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Daim's position will enhance collective role: DPM

Kamarul Yunus

TUN Daim Zainuddin's new appointment is a positive move that will aid in the collective effort to stimulate the country's economy and resolve problems, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said.

"I do not see why the response has to be in the negative sense because his (Daim) position in the Cabinet will enhance the collective role.

"We should view this (Daim's appointment) positively ... to be seen to be working together to stimulate the economy and solve problems," he told newsmen after chairing the 47th International Islamic University (IIU)'s council meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister and IIU council president, was asked to comment on talk that Daim's appointment as Minister of Special Functions in the Prime Minister's Department would weaken his (Anwar's) position in the Government.

Dismissing such speculation, the Deputy Prime Minister said he has been working together with Daim for some time now since the latter, who is also Economic Adviser to the Government, was appointed as executive director of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC).

"In the NEAC, Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) is the chairman, while I am the deputy chairman and Daim, a permanent member in the executive council.

"I look at Daim's appointment positively because we have been working together as a team in the NEAC.

"We have met from time to time or almost daily to study and discuss effective measures to overcome the current economic problems," Anwar said, but did not deny that Daim's appointment has given rise to a lot of speculation.

"I find that there are too many perceptions (about Daim's appointment) but we cannot avoid these. I was informed by the Prime Minister about the appointment and I look at it positively."

This was the first time that Anwar has commented on Daim's appointment which was announced last Wednesday.

On whether Daim's appointment will overlap Anwar's role as Finance Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister said, "This does not arise at all."

As Minister of Special Functions, Daim is responsible for matters concerning economic issues and problems, and the Prime Minister had said Daim will remain so until the country's economic woes are resolved.

Last Thursday, Dr Mahathir had also said that the interests of the nation will take precedence in the event of any difference between Anwar's and Daim's policies.

Daim, finance minister from 1984 to 1991, was sworn in as a Cabinet minister last Friday.

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