

I still consider Ezam a good friend, says Anwar

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PETALING JAYA: Parti Keadilan Rakyat de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has denied that he is being controlled by vice-president Azmin Ali.

Laughing off the allegation made by his former Youth chief and right-hand man Ezam Mohd Nor, Anwar quipped: "Probably (wife Datin Seri Wan) Azizah (Wan Ismail) controls me a bit more."

He described the accusation as Ezam's "personal opinion (arising) from his personal problems with Azmin," adding that this did not really affect the party.

Asked whether he listened to Azmin a lot, Anwar said: "I listen to everybody, to all party leaders. You'd be surprised at the level of communication I have with them. In the past, I have been called too democratic!"

Ezam who quit the party recently over differences with his former good friend Azmin, had lashed out even to the extent of calling Anwar a dictator and a weak leader.

Despite the name-calling, Anwar said that he still considers Ezam a good friend. "I'm OK. If I see him I'll talk to him," he said.

He said that Ezam's decision to quit did not really come as a surprise because he had let go of all his party posts seven months ago and did

not have much contact with the party.

"He has been a good friend and a good party worker and I thank him and wish him well in whatever endeavour," he added.

Anwar, who was mentor to both Azmin and Ezam, said that he did not realise the extent of differences between the two because on his part he (Anwar) tolerates different styles and different views and saw no reason others could not do the same.

Asked about the perception that this was a case of the two men competing for Anwar's affection and attention, he quipped: "I thought there were three including (Datuk) Nalla (who recently quit PKR)."

Anwar admitted that being a good friend, it was "not too difficult" to pick up the telephone and call Ezam to solve the problem.

"I can. It's not too big an issue," he added.

Azmin, who was also at the PKR office, said that he had tried to understand the differences with Ezam but his call for a casual chat was not accepted.

Asked whether he was hurt that Ezam had levelled unfounded accusations at him and Anwar, Azmin said that he was not because he had known Ezam for over 20 years since their student days, and he still considered Ezam his friend.