

BN has only brickbats for Pakatan's Penang rule
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Barisan Nasional, now the opposition in Penang, has only a bouquet of brickbats for its successor in government, Pakatan Rakyat, to mark the third anniversary of its rule in the state.

Umno liaison chief Zainal Abidin Osman (left) launched the first salvo by underscoring Pakatan's three years of administration in the state with a single word - "disappointing".

The DAP-led government which ruled Penang since 2008 had failed to fulfil its promises to the people in the last general election, he told Bernama on Sunday.

The Nibong Tebal Umno division head accused the DAP of just "using rhetoric, (who) get carried away with its attitude" and lacked focus on the state administration.

"The state government had failed in bringing development to the people; most of the development was brought through the efforts of the previous government and most of the investments were brought into the state by the federal government," he noted.

State Gerakan chief Dr Teng Hock Nan (left) concurred with his Umno counterpart, and listed issues which he considered had been left unattended since his party, which governed Penang for 39 years, handed over power to Lim Guan Eng.

Issues like transportation and housing were a big concern for Penangites as they were closely related to their quality of life, said the former state exco member.

The previous government, he added, already had a complete transportation plan and the current administration "does not really need to hire a new consultant" on the matter.

This month, the state is trying to address the transport issue by providing 16 Rapid busses to ply the route between Seberang Jaya and the Bayan Lepas free industrial zone, to ease traffic congestion and save travelling costs for the workers.

In terms of its economy, Penang outshone the other states by attracting the highest amount of investment into the country last year, recording a total of RM12.238 billion, a jump of 465 percent compared to the total in 2009.

'Business climate likely to change'

However, Teng remains unexcited by the figures, saying even if the state had managed to achieve the highest investment for this year, the business climate was likely to change.

"The state exco needs to continue discussion on how to keep investment coming, and address the various problems (which may hinder its growth)... however, the officer in charge of this portfolio (who is Deputy Chief Minister 1 Mansor Othman) seems invisible in this matter," he charged.

No matter how Pakatan blows its horns, the opposition remains adamant that 'Rome was not built in one day', claiming that it was its past efforts which had brought Penang to

where it is today.

State MCA secretary Lau Chiek Tuan insisted that the previous government had laid a strong foundation in developing the state, especially by harnessing its manufacturing sector.

Lau (left), who was formerly the Berapit assemblyperson, asked Pakatan not to be in a hurry to claim all the credit, as the expansion of the sector last year was related to the global economic recovery.

The federal government, too, should share some of the credit when Penang prospers, as without its cooperation, sectors like tourism, may not succeed well, he said.

While Penang is upbeat about its growing economy, the state is undergoing a massive development plan which has put land, housing and property issues under the spotlight, many a time, with less than pleasant news.

Lim is sometimes seen as being 'developer-friendly' despite declaring that the state under Pakatan has not evicted any person from their homes, blaming the developers instead for being the ones responsible for the misdeed.

But Lau, on the other hand, claims that many developers were unhappy with the "double standard and special treatment" by Lim towards contractor Eco Meridean Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of SP Setia Bhd.

SP Setia Bhd, which is financing the bulk of the construction cost for the RM300 million Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre, will be allowed to build an extra 1,500 houses in the various projects it is undertaking in Penang.

Special treatment 'a dangerous precedent'

State MIC liaison committee chief PK Subbaiyah described the special treatment as a "dangerous precedent" by Lim just because he wants to promote the project.

Subbaiyah said the previous government has never embarked on such a situation before as it was more concerned about developing projects which were beneficial to the people, and solicited the help of the federal government for this purpose.

"So far after three years, the Pakatan government has done only populist and publicity stunts," he said.

"In 2008, Penangites gave them the mandate against BN hoping to see some changes but until today, there are no policy changes or projects that are concrete or beneficial to the people," he added.

"There are just items in terms of money that is given to the people," he stressed referring to the various state sponsored programmes like the senior citizen (RM100 annually) and beneficiary awards (RM1,000 - a one-off payment) upon the death of their parents.

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