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Perak BN reps told to holiday in Malaysia

KAMPUNG GAJAH, Thurs. - Barisan Nasional State Assemblymen in Perak have been directed to spend their holidays at home to reduce the outflow of the ringgit.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said the decision to order all Assemblymen to spend their holidays in Malaysia was made at yesterday's State Executive Council meeting.

Speaking after touring the Pasir Salak Historical Complex, he said he would be spending his year-end vacation here.

Ramli said the Assemblymen should set a good example during this trying time.

"This is being done as part of the Government's austerity drive and it requires some belt-tightening from all to overcome the current economic problems," he said.

Ramli said Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had last week also called on supreme council members to refrain from spending their holidays overseas.

The Cabinet also decided yesterday that ministers should holiday in the country.

In another related development, Ramli said the State Government was prepared to reduce its operating and development expenditure if the situation warranted.

"We have reduced expenditure by two per cent across the board as directed by the Federal Government," he said.

Ramli said a State and district-level economic action council would be established by next month so that all new directives and policies were properly implemented at grassroots level.

"The State council will monitor the districts because the present problem can be overcome only if everyone is disciplined," he said.

Ramli, who is Assemblyman for Pasir Salak, said facilities at the Pasir Salak complex would be completed by the middle of next year.

He said the main attraction, the Time Tunnel, was opened to the public last month and response from tourists had been good.

This integrated complex will also have 30 chalets, watercraft and river expedition facilities and a floating restaurant overlooking Sungai Perak.

Ramli said the Federal Government had allocated funds to build the Datuk Maharaja Lela fort and a replica of his house.

These attractions are being constructed near the grave of first British Resident J.W.W Birch who was murdered at Pasir Salak.

In Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said today State executive councillors would follow the Cabinet's directive not to take overseas vacations.

Koh said the Exco had also decided that only important trips for promotional, industrial, investment, tourism and trade purposes would be approved but with limits placed on accompanying staff and expenditure.

Spending, he said, would be kept to a minimum.

Also, in all these official visits, the Chief Minister and Exco members would travel business class and not first class as they used to.

Koh also said overseas trips would be limited to the minimum number of days needed such as his recent trip to Europe where he visited Germany and Ireland over two working days.

He said this would be adhered to as long as the current economic

situation prevailed.

Deputy Chief Minister and State Umno deputy chairman Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar has directed all Umno leaders in the State not to vacation overseas.

"I have directed Assemblymen and other leaders to holiday in the country. They are not even to go to places such as Haadyai or Medan. We have to set an example and I have asked them to take the lead."

Mohd Shariff was speaking after visiting Menara Umno which is under construction along Jalan Macalister.

In Kuala Lumpur, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said today the Cabinet's directive to cancel all overseas vacations involving ministers should be applied to all government officials at Federal and State levels.

"The directive should be with immediate effect, and not from January as announced by Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud," said Lim, who is also the leader of the Opposition.

He added the ban on overseas vacations should not only refer to government-paid holidays abroad, but should apply to all holidays overseas, including those which are self-financed.

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