

03 SEP 1998

CUSTOMS-RINGGIT

HASSLE FREE MECHANISM FOR RINGGIT CHECK AT ENTRY POINTS

By: Nurhammad Nor

LANGKAWI, Sept 3 (Bernama) -- The Customs and Excise Department will introduce a hassle free mechanism for those who wish to bring back the ringgit into Malaysia before the deadline of Oct 1.

Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Wong See Wah said today Bank Negara had notified the department that they will be entrusted to ensure the smooth flow of the currency into Malaysia from its various entry points.

"Customs officers will ensure the smooth passage of the ringgit back to Malaysia," he told reporters after opening the Third Session of the APEC-SCCP (Sub Committee on Customs Procedure) Meeting here.

Wong said, it will however, take some time to implement an effective mechanism on the matter as the experience would still be new and the customs would have to look into various aspects including security, forms and procedures.

He also said customs authorities will undertake an awareness drive to educate the public about the move to ensure all travellers and overseas students understand the situation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced two days ago several measures to regain monetary independence and insulate the Malaysian economy from the prospects of further deterioration under the present global economic and financial turmoil.

Under the measures, from Oct 1, the ringgit can be traded only within the country and those holding ringgit in overseas banks have been asked to bring the ringgit back as it would no longer be valid outside Malaysia after the deadline.

In line with the move, Wong said the customs will also be prepared to have suitcases of ringgit being transported back into Malaysia if the holder professes not to use the bank transfer.

Wong also said he does not expect a ringgit blackmarket to surface domestically in the near future despite fears from certain quarters and financial analysts.

He said the ministry recognises that disadvantages might occur following the move to fix ringgit's rate at RM3.80 to a US dollar.

However, Wong said with an effective monitoring system and the help of all parties, public and private sector, the government does not foresee any blackmarket trading of the ringgit. -- BERNAMA

NH SA