

Daim takes leave

SUN 20 APR 2001

Finance minister on two-month break and won't be attending cabinet and Umno meetings

By **T. Buvanes, Ferida Abdul Kudhus**
and **Hazatul Syima**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

Daim assumed finance job in 1999

from FRONT PAGE

SUN 20 APR 2001

he may scold me later," he said in jest.

Asked the reason Daim gave for going on leave, Mahathir said: "You disturbed him too much ... asked him non-stop questions and criticised (him) on MAS issues and other matters. Maybe he has worked too hard."

Daim, 63, was appointed to the post in January 1999 in the aftermath of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sacking.

He had served as finance minister from 1984 to 1991, when he resigned, and in 1993, he was appointed economic adviser to the government and also executive director of the National Economic Advisory Council. He was made special functions minister in 1998.

Mahathir also explained that the appointment of two economic advisers is to assist him in making informed decisions.

"Before I can make a final decision, I have to study the matter in great detail," he said. "Otherwise, I will end up making bad decisions."

Former central bank governor Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman, 60, was appointed special economic adviser to Mahathir on Tuesday.

Last May, former central banker Nor Mohamed Yakcop was appointed his adviser on finance-related matters.

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs: Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin has taken two months leave, sparking fresh speculation that he is quitting the post.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Daim, who is also special functions minister, has merely gone on leave and there are no plans to choose a new finance minister.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. At the moment, we don't have any plans to choose a new finance minister as we have not reached that stage yet," he told a press conference after attending the Young African Leadership Intellectual Dialogue.

He said Daim will probably be back from leave in time for the Umno annual general assembly in June.

In Daim's absence, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz will represent him in the cabinet.

Rumours of Daim's resignation erased an early rally in the local share market (*see SunBiz*).

Suhakam received 475 complaints last year, says report: Page 4

Asked if Daim is suffering from ill health, Mahathir said: "I think he's tired or something like that, but he still does his work."

Asked whether the leave is bad timing, with the economy at a critical stage, the prime minister said: "Well, he's not leaving in the first place, he's just going on leave. That's not the same as leaving but he's still doing work, he still goes through his papers."

"The only thing he does not do is to attend cabinet meetings and Umno Supreme Council meetings, that's all."

Earlier, speaking after launching the National Education Convention 2001 at Institut Aminuddin Baki in Genting Highlands, Mahathir was asked if Daim's leave was related to rumours that he was going to resign.

"That you have to ask him ... cannot ask me. If I answer

turn to **PAGE 2**