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MAHATHIR-DAIM

MAHATHIR SHRUGS OFF REPORT OF DIFFERENCES WITH DAIM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has brushed aside a report suggesting fresh differences between him and Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin.

"They have been saying that for a long time. I'm going to admit that we don't see eye-to-eye always but in the end we reach some agreement which has worked out for this country.

"Of course, he cannot agree with all the things I want to do and I cannot agree with all the things he wants to do but we reach a consensus," Dr Mahathir said when approached by reporters about an article in yesterday's Asian Wall Street Journal.

The prime minister earlier opened the 54th MIC General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

On them reportedly having differences over the appointment of a new governor for Bank Negara, Dr Mahathir said there were several candidates for the top central bank post including those recommended by Daim himself.

"But I had a frank discussion with him to see who should be the most suitable candidate and he agreed," Dr Mahathir said.

The front-page AWSJ article, among others, said that a policy change involving the proposed removal of Malaysia's most experienced senior executives from the boards of state agencies, could exacerbate a "growing rift" between Dr Mahathir and Daim.

It also cited other signs of tension between the two men, including on matters pertaining to the involvement of a Singapore company in Malaysia's telecommunications industry and the appointment of a financial adviser to the prime minister's office.

When asked why the market was now acting "very funny", Dr Mahathir said: "I don't understand the market...I don't pretend to understand it and I will not learn to understand it."

Queried on speculations of changes in the Umno office-bearers, including the post of party treasurer, the prime minister said: "That is something new. I don't know about that. The press always knows better than I do."

Daim is currently Umno treasurer.

-- BERNAMA

MAM RYN