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Talk of rift with Daim not new, says Dr Mahathir

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday talk of a rift between himself and Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin was not a new phenomenon.

"Well, there have been reports about rifts between me and Daim for ages. Ever since Tun joined the Government they have been saying he doesn't get along with me.

"Yet in times of crisis, he joined the Government and helped solve some of our problems. Before this there was also talk, but somehow or rather we still smile at and hug each other, and we still run the Government, I think quite successfully."

Dr Mahathir was asked if the appointment of Bank Negara Malaysia Adviser Datuk Nor Mohamed Yakcop as his special adviser had led to some people saying there was a rift between him and Daim.

To a question whether he had any indication from Daim of the latter wanting to quit the Government, Dr Mahathir said: "He told me from the very beginning he would serve the Government only temporarily because of the shortage of talent in this field.

"I believe once the economy turns around and gets back to the old pace, I think he might want to resign.

"That was the condition with which he came into the Government. He has always made it very clear he does not want to stay in the Government forever... He does not even eye any post in the party."

Asked if this (Daim quitting) would happen anytime soon, Dr Mahathir said he did not know.

"You pray for the economy to turn around and we achieve eight per cent growth every year, I'm quite sure he will say, 'well that's enough, I've done my part and I will be going off'."

Meanwhile, Daim said the Finance Ministry's newly-appointed adviser Datuk Md Nor Md Yusof will provide the ministry with inputs on the private sector.

The appointment of the Bumiputra-Commerce Bank Bhd chief executive as adviser, effective May 8, and for a period of six months, was announced on Wednesday.

He joined former Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, who was named adviser to the ministry early this year.

"Mustapa on economy... Md Nor will provide me with inputs from the private sector," he told reporters at the Umno General Assembly yesterday.

Meanwhile, Mustapa, when asked to comment on the appointment of Md Nor, said: "As I said before, we have a lot of work to do in the Government, and anybody who can contribute can play a role.

"This is a welcome development," he said.

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