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Ramli-Happy(Special Report)

RAMLI HAPPY TO LEAVE PERAK WITH PRIDE

IPOH, Dec 3 (Bernama) -- There is not much change in his official residence except for several things which have been packed while at one corner there are several boxes of dried flowers arranged in such a way that they are ready to be moved to some other premises.

After almost 17 years as Menteri Besar and staying at the official residence right in the heart of Ipoh city, Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib finally has to leave the premises which had witnessed various events besides being home to his four children who were raised there.

It was also the place where his wife Raja Puan Sri Noora Ashikin, who is chairmen of several women's associations, taught the associations' members how to make pot-pourri whether for sale or for their own consumption.

In an interview recently, he said he has mixed feelings about his departure within the next two weeks to join the federal government.

He is sad to leave close friends behind and not being able to see the completion of some of the projects that he had initiated and at the same time he is happy because he had brought Perak to a level of development that he can be proud of.

"When I first assumed the post of Menteri Besar, the situation in the state was rather backward in various aspects including infrastructure, economy and culture," said Ramli who was made acting Menteri Besar in October 1982 before being officially appointed to the post on March 1, 1983.

In the recent general election, he switched constituency from the Kampung Gajah state seat to the Pasir Salak parliamentary seat.

Recalling his involvement in the general elections, Ramli who was born in Pasir Salak on March 1, 1941, said the most memorable incident was when he was asked to contest the Kampung Gajah State Legislative Assembly seat in the 1978 general election.

"I was happy because I was given the trust although I was the youngest Umno division head in the state then," he said.

Ramli, who has a Bachelor of Law degree from Queen's University, Belfast and a Barrister-at-Law from Lincoln's Inn, was also the youngest Perak Menteri Besar when he was appointed to the post at the age of 42.

"Dr Mahathir was responsible in choosing me as Exco member and Menteri Besar," he said.

He said the drop in the price of tin on the international market in the early 1980s had a significant effect on the tin mining industry which was the backbone of the Perak economy and resulted in a slowing down of the state's development.

Ramli said he had to bring in foreign investors and implement industrialisation programmes to revive the Perak economy.

Up to August this year, the state government had approved various industrialisation projects worth RM1.086 billion, an increase of 164.8 per cent or RM410.1 million from the same period of last year.

The increased investment had also raised job opportunities for locals by 39.5 per cent from 3,308 to 4,615 jobs.

He said the Perak government also endeavoured to develop agriculture by concentrating on productivity following the decreasing size of agricultural land due to industrialisation.

Padi production rose to seven tons per hectare compared with 3.5 tons

per hectare previously, he said.

"We also have more than 14,000 hectares of oil palm plantation in Indonesia," Ramli said.

In terms of culture, he said Perak is among the states which had successfully improved the standard of cultural activity especially among the Malay community.

He said a study by a professor from the University of Malaya showed that Perak had 46 cultural materials relating to the Malay race, exceeding those found in Kelantan and Terengganu which were said to be the centre of development of the Malay culture all this time.

He said Perak now has the third highest per capita income besides having the most popular domestic tourist destinations.

The per capita income in the state is between RM5,130 and RM5,314 in 1999 and next year compared with RM4,946 last year.

-- BERNAMA

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