

Gerakan gives Penang gov't an 'F' for non-performance

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by Susan Loone

Penang Gerakan has given Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's administration an 'F' in terms of good governance and performance, since Pakatan Rakyat took over the state in March 2008.

In a press event dubbed 'Skin the Cat' - a reference to Penang's CAT (competency, accountability and transparency) government, Gerakan leaders said they had zeroed in on five areas to analyse Lim's three-and-a-half years performance and found him failing in all.

The areas include the controversial subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre (sPICE), 'Kancil' carpark at the foot of Penang Hill, the state's so-called 'free' wifi project, illegal telecommunication towers (telcos) and traffic congestion.

State Gerakan publicity bureau chief Dr Thor Teong Ghee said the party wants to act as a good opposition, and would provide constructive criticisms on the five projects, other than just lambasting the state for its various failures.

Thor (right) added that the 'lopsided' sPICE agreement which favoured the developer - Eco Meridian Sdn Bhd/SP Setia Berhad - needs to be renegotiated and the contents of the contract revealed totally to the public.

BN has criticised Lim intensely for granting the developer a concession to build houses in excess of 1,500 units - the maximum density allowed - and providing free land to build 450 low-medium-cost houses on mature land complete with proper infrastructure.

However, the state insisted that by privatising the project, it has saved Penangites RM250 million, include providing a seven acre rooftop eco-park for the public.

"The state government has to do what is necessary without causing losses to Penangites," he told reporters at the press conference.

'Free wifi that is not free'

Thor, who is BN coordinator for Sungai Pinang, also criticised the 'free' Wifi project with 750 hotspots installed by the state, saying that eventually, the latter signed a RM8.5 million agreement with a private company, Redtone.

For that amount of money, each hot spot would cost Penangites some RM11,000... what does the state government mean by free-wifi?" he queried.

Thor also made an issue about the erection of illegal telco structures in the state, saying that the local council should have by now informed the public about whether the towers within their residential areas were registered and safe.

While the BN has slammed Lim for not having an open tender for the wifi, the latter has clarified that Redtone was the only company which was willing to provide 750 free hot spots.

As for traffic congestion, Thor claimed that the state had not done anything substantial to resolve the ever growing problems within the island.

"No roads are widened, flyovers constructed or roads modified to cope with the increasing traffic woes... and what about improving the public transport?" he added.

False promises, sweet nothings

Meanwhile, the party's legal and human rights bureau chief Baljit Singh slammed the state government for bragging about its achievements when it cannot even construct a carpark properly.

While Lim continues to lay the fault at BN's feet as the project was mooted during its term prior to 2008, the latter blamed the current government for approving the plan, which resulted in a carpark that is only "fit for Kancil cars".

Baljit (right) said that many controversies over several other projects have also been highlighted by BN, but the state was not interested in resolving them.

Instead, Lim and his officials are merely interested in organising very frequent press conferences to brag about their so-called achievements, he added.

"If it cannot even build a carpark properly, how can they develop Penang?" he queried.

"The state government only knows how to blame the previous government although (in the case of the carpark) it is their responsibility," he said.

"This clearly shows that the Pakatan government is only good at making false promises, and saying sweet nothings," he alleged.

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