

SARAWAK MULLING MORE QUARANTINE CENTRES

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KUCHING (Bernama) – Sarawak plans to create more plant quarantine centres, especially at rural entry points along its 1,781 kilometre-long borders with Indonesia, to add to its existing 17.

This was vital to contain the spread of pests and diseases into the state, said Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embass when speaking to the media after officiating at the Ninth International Conference of Plant Protection in the Tropics which began yesterday.

The three-day event is jointly organised by Universiti Pertanian Malaysia; Universiti Malaysia Sarawak; Universiti Teknologi Ma-ra, Sarawak; Malaysia Pepper Board; Malaysia Cocoa Board; CropLife Malaysia; and the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK).

“We are seeing, as our nation moves toward globalisation and free flow trade between countries, the increase in global trade of fresh produce which can result in greater risks of the introduction of invasive pests and diseases.

“In addition, the rapid movement of tourists and the smuggling of live planting materials and products present an ongoing threat to the spread of pests and diseases,” he said.

He said from 2014 until now the state had intercepted around 82 products found to be infected with diseases, and the government was taking a very serious view because once the disease was brought in, the impact would be very disastrous.

“We need to establish quarantine points at places like Serikin, Lachau, Ulu Baram while strengthening existing ones with better facilities,” he said.



Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embass at the Ninth International Conference of Plant Protection in the Tropics on August 3. – BERNAMA

Earlier in his speech, Uggah who is also the State Minister for the Modernisation of Agriculture and Rural Economy said incidences of incursions of the Moko and blood diseases of banana, Erwinia dieback of papaya, Erwinia stem canker of dragon fruit, Citrus Greening Disease (CGD) of mandarin oranges and red palm weevil had seriously impacted the growth of the respective crop industry in Malaysia.

“In the case of bacterial diseases in dragon fruit and CGD, they have virtually destroyed the once lucrative industries. So far, Sa-rawak is free from them but we will not be complacent.

“In this direction, Sarawak is promoting the use of clean banana meristem culture planting material and discouraging the use of papaya seeds from disease infected areas,” he said.