

18/03/2000

Act a serious punishable misconduct: Union chief

THE National Union of Bank Employees (Nube) and Sarawak Bank Employees' Union (SBEU) yesterday condemned bank employees who leaked information to others without the consent of the account-holders.

Describing such act as serious punishable misconduct, Nube general secretary G. Gopala Krishnan said it clearly violated the Banking and Financial Institutions Act.

"Nube will never condone such actions as it contravenes one of the most fundamental aspects of banking ethics which have long been cherished by bankers," he said in a statement issued yesterday.

However, Gopala Krishnan said the number of such employees who divulge information may be very small.

"We hope the banks concerned would take immediate steps to investigate such deviation and bring to book those involved," he said, adding that Nube also agreed with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that this act by those involved is irresponsible and unprofessional.

He was referring to the Prime Minister's statement with regard to Bank employees leaking information in the Internet and to outsiders in the various media.

The Association of Banks in Malaysia (ABM) meanwhile said it was taking a serious view of the alleged leakage of customers' information by bank staff, but did not say whether it will act. In a short statement released yesterday, the ABM said leaking information was counter to the secrecy provision of the Banking and Financial Institution Act (BAFIA).

"In this respect, the association has again emphasised to all its members to continue complying fully with all the provisions of the Bafia at all times," it said.

In news report yesterday, the Prime Minister had said the Federal Government might follow in the footsteps of the Malacca Government and stop dealing with banks whose workers could not be trusted.

However, Gopala Krishnan said Nube, on behalf of the bank employees, hopes the Government would reconsider its action of not dealing with the banks concerned as it is tantamount to punishing all employees and the banks for the malicious actions of a few irresponsible persons with vested interest.

He said Nube also urged Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohamed Ali Rustam to reconsider the State Government's decision to withdraw its funds from two banks.

"Nube is trying to arrange a meeting with the Chief Minister so that the State Government could reconsider its decision.

"The actions of a few overzealous, immatured and irresponsible employees during the last election do not warrant such a drastic and punitive reciprocal action.

"As the country is just on the road to recovery, and with the bank mergers on the cards, such action may have serious consequences on the banking and the financial industry in general, and in particular to the banks concerned," he said.

On some employees supporting political parties during working hours in the bank, Gopala Krishnan said Nube agreed that such action is wrong and the bank management has the right to prohibit such activities in the bank which the union also considers this as a serious misconduct.

"We hope the relevant government agencies would lodge complaints to the

head office of the banks concerned so that appropriate investigations can be carried out," he said.

In a separate statement, SBEU's general secretary Andrew Lo Kian Nyan said the union believes that the matter must be handed professionally and such allegations must be reported to the police and the Bank Negara for proper investigations.

"Such claims if true, constitute a violation of the Banking Secrecy laws that protect the confidentiality of banker-client relationship.

"Any person found guilty should be punished in accordance with the law," he said.

Lo said it is dangerous and damaging to national interest to cast doubts on the credibility of the country's own banks just because a few employees are alleged to have revealed controversial documents or have campaigned for certain parties during the last general elections.

Thus, he said SBEU calls on all parties, bank employees as well as politicians to act professionally and in transparent manner.

(END)