

Miti expects April trade figures to improve

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's trade figures for April are expected to improve despite the worsening global trade tensions, particularly between the US and China, said International Trade and Industry Deputy Minister Dr Ong Kian Ming.

"There was a slight drop overall in Malaysia's import and export performance, but we also take note that the trade decline in February was much larger than March, when we look from a year-on-year comparison, and March has improved compared to February.

"That may indicate that the trade figures may improve in April," he told a press conference after launching Semicon Southeast Asia 2019 yesterday.

Ong elaborated that the latest remarks by US President Donald Trump on the trade negotiations would not affect Malaysia's actual trade volume in the short term.

"For further impacts on Malaysia, we will wait and see what's the actual policy announcement from a tariff perspective from the US and Chinese governments," he said.

Market reaction is very short-term and if tomorrow China and US



Containers waiting to be uploaded onto vessels at North Port in Port Klang. – REUTERSPIX

announce a positive resolution, the market will be up, he said.

Local exports decreased 0.5% to RM84 billion in March 2019 from a year earlier as the nation sold less electrical and electronic products and commodity-based items.

The country's trade in February 2019 declined by 7.2% to RM122.15 billion compared to February 2018.

Ong said in the long term, the

unsettled tensions between the two big economies would not be positive for Malaysia as the country is highly dependent on trade with them.

"Any negative effects on trade between the US and China will have a long-term negative impact on Malaysia's trade in total. We hope for a positive conclusion so that this tariff war can be avoided," he added.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Investment

Development Authority CEO Datuk Azman Mahmud said the agency is looking at approved investments worth RM13 billion in the electrical and electronics segment for 2019.

"The figure is based on domestic and foreign investments and whether the trade tensions between the US and China is still an ongoing issue, but we can't predict the future," he said. – Bernama