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Japanese Finance Ministry team to meet Daim

Adeline Ong

A DELEGATION from Japan's Finance Ministry, headed by its director of International Markets Office Kishimoto Shuhei, was scheduled to arrive in Kuala Lumpur late last night.

"The delegation will be in Malaysia to get a comprehensive picture of the current economic and financial situation in Malaysia," an official of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

It is understood that Shuhei will meet newly-appointed Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin and Finance Ministry officials, possibly to iron out matters related to Malaysia's request for US\$5 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) aid under the Miyazawa Package.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said in an interview with the Mainichi newspaper said that Japan was too slow in disbursing funds from the US\$30 billion Asian rescue package named after its Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa.

"Malaysia asked for US\$5 billion for infrastructure projects but we have to go through study after study, time and time again.

"By the time Malaysia eventually gets to see the money, the crisis will be over. Japan has to think about the effectiveness of its aid," Dr Mahathir had said.

Miyazawa had last October announced the loan facility to help revitalise Asian nations hit by the financial turbulence which shook the region since July 1997. The package targets South Korea and Asean members Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines.

In Frankfurt last week, Miyazawa expressed surprise when told by Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed of the delay in the disbursement in funds for Malaysia.

Malaysia was supposed to have started receiving the US\$5 billion at the end of last year.

"He appeared surprised that there had not been much movement and he said he would check. He thought that everything had been cleared for Malaysia and Thailand," Mustapa had said.

The two finance ministers were in the German city for an Asia-Europe Finance Ministers' meeting on January 16.

A Japanese Finance Ministry official had earlier said that the Tokyo Government would not "just hand out the money without having a detailed plan from each country on how it would proceed with economic reconstruction".

"We decided to give the money to help Asia economically, and countries must present us with clear, detailed plans on how they are going to use the money for economic improvement," he was quoted as saying.

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