

19 DEC 1998

Sulaiman-Box/BM

MAHATHIR'S HELP SOUGHT TO DEFER BLACK BOX DEADLINE

MUAR, Dec 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been asked to intervene to defer the Jan 1 deadline for the installation of the black box, a speed warning device, on express, excursion and factory buses.

Pan-Malaysia Bus Operators' Association chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah said the decision to seek Dr Mahathir's help was made unanimously at the association's meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said the association was not opposing the black box ruling but was merely requesting for a deferment of the deadline to a more suitable time as 90 per cent of bus companies were facing financial problems due to the economic downturn.

Furthermore, it was impossible for all buses to be fitted with the box, costing RM1,000 each, within less than two weeks before the year ends, he told reporters at his residence here.

To date, only about 100 of the 6,000 express buses, excursion and factory buses as well as other public transport vehicles had installed the device, said Sulaiman, who is also Umno permanent chairman.

Sulaiman said the need to install the black box was not that pressing as the device cannot prevent accidents from happening.

It could only caution drivers if they exceeded the speed limit, he said.

He claimed that bus services would be affected if the Road Transport Department (JPJ) went ahead enforcing the black box requirement ruling on Jan 1.

"We fear bus companies will be forced to stop their services because of the JPJ enforcement and this will lead to a chaos in the country when the "balik kampung" exodus starts for the Hari Raya Puasa next month followed by the Chinese New Year in February," he said.

The livelihood of some 40,000 people involved in the public transportation industry would also be affected, he said.

He also regretted that Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik did not reply to the association's letters requesting for a dialogue on the black box issue.

-- BERNAMA

SO/RAM TS