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Assembly-Perak (Companies)

AILING COMPANIES WILL NOT BE BAILED OUT, SAYS RAMLY

IPOH, Nov 13 (Bernama) -- The state government will not bail out ailing and non-viable companies anymore, the State Legislative Assembly was told today.

State Executive Councillor for Industrial Development Datuk Ramly Zahari said the programme to rehabilitate companies burdened with debts would not be carried out again as was implemented for Nikkei Battery.

He said the state government tried to bail out the company whose shares were also owned by the Perak State Development Corporation but the company's internal problems and its incompetent management with market conditions led to the failure of the initiative.

Ramly said this when replying to a supplementary question from Kapt (Rtd) Usaili Alias (Keadilan-Bota) who wanted to know the status of the factory in Tronoh which he claimed "swallowed RM18 million investment but is now lying idle."

Replying to the original question from Mohd Jafri Mohd Yunus (BN-Batu Kurau) on the total number of small-and medium-scale industries (SMIs) in Perak, he said there are 1,117 registered SMIs based on the paid-up capital of between RM10,000 and RM2.5 million.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali said although the state was endowed with vast tracts of land that could be developed, the state government would not be hasty in awarding the land to ensure investors fully utilised them.

Replying to Usaili, he said, investments in certain projects would be given only temporary occupation licence (TOL) in the initial stage and ownership titles would be awarded later after the viability of the projects have been determined.

He, however, said the state government was prepared to alienate a big piece of land to investors intending to set up educational institutions in the state such as Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) in Kampar.

He said 1,200 hectares in Tapah are awaiting prospective investors to set up another university.

"Education is one of the sectors Perak has an advantage over states like Selangor, Johor and Penang to woo new investments," he said.

Tajol Rosli said while the absence of an international airport and seaport had affected efforts to attract foreign investments to Perak, the state government was giving attention to attract investments in the education sector.

Between January and June, Perak received investments totalling RM374.7 million for 30 projects -- 12 new and 18 expansion projects, he said.

Replying to Datuk Chew Wai Khoo (BN-Tebing Tinggi) on the impact of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) on the state's tourism sector, Ramly said although generally the country's tourism industry was severely hit by the deadly disease, the number of tourists to Perak had actually increased.

January to June statistics showed 721,800 tourists came to Perak vis-a-vis 707,536 in the same period last year, he said.

The Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) calculated the data based on the tourist arrivals in Ipoh, Lumut and Pulau Pangkor and did not take into account the figures in Taiping, Bukit Merah Laketown Resort, Hulu Perak, Kuala Kangsar and other places, he added.

State Executive Councillor for Youth and Sports Datuk Jamal Nasir Rasdi

said the involvement of students and youths in criminal activities in Perak was under control as statistics showed less than two per cent were involved in the last three years.

He said there were 3,659 reported cases of students and youths involved in crime from 2000 till September this year.

Of the total, 889 are violent crime, 2,770 property crime but only 780 involved students, he said when replying to Usaili.

He also said a committee under the State Youth Consultative Council had been set up under the chairmanship of the Perak Police Chief to handle social ills in the state.

State Executive Councillor for Agriculture Datuk Azman Mahalan told the House the state-level Farmers, Fishermen and Livestock Breeders' Day celebrations at Ladang Infoternak in Sungai Siput recently netted RM1.5 million in sales.

Replying to Abdullah Ahmad (BN-Rungkup), he said, more than 250,000 people visited the expo site where the Third International Orchid Festival and Perak Decorative Fish Festival were also held.

He said the Farmers, Fishermen and Livestock Breeders' Day celebrations would not be held at the district-level as the state government had spent more than RM1 million to build various facilities to turn Infoternak as a permanent site for the celebrations.

Meanwhile, the DAP's attempt to raise the ban on drinking liquor in open places in Ipoh at the state assembly prompted a backbencher to ask whether PAS and Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) also supported the DAP in the issue.

While Nga Kor Ming (DAP-Pantai Remis) was debating the budget, Datuk Saharudin Abd Jabar (BN-Trong) stood up and sought clarification from the Opposition Leader whether PAS and Keadilan also backed the DAP's call to lift the ban on non-Muslims and tourists.

Nga said Saharudin should have followed his speech from the beginning as he had said that his party did not support the habit of drinking liquor but wanted non-Muslims and tourists be allowed to drink liquor in open places.

He said the scenario in Ipoh, especially at night, did not reflect its city status because there was no exciting activities and the ban to drink in open places like in Greentown Walk portrayed a negative image.

Nga, who is also DAP National Youth Chief, said the ban and issuance of summons to courting couples holding hands in public parks and libraries had tarnished Ipoh's image and reflected an a'la-Taliban type of administration.

At this juncture, Tajol Rosli interjected, wanting to know whether the launch of the Islamic State Document by PAS yesterday would affect tourist arrivals to Malaysia.

Stressing that the matter was beyond his jurisdiction, Nga said his party was firm in opposing the Islamic State Policy as Malaysia was a multi-racial country.

Nga also proposed to the state government to apply for a duty-free island status to further develop the tourism industry in Pulau Pangkor similar to that in Langkawi and Pulau Tioman.

Tajol Rosli told Nga that he had raised the matter with former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who asked him (Tajol Rosli) to state what benefits the status would bring to Pulau Pangkor.

"Hence, I'm asking the Honourable Member to state what are the benefits of getting a duty-free island status so that I can make a request again to the Federal Government," he said.

Nga said: "If there are no benefits, surely Langkawi and Pulau Tioman will not have jostled for the status."

He urged Tajol Rosli to get the facts from the State Economic Planning Unit.

-- BERNAMA

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