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JE-Memorandum

DECLARE BT PELANDUK A DISASTER AREA, SAY PIG FARMERS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 (Bernama) -- Pig farmers and residents of Bukit Pelanduk in Negeri Sembilan, the area worst hit by the deadly viral disease Japanese encephalitis (JE) that has so far claimed at least 50 lives, want it to be declared a disaster area.

They also want aerial fogging against culex mosquitoes, which transmit the virus from pigs to human, be carried out immediately and for the next three months.

They made the appeal to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a memorandum delivered to his office here today.

An official of the Prime Minister's office accepted the memorandum bearing the signatures of 100 pig farmers and residents of Bukit Pelanduk.

The government has set up a task force comprising various ministries and headed by Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng to wage war against the disease which broke out last October.

Among others, it has been tasked to destroy animals in abandoned farms, intensify anti-mosquito fogging and expand the vaccination of those in high-risk groups.

They also appealed for the setting up of a multi-million ringgit government livestock compensation fund to compensate every pig destroyed and a RM100 million credit-facility fund from the various RM7.4 billion small and medium industry (SMI) rehabilitation funds, to stave off pig farmers from bankruptcy.

"The JE virus outbreak is a multi-faceted crisis, involving not just the pig-breeding industry, but public health as the real source is the culex mosquitoes, the health and safety of human lives and even social tranquility in a plural society," they said.

-- BERNAMA

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