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## Pushing key agencies for quicker recovery

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - State Governments have targeted key agencies involved in food production, housing and land and economic development as having to work on a "fast track" basis in helping towards an earlier economic recovery.

At the same time, civil servants have been urged to assume a greater sense of urgency and work ethics akin to crisis management to tackle the economic problems.

This newfound sense of urgency follows a directive on Wednesday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to all Ministries and State Governments to cut red tape in approving projects which could boost economic growth.

The Perak Government has targeted its Economic Development Corporation, Agriculture Development Corporation and Yayasan Perak - which are involved in food production and development - as the first agencies which need to work on a "fast track basis".

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said today the Public Works Department, Department of Environment and the Agriculture Department which are also involved in development and production processes would be similarly directed to do so.

A meeting of these agencies and departments will be called on Monday to stress on the need for fast tracking, he said.

"Because of the situation now, we are telling them they cannot work at the normal pace, but on a totally new one as there are certain targets to achieve during this time.

"Therefore, they must work with new energy and dynamism, otherwise we cannot achieve the objectives set by the Government (to boost food production and economic growth)," he said after meeting the Pahang Sultan, Sultan Ahmad Shah and his entourage at the airport en route to Kuala Kangsar.

Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, who was in Ipoh accompanying the Pahang Sultan on his way to Kuala Kangsar, said he had directed the State Secretary to do away with all the usual regulations and bureaucratic red tape, which would slow down administrative procedures.

In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam said the State Government had acted to expedite the issuance of approval for projects.

Osu, who is also Finance Minister, said: "Files must move fast ... approvals from my Ministry can be issued within five days."

Similar directives have also been issued to all approving authorities, he said, adding that in this time of economic downturn, speedy approval could cut Government's expenditure while at the same time enable the implementation of beneficial projects.

In Malacca, the State Government has cut the time taken to approve housing projects from six months to about one to two months since early this year to boost the housing sector.

Housing and Local Government committee chairman Datuk Mo'min Abdul Aziz said the directive to expedite approvals was issued by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin early this year.

Developers, however, must come with complete files and documents so that their applications could be approved faster.

Mo'min attributed much of the delays to land acquisition exercises.

"The exercise is no longer a problem, but developers must compensate the affected people accordingly to avoid delays," he said.

Mo'min said regular meetings held with the State Housing Developers Association to iron out problems had also cut down bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, Public Services Department deputy director-general (II), Datuk Khalil Hussain, said civil servants could not go on working as previously.

"Before, if we have 10 projects, a delay of two is almost unnoticeable as eight will go on.

"Now we can afford less projects. If there are only five and some have to be delayed, the overall negative effect on the economy can be glaring."

Khalil said he was not accusing the Government servants of slacking but he believed they could contribute more.

In Penang, Seberang Prai Municipal Council president Daud Taha said the council had established one-stop units in the council's building, engineering and health departments to cut bureaucracy and help the public seeking approvals or licences from the various departments.

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