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Speculators await `signs' from Dr M

ACTIVE profit-taking by offshore speculators and anticipation of "some sort of indication" from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad later in the evening saw the ringgit easing lower against the greenback yesterday.

Speculation took a backseat during a day of thin trading in the foreign exchange market as players offloaded the ringgit.

The ringgit ended weaker at 2.9450/00, against 2.8949/95 on Friday, following profit-taking activities.

A dealer said foreign speculators were squaring off their positions as no sign or rumour was forthcoming in a "very quiet" day.

They were also taking precautions ahead of the scheduled interview of Dr Mahathir by Cable News Network at 9.30pm yesterday.

Other Southeast Asian currencies remained weak as the second month of the region's currency turmoil came to a close.

AFP reported that the Philippine peso slid to an all-time low of 30.90 to the US dollar, down almost two per cent from Monday's close of 30.32, before settling at 30.688.

Foreign funds were said to be quitting Manila's stock market and there were rumours that the Central Bank of the Philippines may ease liquidity requirements amid a clamour from businessmen squeezed by soaring interest rates.

The baht, whose float on July 2 had triggered the crisis, was under pressure amid uncertainty ahead of a key parliamentary debate tomorrow on a draft constitution and higher-than-expected August inflation.

The baht however closed unchanged from Monday at 34.45 offshore, after reaching a low of 34.75.

The Indonesian rupiah closed lower at 3,030 to the dollar, from Monday's rate of 2,952.

The Singapore dollar closed at 1.5227, down from Monday's close of 1.5145 to the greenback.

(END)