

Daim: Now world, wants to hear us

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is significant that Malaysia has been chosen as the lead speaker for the Commonwealth on establishing a new international financial structure, Tun Daim Zainuddin said yesterday.

The First Finance Minister said the significance was that people now wanted to hear what Malaysia had to say.

"Before, they (the foreigners) criticised us. They said we were wrong and would fail (in implementing selective capital controls).

"But now, they have admitted our formula works so they want to hear under what circumstances they can follow us," he told reporters after presenting the 1998 Excellence Awards for the Economic Planning Unit (EPU).

On Sept 2 last year, the Government imposed selective capital controls following speculative attacks on the ringgit.

The ringgit was made untradeable overseas and was pegged at KM3.80 to the US dollar.

Daim said Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku had asked Malaysia to present its case at the Sept 19 to 21 Commonwealth Finance

Ministers meeting in the Cayman Islands and the Cabinet had agreed to send Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad to represent and articulate Malaysia's position.

Mustapa would also represent Malaysia at subsequent meetings with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on Sept 24 to 30.

Daim said Malaysia had also been asked to participate at the press conference immediately after the World Bank and IMF meetings.

Asked if optimism that Malaysia's calls for reforms in the international financial order had finally been heeded was justified, he said: "As far as we are concerned, our policy has worked. That is most important and it is being recognised now."

US President Bill Clinton made a call at the recent Apec meeting in Auckland for reforms in the global financial architecture and said it would be a big mistake to ignore the destructive effects of volatile short-term capital flows.

Clinton's call echoed what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had been saying since the financial crisis broke out more than two years

ago.

Daim said everyone seemed to fall in line when Clinton spoke out on the issue.

Asked whether this meant that only "big voices" were heard when they spoke out, Daim wryly noted that people tended to listen to them even if they were wrong.

He pointed out: "What is important is to only listen to what is right and good for everybody. If something is not right, and they want to accept it, that cannot be good."

On dissenting voices from the opposition parties here on the country's economic measures, he said this was hardly surprising.

"They are in the opposition anyway. The opposition must always oppose."

Earlier, in his speech Daim said although the country had emerged from the economic crisis, "efforts should be stepped up to face further challenges."

He said the Economic Planning Unit should continue to develop its plans dynamically and produce innovative ideas to bring about more development for the future.