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Fong-Tourism

BOOST FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY FROM STIMULUS PACKAGE - DR FONG

KUALA LUMPUR, May 9 (Bernama) -- The tourism industry is expected to get a boost from the stimulus package to be announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this month, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said today.

He said consideration was given to the badly hit industry due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

More than 100 people working in tour and travel companies have been temporarily laid off so far, he said.

The ministry could not offer incentives but the government would include the incentives in the stimulus package, he told reporters after visiting Texas Instruments Malaysia Sdn Bhd.

He was asked to comment on newspaper reports today that the hotel industry suffered losses amounting to RM82.7 million last month because of SARS.

"As of now, our interactions with hoteliers indicate that they have no plans to lay off employees on a massive scale. Their feeling is that they can withstand until June," he said.

He said hotel operators had taken measures such as cutting down on operational hours and giving unpaid leave to employees.

"Many of the relevant agencies are in discussions with hotel owners. The hotels are asking for reduction in electricity and water tariffs. So, we have to response accordingly," he said.

Asked whether the ministry had received reports about employers forcing their workers, who were quarantined for SARS, to take annual leave, Dr Fong said no such reports had been received.

"It's unfair to take annual leave because they cannot do so under the law. The ministry suggests that such people be given unrecorded leave," he said.

Dr Fong presented training certificates to 51 employees in conjunction with his visit.

Texas Instruments, a wholly owned subsidiary of the United States' Texas Instruments Inc, is one of the country's leading semiconductors manufacturers.

Earlier, in his briefing, Texas Instruments Managing Director Tham Wai Keong said since its inception in 1972, the company had invested more than RM1.2 billion and had exported about RM20.2 billion worth of Made-In-Malaysia products.

-- BERNAMA

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