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Abdullah-Sars

ACTIVATING ANTI-SARS MECHANISM? NOT JUST YET, SAYS DPM

By: Jamaluddin Muhamad

BANGKOK, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- Malaysia need not as yet activate its mechanism to handle the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) even though one new case of the disease had been confirmed in Singapore, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said here today.

"We do not want to take action that will imply a serious situation as this will affect economic and tourism activities," he told a news conference here.

Hence there was no need to re-install the thermal scanners at entry and exit points in the country, Abdullah said.

Malaysia will nevertheless monitor closely the new case confirmed in Singapore, he said.

Abdullah said he had asked Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng to get a detailed report on the new case from Singapore.

He said the anti-SARS mechanism was already in place in Malaysia and it could be activated at short notice.

So far no new SARS case had been reported in Thailand.

Abdullah arrived here yesterday for a two-day official visit.

Abdullah who is also Home Minister today held a meeting with Thai Interior Minister Wan Muhamad Nor Matha.

They discussed cooperation in the exchange of intelligence in the fight against terrorism.

Abdullah earlier attended an economic and development briefing at the National Economic and Social Development Board.

The briefing by the board's Senior Policy Planning Adviser Dr Arkhom Bannaweli, among others, touched on trade between Malaysia and Thailand.

He said Thailand's total trade with Malaysia for the first five months of this year amounted to US\$3.08 billion (RM11.7 billion) with exports valued at US\$1.7 billion (RM6.7 billion) and imports US\$1.3 billion (RM5 billion).

Its major export items for last year included parts and accessories for office machines, electronic integrated circuits, petroleum and crude oil while main import items were semi conductor devices, natural rubber and automatic data processing machines, he said.

Thailand is Malaysia's eighth largest trading partner accounting for 2.9 per cent of its external trade after the United States, Singapore, Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Dr Arkhom said total investment by Thai companies in Malaysia's manufacturing sector from 1998 to 2002 amounted to RM94.7 million involving 17 projects covering chemicals, plastics, rubber products, beverages and tobacco products.

He said approved Malaysian investment in Thailand for the first six months of this year amounted to US\$26.5 million (RM100.7 million).

Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, he said, had agreed to establish a consortium to purchase and manage rubber stockpile with a US\$225 million joint allocation (RM855 million).

The consortium which would be located here was to ensure orderly price for rubber farmers and to avoid speculation, he said.

He said the agreement to establish the company would be signed soon by the three countries.

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