

'We were discussing economic matters'

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Anwar, Azmin downplay casual chat in Parliament

KUALA LUMPUR: Both PKR president and his deputy downplayed their casual chat over coffee in Parliament, which had set tongues wagging over the possibility of reconciliation.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Datuk Seri Azmin Ali were seen together for the first time following the divisive PKR polls last November.

They were at Parliament's lounge for about 30 minutes during the lunch break before they were joined by party secretary-general Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

Anwar later uploaded a photograph on his official Facebook account with the caption "Having coffee with the deputy president and secretary-general at the Parliament lounge".

He also said Azmin and him spoke about national economic matters.

When pressed further if their meeting could be deemed as reconciliation, Anwar said no.

"No ... it was just a normal meeting to discuss national economic matters," he repeated.

Asked if he had asked Azmin to attend the party's monthly meetings from now on, Anwar quipped that he did not have the time to do so.

At the Parliament lobby, Azmin said they spoke about how they could work together to address economic issues such as how to tackle poverty along with issues related to Budget 2020.

He said Anwar also wanted to give his views on how best to close the economic gap between regions and people in the country.

Azmin said party matters were not raised during the meeting.



Time and place: Anwar gesturing while speaking as Azmin looks on over coffee in Parliament.

"There is a time and place to discuss party matters and a time and place to give attention to issues affecting the rakyat," he said.

Asked if he was coaxed by Anwar to attend party meetings, Azmin said there was no need for that as he attended party functions and meetings when he was not bogged down with ministerial work.

Asked if his meeting with Anwar could be seen as an end to differences between them, Azmin said there was no dispute between them, adding that was the view of an online news portal.

Last month, several PKR leaders, including vice-president Zuraida Kamaruddin, had demanded a reconciliation meeting with Anwar.

Anwar had called on Azmin and Zuraida to attend the party's political bureau meeting on Wednesdays and

monthly leadership council meetings.

Azmin and Zuraida have been absent from the meetings since the party polls in November, giving ministerial work as the reason for their absence.

Earlier, Azmin said he would remain committed to the party.

"There is no reason for me to leave the party unless there are people who are jealous and want to kick me out.

"It is up to them," he said.

Azmin, who is Economic Affairs Minister, pointed out that his faction secured more than two-thirds support in the party elections last November.

He was responding to a claim by PKR advisory council deputy chairman Syed Husin Ali who said Azmin planned to leave PKR and could form his own party.