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Koh-Barter

PENANG GOVT HAILS REVIVAL OF BARTER TRADE WITH MYANMAR - DR KOH

PULAU PINANG, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon today urged the Home Ministry to consider the suggestion by the state government and the Pulau Pinang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry to revive the barter trade between Pulau Pinang and Myanmar.

He said the security was guaranteed around the former penal colony Pulau Jerejak to carry out the business and hence, the ministry should reconsider its earlier decision to shelve plans to re-start the business citing security reasons.

The barter trade must be revived to stimulate Malaysia's ailing economy, he told reporters after opening the US-Penang Business Networking Conference, here.

He also welcomed the memorandum sent by the Pulau Pinang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad seeking his approval to re-start the business.

Dr Koh said he would raise the matter again at the next meeting of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC).

He said he had brought the matter to Dr Mahathir's attention several times since 1994 and the authorities had initially agreed to the idea but the Home Ministry later rejected it for security reasons.

The Pulau Pinang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping said yesterday that the chamber had sent a letter to Dr Mahathir explaining the dilemma faced by the barter traders since stoppage of the business four years ago.

While the traders lost RM600 million a year, Singapore had benefited from the stoppage, he said.

Barter trade between Pulau Pinang and Myanmar started in the 1950s with Myanmar traders bringing in rubber goods and marine products in exchange for electrical appliances, diesel, biscuits, cooking oil and other consumer items from Malaysia.

Dr Koh, who is also Pulau Pinang Barisan Nasional chairman, said the State BN would convene a meeting on Sunday to discuss Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sacking from the government and expulsion from Umno.

-- BERNAMA

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