

01/03/2002

Keng Yaik to lead CPO mission to 5 West Asian nations

Zaidi Isham Ismail

PRIMARY Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik will head a crude palm oil (CPO) trade mission to five West Asian countries for two weeks starting on March 16.

A Government official said Dr Lim will lead the mission to Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco to promote the commodity to the region as well as expand Malaysia's CPO market .

During the mission, Dr Lim will be accompanied by officials from the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB), Malaysian Palm Oil Promotion Council and the private sector.

"During the trip Malaysia will intensify promotional activities to increase the uptake of the commodity which is still relatively low in the region," the official told Business Times in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The source added that prior to the mission Dr Lim will also accompany Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on his official visit to Russia scheduled on March 10. Dr Mahathir is expected to sign a US\$50 million (US\$1 = RM3.80) Palm Oil Credit Payment Agreement with Russia during the visit involving the purchase of 200,000 tonnes of CPO.

According to the MPOB, CPO exports to the five West Asian countries were relatively low. Only 268 tonnes were exported to Iraq in 1999 and 3,324 tonnes in 2000.

Syria in 1999 bought 5,693 tonnes which increased to 30,316 tonnes in 2000, while during the same period Morocco bought 3,001 tonnes and 3,420 tonnes respectively.

Egypt, meanwhile, bought 434,986 tonnes in 2000 and 457,451 tonnes last year, and Turkey during the same period bought 137,895 tonnes and 149,525 tonnes respectively.

A total of 1.26 million tonnes or 13.88 per cent of Malaysia's 9.081 million tonnes of CPO exports went to West Asia in 2000.

Malaysia is the world's largest producer of CPO, accounting for some 50 per cent of the world's CPO output in which it exported 10.593 million tonnes to 140 countries last year.

(END)