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MARA-SMES

MARA ALLOCATES RM150 MLN FOR SMES

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 (Bernama) -- Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) allocates about RM150 million for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) loans, yearly, as part of the government's efforts to help small businesses and boost domestic investments.

Deputy director general (Entrepreneur) MARA, Ali Abdul Rahman Omar said each SME projects are subject to a maximum ceiling of RM1 million.

"They need to undergo the normal procedures when applying for loans and approval would be given to those who are eligible," he told newsmen after officiating 5th annual general meeting of the MARA Pensioners Association, here, today.

He said, in order to assist SMEs, MARA would speed up application process, up to at least 50 days.

He said this when asked to comment on the government's directive for financial institutions to support SMEs by ensuring speedier access to credit.

In the stimulus package announced recently, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said SMEs would be further developed as one of the main catalysts to boost domestic investments.

Meanwhile, the general manager for the Takaful Keluarga Division in Takaful Malaysia, Md Azmi Abu Bakar, said he is confident that the takaful sector in the country would be further developed, by chalking up growth of about 30 percent per year.

"The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak has shown a positive effect on the Takaful sector, which is due to growing awareness," he said after presenting Takaful policy to 26 Mara pensioners.

He said, Takaful Malaysia holds 15 percent of the Takaful market in the country, with 15 of its policyholders being non-Muslims.

"Our products are open to all, which brings in competitives return. We believe that our products will be fully accepted once the non-Muslims understands this concept well," he said.

Takaful Malaysia presently offers general takaful and family takaful products.

In the annual statement for 2002, Takaful Malaysia expects an improved participation from corporate entities including multinational companies.

Takaful Malaysia reported an increase in revenue of 31 percent to RM71.54 million compared with RM54.46 million, in the previous year.

However, the group posted a lower net profit of RM10.34 million. --

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