

16 JUL 2003

Tourism-Dialogue

MUKHRIZ: TOURISM SECTOR NEEDS TO BE MORE RESILIENT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 16 (Bernama) - The million-ringgit tourism sector, the second highest revenue earner for the country must be more resilient to face future crisis, a senior company official said today.

"The tourism industry is not resilient enough. We are too susceptible to problems. We need to learn to be more robust for any situation," Bioven Holdings Sdn Bhd Chairman Mukhriz Mahathir told Bernama.

He said the country faced a series of problems and the recent Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) threat was just another threat to the sector.

"We are proactive but we need to make the industry more stronger so that when we have problems like this we can bounce back. We have to relook at the industry to make it more resilient," he said after attending the inaugural New Straits Times-Travel Tourism dialogue themed "Tourism: The Way Forward" here.

Some 200 industry players participated in the one-day dialogue where problems confronting the sector were highlighted and recommendations were put forward.

At the plenary session earlier, Mukhriz said proper data on tourism should be collected and analysed to improve the sector.

"Detail study is very much lacking and not reaching the target group.

"More systematic and comprehensive study must be done on a regular basis and findings must be channelled to the industry," he said.

During the same dialogue, the participants urged the media to play a balanced role to protect the sensitive sector as any negative publicity could have an adverse impact on tourist arrivals to the country.

"There must be more balanced and responsible reporting by the local media and better relationship with foreign media," Bernama executive editor Azman Ujang said.

Citing the recent SARS threat, industry operators said the media should not amplify the issue but instead help to speed up the recovery of the badly affected sector.

--BERNAMA

VP HM ABG