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Shahidan-Rice

PERLIS MB SUGGESTS BARTER TRADE FOR BERNAS

KANGAR, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Padiberas Nasional Bhd (Bernas) should go into the barter trade with Thailand as a means of controlling the rice price, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said today.

He said Bernas could import Thai rice in exchange for Malaysian products like electronic goods and furniture.

Shahidan said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had agreed in principle on this when he raised the matter with him his recent visit to South America.

"I am confident the barter trade system will keep the rice price from rocketing," he told reporters after opening the state-level World Consumers Day in Arau, near here.

The market price for a 10kg pack of rice is RM11.80 for super grade and RM10.10 for premium grade, while glutineous rice is selling for RM13 and Thai scented rice for RM20.

Shahidan said the government had to import rice because of the limited local production compared with the demand and this directly resulted in a cash outflow.

He said the people would suffer if the Thai exporters conducted transactions in US dollars.

Shahidan was confident that if the proposal was accepted, it would also help safeguard the value of the ringgit as well as the Thai bhat.

"The barter trade will not be a government-to-government deal, but is between the traders of both countries," he added.

He said the border traders had already carried out barter trade, like exchanging Malaysian-made furniture for fruits of the same value.

Addressing the function earlier, Shahidan criticised certain groups for blaming Dr Mahathir for his firm stand which led to the declining ringgit.

They must understand the real cause, and not blame Dr Mahathir, he said. -- BERNAMA

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