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Ringgit-MBs

RULING WILL NOT HURT MALAYSIANS WORKING IN SINGAPORE

MUAR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- The ruling on export of ringgit notes will not be a problem to more than 10,000 Malaysians in Johor working in Singapore, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today.

He said they should not worry about the ruling which was meant for those with some RM17 billion deposited in the republic.

"I don't think Malaysian workers in Singapore will have problems over the ruling," he said when commenting on drastic measures announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday to check the depreciation of the ringgit, including a fixed exchange rate, curbs on trading of the ringgit and repatriating money overseas.

Abdul Ghani said Malaysian workers need to exchange their foreign currency back into the ringgit as soon as they re-entered the country.

He also said the measures were timely as the ringgit was frequent target of currency speculators. "This will ensure that the ringgit will not be a commodity for trading or basis for speculative activities."

In KOTA BAHARU, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat described the foreign exchange curbs as an appropriate response to foreign pressure.

"We have been on the receiving end far too long. We shouldn't let this to continue without returning the pressure on them," he told reporters after the swearing-in of Tendong assemblyman Husein Ahmad, 62, as the Kota Baharu Municipal Council (MPKB) president.

Husein succeeds Nordin Yaakob who ended his service on Aug 31.

Nik Aziz said a middle east country once adopted similar measures to protect its economy.

Unlike Malaysia, he said the country concerned did not recall all its currency overseas.

Instead it reprinted a totally new currency, rendering its currency overseas useless.

In IPOH, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said the measures would insulate the people against hardships resulting from the speculations on the ringgit.

"International trade needs currency but we don't want the ringgit to be traded merely to give profits to certain people at the expense of the country and the people," he told reporters after receiving a call from Bosnian leaders and Members of Parliament at his office.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said the time had come for Malaysians to sell off their assets overseas and bring back the ringgit to help rehabilitate the country's economy.

Now was also a good time for them to buy shares as the prices were attractive, he told reporters after chairing the State Executive Council weekly meeting at Wisma Darul Iman.

He said the foreign exchange measures announced yesterday were also timely to end free trade of the ringgit.

On the effects on foreign investors, he said the measures would stabilise the country's economy to gain the confidence of investors.

In SHAH ALAM, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar said that providing a fixed exchange rate for the ringgit could help the country to overcome the economic downturn.

"Selangor fully supports the drastic measures announced," he told reporters after chairing the State Executive Council weekly meeting.

Abu Hassan said the state economic action council which met this morning had agreed to organise series of information sessions to explain to the people the measures announced by the prime minister yesterday.

In PULAU PINANG, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon welcomed Bank Negara's measures at containing speculation in the ringgit.

Describing it like painful injection, bitter medicine and unpleasant dietary control, he said those measures "are needed to restore health in our economy."

"Currency exchange control measures imposed by Bank Negara are necessary to curb and counter speculative attacks on our ringgit and enable a moderate or lower interest rate policy to be implemented effectively," he said in a statement here.

According to him a more stable currency and lower interest rate would spur economic recovery and would be good for business in the long run.

Such measures would not affect long-term genuine foreign direct investment, especially in the manufacturing sector, as long as an effective and efficient mechanism using IT and electronic facilities could be put in place to minimise bureaucratic red tape and delay, he said.

In fact, Koh said serious long term investors will welcome a stable currency and a stable economy which will enable them to make and implement long-term business plans and decisions.

"What is crucial is that we must continue to sustain and upgrade our overall competitiveness based on our political stability, good infrastructure, attractive incentives, efficient government machinery and above all the productivity and technical capability of our workforce," he said.

After all, China and Chile with a long-term policy of currency control, had both been enjoying robust growth even under present circumstances, he said while calling on all Malaysians in Pulau Pinang to rally behind government and support these drastic but necessary measures.

Meanwhile, President of Pulau Pinang Malay Chamber of Commerce Datuk Abdul Rahman Maidin also welcomed government's measures in increasing the time limit for loans before they could be declared non-performing.

The measure would enable businessmen to recover their businesses and this would reduce the number of non-performing loans and its amount.

He also called on the government to seriously consider the proposal to introduce economic recovering bond to be subscribed by Malaysians as the saving rate in the country is higher compared to other countries.

In ALOR SETAR, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid the revolutionary measures would not erode confidence of investors in the country.

"With the latest move, we are in full control of the ringgit. It is a revolutionary move dan we are proud of it," he told reporters after meeting Barisan Nasional members of the state legislative assembly to brief them on the measures.

He said the measures would be shocking initially to foreign investors but not so once they understood the whole thing.

Sanusi said he was confident that other countries whose currencies were also having problems due to speculative activities would adopt similar measures.

"I belief the world should learn from Malaysia," he said.

-- BERNAMA