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Statement on consensus today

THE Asean finance and central bank deputies will today issue a statement on the consensus reached on issues discussed at their four-hour meeting yesterday.

Treasury secretary general Tan Sri Clifford Herbert said the officials had discussed a number of issues, including Asean assistance, surveillance, policy responses to crisis and actions economists could take to overcome the economic problems.

"The meeting took longer because we have problems with language," he told reporters at the end of the meeting.

He was asked why the meeting took longer than scheduled.

"We achieved consensus on all things except for the commas (for the statement).

"It (the statement) will be issued today," Herbert added.

Hong Kong's financial secretary Donald Tsang said he is in Kuala Lumpur to "listen and talk".

"We are talking about how we can bring the Manila framework forward. I am looking forward to meeting the other ministers in this," he said upon arrival at the meeting venue yesterday.

When asked for his opinion on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad's call for a fund autonomous of the IMF, he said: "We know my views on this."

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim held bilateral meetings with four of his counterparts ahead of the Asean Finance Ministers meeting.

They are Indonesian finance Minister Mar'ie Muhamad, Myanmar Finance and Revenue Minister Brigadier General Win Tin, the Philippines' Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo and Thai finance minister Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda.

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