between us," he told about 60 local and foreign journalists at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur called to announce details of the Corporate Debt Restructuring Committee.

"You should appreciate that we are dealing with a very difficult situation... which involves the entire Cabinet and the NEAC meets daily.

"It is a joint effort. We discuss and deliberate on major issues together and the focus is on economic recovery," Anwar said.

On whether rumours of a rift might affect economic recovery efforts, he said:

"You cannot stop people from instigating or discussing or spreading rumours.

"For example, I called for this press conference on corporate debt restructuring but I hear that some people believed it could be related to my position as Finance Minister."

Anwar stressed that he is firmly in charge of the Finance Ministry and that Daim's appointment to the Cabinet is the Prime Minister's prerogative.

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