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Mahathir - rift

MAHATHIR SAYS HE AND ANWAR ALL OKAY

KUALA LUMPUR, May 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reiterated that there is no rift between him and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"There is no rift (with Anwar), every morning we sit down, he, I and Daim (economic adviser to the government) and we decide what we have to do together," he said.

"But no matter how we do it, even if I were to kiss and hug him in public all the time, they will say there is a rift because this is what they want to see," the prime minister said.

He was responding to a question from a CNBC journalist suggesting a rift between him and Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, after the prime minister launched Asnita, Malaysia's first unit trust fund for women here today.

On him being perceived as "not singing from the same singing sheet" as Anwar, Dr Mahathir said: "Wrong, perhaps the way he puts it may sound different but the basics are the same."

On the journalist's suggestion of cronyism and nepotism in the government, Dr Mahathir said there was no such thing.

He said the government, which subscribed to the Malaysia Incorporated concept, had a duty to help people and companies which have been contributing 28 per cent of their profits as government revenue.

"Why shouldn't we help them, in whom we don't invest...but when they make a profit, 28 per cent is for the government. We help everybody," he said.

Dr Mahathir refuted claims that he had helped his son Mirzan, who owned the troubled Konsortium Perkapalan Bhd, in the acquisition of Mirzan's shipping business and assets by Petronas, the national oil company.

"We help any businesses in trouble... this is a business decision...you should see whether it is favouritism, just giving money away freely or was it a commercial deal," he said.

"Please look carefully into what was being done. It is not because he is my son. It is a favourite gambit of western press to say that Asians are all corrupt people who just spend money on their children," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he has many children and relatives who are poor and invited the journalist to see the kind of lives they are living.

"They shouldn't be living that way if I'm someone who spent government's money on my own relatives...I don't do that," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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