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Only one hotel to quote room rates in US\$

Eirmalasare Bani

ONLY one out of 70 hotels which will be providing accommodation for the Commonwealth Games in September this year will quote its room rates in US dollars. The other 69 hotels, have agreed to deal in the local currency.

These hotels, which signed an agreement in 1996 with the Sukom Accommodation Bureau (SAB) for the provision of rooms during the Games, were given the choice to quote their prices either in ringgit or US dollars.

As such, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said he does not understand why the move by the hotel, which is quoting its rates in US dollars, is being questioned.

"An agreement has been signed ... at that time, at an exchange rate of around RM2.5 to US\$1. I don't see it as a problem," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after launching the Langkawi Celebrity Go-Karting event.

He was asked to comment on the call for local hotels to quote their rates in ringgit instead of foreign currencies.

SAB is responsible to provide between 8,000 and 9,000 rooms in the Klang Valley and Langkawi to accommodate tour operators, broadcasters, sponsors, the media, dignitaries and officials of the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd's communications director, Tunku Maziah Mukhtar said the company is still holding discussions with the hotel concerned.

"We are talking to them. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has recently announced that although price quotations are made in dollars, the payment must be done in ringgit.

I'm sure the particular hotel will take note of the statement," she said.

She said when compared with hotels overseas, Malaysia still offers the lowest rates.

Citing an example, she said four-star hotels in Atlanta during the Olympics in the US in 1996 were charging very high rates although some were of the same standards as the smaller Malaysian hotels.

"Hotels have their peak and low seasons. We agreed on a standard rate when the agreement was signed with the hotels. It is not the same as the rates offered to guests now," she said.

She said the company does not want to tell the hotels to reduce their rate as it would be unfair on them.

Tunku Maziah said some of the hotels have secured more than 50 per cent bookings for the Games.

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