

26/06/1998

`Daim to zero in on economic recovery'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - There will be no overlapping of guidelines or functions among the different ministerial portfolios with the appointment of Tun Daim Zainuddin as a Minister, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said.

She also said no Minister could undertake policy initiatives on his or her own, rather it must be done based on consensus in the Cabinet.

"As far as I am concerned, Daim is not going to interfere with my Ministry, but as the executive director of the National Economic Action Council, I am sure he will like to hear comments from those who are not in the NEAC."

If any other Ministers have ideas or suggestions that were outside their portfolio, it would be discussed at the Cabinet, she added.

Rafidah echoed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's comments on Daim's appointment saying that Daim had been performing his function as executive director of the NEAC with some difficulty as he could not represent the Government previously.

"Now that he is in the Cabinet, he has more authority to speak to outsiders and he speaks with authority and responsibility.

"Sometimes the link between the Cabinet and the NEAC is lacking," she said.

She said his presence in the Cabinet would enhance the body's linkage with the NEAC, and this would accelerate decision-making and programmes that the Government wants to implement. Responding to a question, Rafidah said Daim would be like any other Minister and would not oversee any agencies such as Bank Negara.

"He will come in as another Cabinet Minister except that he will zero in on economic recovery so he will co-ordinate all these things we are doing and make sure it gets implemented, and help put the pieces together."

Being a member of the Cabinet, Daim will also be made accountable and responsible for any proposals he puts up.

"It is better because if you propose from outside the Government, nobody takes you seriously."

Daim's appointment as Minister with Special Functions in the Prime Minister's Department was announced yesterday. He will be sworn in before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong tomorrow.

Government leaders interviewed welcomed Daim's return to the Cabinet. They said Daim's experience in bringing the economy out of the 1985 recession would enable him to play an effective role in addressing current economic problems.

Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Daim's presence in the Cabinet would, together with Dr Mahathir and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, form "the three pillars in bringing about economic recovery".

He said while some overlapping of roles could not be avoided, every ministerial portfolio had its specific functions.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob described the appointment as "timely", as ministerial status would make it easier for Daim to meet counterparts locally and abroad in efforts to overcome the nation's economic problems.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said Daim's appointment was "most appropriate" and he would be an asset to the

Cabinet.

Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib lauded the appointment as a "formalisation" of Daim's existing role in addressing the economic problems.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad said Daim's previous experience as Finance Minister would enable him to effectively carry out his new duties.

The Malay Chamber of Commerce said Daim's return to the Cabinet was timely as his wide experience made him a suitable person to lead the country's economic recovery. Its deputy president Datuk Abdul Rahman Maidin described Daim's appointment as a sacrifice for "national service".

(END)