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Indonesia invited to learn from Malaysian experience

Ahmad A. Talib in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Fri: Responding to Indonesia's keen interest on Malaysia's affirmative action plan, the New Economic Policy, the Government has invited Indonesia to send its officers to take a first-hand look at the Malaysian experience and make its own assessment, Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin said today.

Indonesia is also welcomed to learn more about Malaysia's wealth distribution scheme such as the Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB), Daim told Malaysian journalists accompanying Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on his official visit here.

Dr Mahathir held private talks with President Abdurrahman Wahid yesterday and later joined a ministerial meeting aimed at strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries. Dr Mahathir was sent off at the airport by Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri this morning.

Daim, Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and senior officials were among members of the Malaysian delegation at the meeting.

Indonesia, looking to the Malaysian model to improve the socio-economic status of its people, was given a briefing on the NEP and the infrastructure by which this is carried out in Malaysia. "However," Daim said, "Indonesia should send a team to look at our situation with regard to this and make their own conclusions."

Indonesia needs to fully understand the NEP's philosophy, history, structure and implementation methodology before it could be applied. "We're more than willing to share our experiences and knowledge in this," Daim said.

As for the PNB, Daim said the same thing applies - Indonesia must undertake a proper study on the way this is done before possible implementation. In Malaysia, PNB succeeded because it has good, profit-making companies included in its scheme and this helped to ensure high dividends to investors.

At the talks yesterday, Indonesia also sought Malaysia's help in developing its oil palm industry besides possible collaboration in developing a financial centre in Brunei. Daim said the proposal should not be rejected outright and must be studied in detail before implementation.

Elaborating, Daim said the proposal could best be discussed within the ambit of EAGA. There are implications in this and they must be carefully analysed, he added.

Asked for his views whether Indonesia will extend some form of guarantee to Malaysian businessmen now, Daim said the matter is not as simple. In fact, he suggested that Malaysian businessmen be resourceful when doing business here.

"If they're good businessmen, then they should be able to do proper business here. Of course things could have been better. You have to be more serious, more committed, more resourceful. It's no point just to be included in the Prime Minister's delegation and then hope someone else pave the way for you to do well. In business, you must mean business..." Daim said.

Malaysian and Indonesian businessmen attended a business forum yesterday while some had their one-to-one meetings, exploring possible deals.

When told that Malaysian businessmen were rather worried over

uncertainties when doing business here, Daim said they have to look for a good local partner who can facilitate their ventures. "The rules must be made clear, though," the minister said.

He described yesterday's meeting as "very friendly and warm". Asked whether the question of Indonesian maids were raised at the meeting, Daim said Dr Mahathir brought it up and assured Indonesia that the law will take its course in cases involving allegations of maid abuses by Malaysian employers.

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