

Ornamental fish breeders and producers face stiff competition

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in Johor Baru

LOCAL ornamental fish breeders and producers are facing stiff competition from Belgium, China, the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand in the export market.

Malaysia Aquarium Fish Exporter Association president Raymond Cheah Wan Leong said that of all those countries, China and Thailand - ranked 17th and 19th in the world market - were the strongest competitors as they were moving up fast and could overtake Malaysia's fourth position.

"Governments of both countries fully support their ornamental fish industry with incentives, market research and product development," Cheah said at the opening of the National Workshop on Ornamental Fish Industry 2001 - Quest For World No. 1.

Cheah said the industry hoped the agriculture ministry, through its related agencies, would come out with incentives to support the industry, which saw RM150mil worth of exports last year.

He said the association expected next year's exports to remain at present levels due to a decline in world demand and competition from producing countries.

Cheah said although producers and breeders had been progressing well over the years without government intervention, nevertheless both parties should work together to resolve outstanding problems.

He said the industry lacked research and development capability and product development and that this was where the ministry could help.

Cheah said there were now 400 ornamental fish breeders and producers, many of which were family owned and located mostly in Johor, Perak, Penang and Selangor.

He said the association supported the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his Budget 2002 speech that exporters used Senai Airport as an air cargo hub.

He said that 80% of ornamental fish were exported through Singapore's Changi Airport due to the frequency of its flights to 250 cities worldwide compared with the KL International Airport's fewer than 30.

He said that ornamental fish exporters had been shipping through Singapore for many years and this practice was unlikely to change in the near future unless Malaysia provided similar services.