

# Chandra thankful for how currency crisis was handled

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DR CHANDRA Muzaffar, a former close aide of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, said Malaysians are thankful now that the country did not go the way of the former deputy prime minister and finance minister in tackling the currency crisis of the late 90s.

Under the glaring headline, "Strong economy for not following Anwar," Malay daily *Berita Harian* quoted Dr Chandra as saying that the former leader was more inclined to follow the advice of the International Monetary Fund.

Dr Chandra, the former deputy president of Parti Keadilan Nasional, which was formed in protest against Anwar's eviction from Umno and the Government, said Anwar probably had a political agenda to follow the IMF or, maybe, he was just naive about the economy.

"Thank God, there was Dr Mahathir to save us," Dr Chandra said, in reference to the several unorthodox approaches by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to resolve the crisis.

"What the IMF had done all along had only benefited currency speculators while the system it advocates is based on a Western capitalist system spearheaded by the United States," he added.

Dr Chandra, who now heads the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), said his organisation was among those who had welcomed the currency reforms intro-

duced by Dr Mahathir in 1998, which included certain capital controls and pegging the ringgit at RM3.80 against the US dollar.

The article also carried comments by Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (Abim) president Azam Abdul Rahman and Umno Youth executive committee member Dr Zambry Abdul Kader, both of whom also chided the IMF for not having confidence in Malaysia's formula to tackle the issue when it surfaced.

Early this week, IMF managing director Dr Horst Kohler, who is visiting the country, conceded that Dr Mahathir was right in deciding on the reforms.

An issue brewing in the Malay press concerns the Azhar Wahab group, said to be an offshoot of the banned Al-Arqam movement.

*Berita Harian* said the National Fatwa Council, which ruled that the group had deviated from Islamic teachings, will not budge from its stand that Azhar and his followers were a threat to the sanctity of the religion.

The paper quoted Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin as saying that the council had made a thorough probe on the activities of the group before deciding to ban them.

*Utusan Malaysia* quoted him as saying that the decision was necessary in the wake of attempts by the group to mislead Muslims.