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SARS-Banks

BANKS BE FLEXIBLE WITH HOTEL OPERATORS - MUSTAPA

MUAR, April 27 (Bernama) -- Commercial banks are advised to be flexible with hotels and tourist companies whose businesses suffered due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak.

However it is up to the banks to consider the proposal to reduce their financial burden because of the tourism sector's poor performance, National Economic Action Council Executive Director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said today.

"We proposed to the banks to be more sympathetic towards tourists companies affected badly by SARS," he said at a media conference after opening the Bakri Umno division delegates meeting at the Mara Science Junior College here today.

Mustapa, Umno supreme council member, said based on the country's 1997-98 economic crisis experience, he believed the banks will cooperate.

SARS impact on the global economy was worse compared to the effects due to the Iraqi conflict.

"SARS not only undermined investors confidence but also stopped people from travelling," he said.

Due to the outbreak of the killer disease, Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad and Malaysia Airlines reduced their travel operations to SARS-affected countries, he said.

On The Economist article criticising Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Mustapa said to ridicule his integrity was regrettable.

"Dr Mahathir is a leader who had contributed to the nation and the world. The report is not fair, one-sided and did not highlight Malaysia's success," he added.

-- BERNAMA

SO BH VP