

Turkey drafts law to help banks restructure debt



(Reuters) – A draft law submitted to Turkey’s parliament introduces tax exemptions to loan restructurings and legal protection for bankers as Ankara tries to make it easier for banks to restructure bad debt.

Following last year’s sharp fall in the lira, Turkish banks and the government have been in talks on how to restructure billions of dollars of loans and remove them from banks’ books – an important step toward pulling the economy out of recession.

The draft law seen by Reuters contains some of the demands banks put to the government during the talks, such as tax exemptions on restructurings and amendments to protect bankers involved in restructuring.

Under an existing legal technicality bankers involved in debt write-downs or decreasing the value of loan collateral could potentially be liable to embezzlement charges.

The government pledged in April to repackage problem loans to energy companies, estimated at more than \$12 billion, into funds which can then be sold to investors. It aims to do the same with construction loans.

The plan is seen as one of the ways to free up banking resources as well as supporting industries that are burdened by the slowing economy.

"Banks seems to have got most of their demands from the government. I think perhaps this may help with the most troubled types of restructurings, but I'm cautious on a broader take up by banks" a restructuring consultant said on condition of anonymity.

The draft law, submitted to parliament on Monday, exempts at least 50% of the profits banks make on problem asset sales from corporate tax. Asset transfers from borrowers to creditor institutions will also not be subject to value added tax.

The types of restructurings that fall under the scope range from amend and extend agreements, to debt to equity swaps and transfer of problem loans and assets to special purpose funds.

The changes will be in effect for two years and can be extended for two more.