Regional partners re-connect in Darwin

18 November 2015

Senior officials from four of the Northern Territory’s key trading countries in South East Asia have gathered in Darwin to progress the collective interests of the region.

Minister for Asian Engagement and Trade Peter Styles this morning welcomed representatives of BIMP-EAGA (Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-The Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area) ahead of three days of discussions and activities across Darwin.

Minister Styles said talks will centre on the NT’s engagement with the group, participation in an upcoming BIMP-EAGA Ministerial Meeting in Malaysia in December and Darwin hosting another group gathering in April next year.

“The Northern Territory Government is committed to engaging with its neighbours and this meeting is the first step in re-connecting with the BIMP-EAGA group of nations dumped by the previous Territory Labor Government,” Mr Styles said.

“These relationships are part of our long-term goal to demonstrate we are a good neighbour and to support the NT’s future political, economic and cultural engagement with the region.

“Strong relationships are fundamental to doing business in Asia. We want the Northern Territory to be seen as a natural partner and engaging with an important group such as BIMP-EAGA shows we are serious about forging deeper ties.”

The gathering coincides with NT Government delegations taking part in the Indonesia Australia Business Conference and Indonesia Australia Business Week events in Indonesia this week and follows on from the successful Northern Australia Investment Forum held in Darwin last week.

BIMP-EAGA was formed in 1994 with the aim of addressing socioeconomic development issues in each country.

The Northern Territory is not a member and does not hold voting rights however it is recognised as a development partner with observer status.

Leading Asian economies and the NT’s major trading partners Japan and China also have involvement with the BIMP-EAGA group.

The program of activities will also include sightseeing and tourist activities on the final day.
“Possessing strong people-to-people ties in South East Asia is important to maintaining our prosperous economy,” Mr Styles said.

“We intend not only to carry out productive discussions with our neighbours but also to provide them with a welcoming and unique Territory experience.”

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