

05 JUNE 2000
Coconut-Import
COCONUT IMPORTS MAY BE REDUCED

TELUK INTAN, June 5 (Bernama) -- The government is studying the possibility of reducing the import of coconuts following the drop in ex-farm prices.

Agriculture Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Abu Bakar Taib said today the matter would be studied carefully because it would involve the market price of coconuts.

"The problem is that the coconut price in the market is still high although the ex-farm price has dropped," he told reporters after opening the office of the Sungai Manik and Labu Kubong Areas Farmers organisation, here.

Malaysians now use about 5 million coconuts daily and the government had to import about 250 million last year to overcome the coconut shortage which sent the price spiralling to RM2 each at the end of 1998.

Abu Bakar said local entrepreneurs and the private sector should help the government build an effective marketing network for coconuts to ensure stable prices nationwide.

"They should help us distribute coconuts throughout the country because the problem we face is more on the distribution system which is not efficient," he said.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal to provide incentives for estate operators who maximise the use of their land, he said the incentives being considered included providing comprehensive estate infrastructures in their areas.

He said the government would also provide high-technology agricultural zones modelled after the industrial zones for those interested to work in such zones.

The plan was part of the programme under the Third National Agriculture Policy from 1998 to 2010 and involved an investment of RM32 billion of which RM21 billion was expected to come from the private sector, he added.

-- BERNAMA
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