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MAHATHIR-TRADE

CONTRACTION IN TRADE SURPLUS NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is not unduly concerned over the sharp contraction in the trade surplus for January this year compared with a month earlier as the "trade surplus in any given month is not constant," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said today.

"It is still a surplus and it is quite a lot, sometimes it is more, sometimes, it is less and sometimes there is deficit (but) we don't worry about that," the Prime Minister said commenting on the trade figures released yesterday by the Statistics Department after presenting a speech at the Asean Management seminar here.

The trade surplus for January 2000 at RM4.5 billion was a sharp decline compared with the surplus of RM8.6 billion recorded in December last year, due to rising imports.

Touching on the country's rising import bill, Dr Mahatir said that it reflected the further pick-up in the economy "as Malaysia imports more intermediate goods to produce finished products."

He said that the increase in the amount imported actually would translate into an increase in the amount of exports.

The Statistics Department also reported that Malaysia recorded a 4.5 percent higher trade surplus for January this year amounting to RM4.5 billion against a surplus of RM4.3 billion in the same month a year ago.

This means that Malaysia's balance of trade has been in surplus for 27 consecutive months since November 1997.--BERNAMA

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