

PRIME NEWS

'Easy to fix gadget in swiftlet farms'

APPROPRIATE: Vet department to clear air on bird's nest exports to China today

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WITH bird's nest farmers anxious to resume stalled exports of bird's nests to China, Veterinary Services Department director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Aziz Jamaluddin met operators in Kluang, Johor, yesterday and will convene a press conference tomorrow.

The central issue is the installation of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) on swiftlet farm houses, a Chinese requirement which the department believes to

be appropriate.

Dr Aziz said Malaysia and China had, in April, agreed on a nitrate content of not exceeding 30ppm (parts per million) while exporters were to be issued an RFID certificate by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission.

The second requirement was to ensure problematic bird's nest farms could be identified.

Trading could resume once the protocol for the bird's nest exports is signed by the two countries.

Contrary to the assessment of the operators, the department insists that the RFID installation

is not complicated.

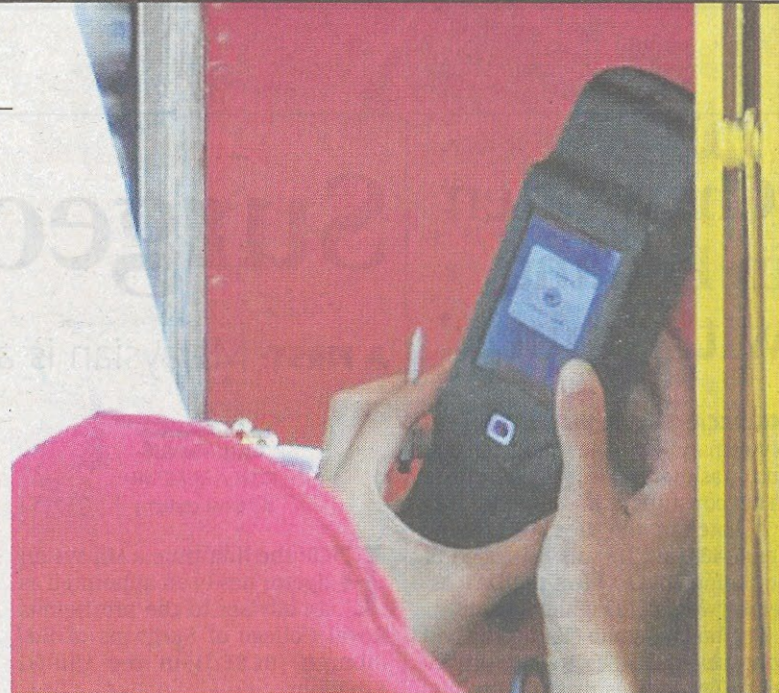
"It is not a difficult or complicated process. Farmers and traders just have to identify themselves so that we can ensure the origin and quality of the bird's nests exported," said Dr Aziz.

A major concern of the department is that only 4,800 of the 50,000 swiftlet farms have registered with the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries Ministry.

In this context, Dr Aziz said the RFID was a tool to identify the swiftlet farms.

On Sunday, Sarawak Bird's Nest Import and Export Association president Liu Thian Leong said that the system was not practical considering the urgent demand for bird's nests.

He had added that the RFID's installation may take years to complete and most operators were des-



The Radio Frequency Identification gadget to be installed on swiftlet farm houses. It is able to detect bird's nests with nitrate content exceeding 30ppm (parts per million). Pic courtesy of Veterinary Services Department

perate to resume the exports due to financial difficulties.

A temporary ban was imposed by China in July last year after it reportedly found that Malaysia's bird's nest samples contained 200ppm of nitrate. The standard level allowed by the World Health Organisation is only 34ppm.

Dr Aziz said operators could

choose to register online. To facilitate the exercise, officers have been visiting the farms.

"I'm going to the ground to assist them on registrations. My team will also try to explain to the operators on why it is important for them to register with us."

The team will also travel to Malacca and Negri Sembilan.