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Anwar - editors

MALAYSIAN MEDIA MUST REMAIN CREDIBLE, SAYS ANWAR

By: Salmu Hashim

WASHINGTON, July 21 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian media must remain credible and objective and must continue to play its role of disseminating information and the truth, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said here Monday.

He said this in response to a question by a reporter over the recent resignations in two of Malaysia's leading Malay dailies.

Datuk Nazri Abdullah last week resigned from his position as Group Editor of Berita Harian, while Datuk Johan Jaaffar resigned as Editor-in-Chief of Utusan Melayu Group.

Asked whether the departure of the two top journalists, widely regarded as his "political allies," was symbolic of a rift between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and him, Anwar simply said: "The prime minister has said this is an ongoing, normal change, but to my mind what's more important is that the media must remain credible and objective."

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said the media must continue to disseminate information and the truth.

"That's more critical than the other issues," he said.

However, he reiterated that there were no policy differences between him and the prime minister,

"Rather we complement each other," he said.

Anwar said differences between him and the prime minister were merely "perceived" because Dr Mahathir talked about issues that affected developing economies while he tend to talk about special programmes that needed to be implemented.

"There are of course perceived differences because the pronouncements I make which are tied to the general policies coordinated by the Treasury, and we're expected to implement these."

"The prime minister articulates the concerns of the developing world, the failure of international arrangements to protect the poorer economies and the developed world impatience to push ahead with liberalisation without regard for the negative impact it might have on the local economy."

"Because of our different roles, you do see some perceived differences," Anwar said.

On a news report that the prime minister and him differed in their views on the interest rate where Dr Mahathir favoured lower interest rate to stimulate the economy, Anwar clarified: "I am supportive of a low interest rate policy, but we're also dictated by circumstances such as inflation, speculation, and offshore interest rate of the ringgit - and these issues also affect interest rate policies."

He said relatively high interest rate could adversely affect the conduct of the private sector.

"So, what we're doing is to maintain a tight monetary policy to reduce the spread on the lending interest rate, which can be done," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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