

Labuan chambers to oppose the Customs ruling

LABUAN: Five chambers of commerce here Friday, unanimously agreed to collect at least 20,000 signatures, to oppose the just-implemented Customs department's ruling and policy on duty-free-shops and outflow of Labuan-registered vehicles to mainland Sabah.

The chambers are the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce Labuan (DPMML), Labuan Tiong Hua Chamber of Commerce, Labuan Indian Chamber of Commerce, Kadazan-Dusun Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Labuan and Malay Islamic Chamber of Commerce Labuan.

They held an extraordinary meeting in calling for members to unite and urge the government to reinstate Labuan's duty-free status.

DPMML President Datuk Yusof Mohamad said the signature drive would commence from today until next month and be handed over to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak before year-end.

"On behalf of the business community, we are opposing the newly-enforced rule and policy which has badly affected duty-free shop owners and Labuan's economy.

"The business environment has changed for the worse since its implementation on Nov 1, with a drop in sales volume and a

number of workers losing their jobs," he told a press conference after the meeting at the Tiong Hua Chamber of Commerce office here.

The Labuan Royal Customs Department has stationed its enforcement officers at all 20 licensed duty-free-shops throughout the island since the new rule was implemented on Nov 1 to monitor the sale of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks.

Customers intending to purchase cigarette or liquor of any quantity are required to produce their identification card to be recorded by the Customs department officer. Duty-free shops at the Labuan Airport are required to sell the two items (cigarettes and liquor) to only travelers with a boarding pass.

"The new rule scares customers away, thus, affecting business activity," Yusof said.

Labuan Tiong Hua Chamber of Commerce President Datuk Wong Kee Yee said the rule must not be implemented, owing to Labuan's gloomy economy which has been badly affected by the slump in global oil prices, leading to a slowdown in the oil and gas sector.

Its Vice-President Arthur Kong was of the view that the customs rule would affect the tourism industry. - Bernama



The meeting at the Tiong Hua Chamber of Commerce office.