Stay in Asia for the long haul: Rogers

The legendary investor recently shared his views on investing and life. JASON LOW reports

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These were some of the key advice that legendary investor Jim Rogers gave at a campus talk recently.

"Yes, save money and invest wisely," said Mr Rogers, when asked if there is any lesson that Singapore can learn from the credit crisis that has pushed the Republic into a technical recession.

"Singapore has more foreign currency reserves per capita than most other countries and this should be the way to go," he added.

I am confident that in the situation when this crisis worsens, Singapore will be the last country standing.

The two-hour session held at the University Cultural Centre, titled "An afternoon with Jim Rogers," was co-organised by the NUS Business School and Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School, and attracted 1,500 people - mainly tertiary stu-
dents.

The audience not only had a chance to hear Mr Rogers' views on the current market but also what he's been doing with his own invest-
ments. The co-founder of the Quantum fund with George Soros spoke at length about the problems the world is facing as well as the key role of governments in curtailing their impact.

He warned that the current crisis "may turn into a depression due to the substantial amount of leverage that was being used over the couple of years," if the right actions were not taken.

But not all is gloomy. Mr Rogers told BT that he is still very bullish about commodities, although their prices have eased. Across the board, commodities have been beaten down over the past year and agricultural commodi-
ties, in particular, have been down quite sub-
stantially and he sees "good opportunities there".

"There is more money to be made in agri-
culture than in gold now since the prices have come down quite a bit, even though I still think gold," Mr Rogers said.

However, the investor himself admitted that he will not buy physical gold in Singa-
pore. "I won't buy gold in Singapore because I get taxed on it. Gold is money and yet it is still being taxed. Purchasing physical gold in Singapore is a no no for me."

He has, however, been buying panda em-
bossed gold coins. "I love gold. My daughter loves pandas, so gold pandas are perfect for us both."

The guru also revealed that he is still hold-
ing on to currencies such as the Australian and New Zealand dollar which have seen sharp declines in recent weeks "because they are solid currencies". He is hoping they will recover in the time to come, even though the depreciation could go on longer.

Mr Rogers, who has moved to Singapore from the US, is known for his strong faith in China becoming the great power of this centu-
ry.

To those who have intentions of leaving Singapore or Asia for greener pastures elsewhere, Mr Rogers has this advice: "The money is in Asia. you have the largest foreign ex-
change deposits here in Asia. And without a doubt the power is moving here. Of course, it is always good for the young to explore and experience life away from homeland for a while, but my advice is to come back after that. Stay here for the long haul."

"Singapore has everything a person can want, to pursue the kind of lifestyle he desires. Even chewing gum on the streets is now being gradually allowed. It is loosening up and is probably one of the most successful one-party states," Mr Rogers quipped in refer-
ce to countries which have been predomin-
antly ruled by one party over its recent histo-
ry, such as Russia and Mexico.

"Compared to the other 'one-party states' that I know of, Singapore is the one that works," he added.

At the end of the talk, Sheng Hong Kai, a second year business undergraduate from Nanyang Business School, remarked: "This is definitely one of the rare chances to see a leg-
end like him 'live' and I truly relished the ex-
pereience. He was very passionate about the topics he addressed given his experience in this field, and what struck me the most was his ability to drive his points home using very simple and fundamental explanations, some-
thing which I personally feel is lacking in to-
day's financial markets."

When BT asked Mr Rogers what advice he would give investors who are starting out, he said: "Always only invest in what you understand. If you are young, follow your heart and do what you are passionate about. Lead a life that you're interested in and success will come naturally."

Inspiring youngsters: Mr Rogers (third from left) told the audience of mainly tertiary students he is still bullish about commodities, although their prices have eased. He was also holding on to currencies such as the Australian and New Zealand dollar which have seen sharp falls in recent weeks "because they are solid currencies".