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JE-Mahathir

NATIONWIDE REORGANISATION OF PIG REARING ACTIVITIES, AREAS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today announced there will be a nationwide review of pig rearing activities and farming areas to ensure that the Japanese Encephalitis (JE) problem does not recur.

The relevant parties including pig farmers had agreed to the reorganisation and for the need to keep farms clean with an efficient effluents disposal system, the Prime Minister said.

"Everyone has agreed with this reorganisation...the need to keep clean so that there will be no mosquitoes," he told a news conference after launching a housing project at Bukit Beruntung near here.

He said if the farmers had been prepared to spend a little more to maintain cleanliness they would not be facing this JE problem in Bukit Pelandok and Kampung Sungai Nipah, Port Dickson.

"When we proposed that they keep the farms clean, some did not agree and now...." he said.

The Prime Minister said the disease now centered in the Bukit Pelandok and Kampung Sungai Nipah areas and the government was determined that it did not spread to other areas such as Port Dickson.

Tourists to the Port Dickson beach resorts need not have to go to Bukit Pelandok and Sungai Nipah, he said.

He said the government had taken all possible measures to counter the outbreak such as killing the source of the virus-- the pigs, destroying the transmitter of the disease from the infected pigs to humans-- the Culex mosquitoes and their breeding areas and vaccinating the people in and near pig farms.

"The Government has already spent RM49 million on these measures so far and will spend more," he said.

On compensation for pig farmers who had lost their source of income, Dr Mahathir said there would be a special lottery draw and the proceeds would be used for this purpose.

On the setting up of a permanent crisis management committee to counter infectious diseases, the Prime Minister said it was suffice to have ad hoc committees because of the shortage of doctors in the country and moreover one could never anticipate the timing of a crisis or an outbreak.

"Only when a situation like the present one occurs, will we know the appropriate action to take. Before a particular thing occurs, no one will of course know what action to take...no one ever told me before that if there is a JE outbreak we will have to shoot the pigs," he said.

He said the six-ministry committee headed by Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng was adequate to handle the present issue.

-- BERNAMA

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