

## **'Rent and purchase' homes if BN wins Penang**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**July 17, 2012**

**By Susan Loone and Low Chia Ming**

Penang Barisan Nasional has thrown Penangites another election pledge if they come to power after the general election, and this time it is to build affordable homes below RM350,000 via a 'rent and purchase' concept.

State BN chief Teng Chang Yeow said the pledge is included in BN's manifesto for the coming polls slated for later this year or next year, and would be implemented once the coalition regains power after losing the state to Pakatan in 2008.

Chang Yeow, who is Gerakan secretary-general, said the proposal came about as the Pakatan Rakyat government in Penang does not appear to be planning to build affordable homes on the island.

He added that BN does not agree to the building of most affordable homes on the mainland, especially Batu Kawan, by the state via its development arm, Penang Development Corporation.

"Do you expect people to travel by motorcycle from there to work in Penang on a daily basis? From a logistical and planning point of view, it does not make sense," said Chang Yeow during a press conference yesterday.

"So we are proposing a rent and purchase concept where you can pay rental and later convert that to downpayment and get a loan to buy the house," he added.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has come under heavy criticisms for not providing affordable housing despite announcing the construction of over 11,000 homes in Batu Kawan.

'Use state reserves to build homes'

This concept however is not new as Gerakan Youth deputy chief Oh Tong Keong had earlier suggested that the government implement it in the 2013 Budget.

The concept was first introduced and implemented by the state government in the early 70s for Rifle Range Flats in Penang.

It involved monthly rentals without a downpayment and the eventual conversion of the property to private ownership upon maturation of the rental period after 25 years.

Chang Yeow said the BN was in the process of identifying the sites for the rent and purchase scheme so that if they were given the mandate to rule Penang again, the projects will be implemented.

He added that public flats - for example those around the Penang Free School area and Rifle Range - under the state and local authorities would be upgraded and redeveloped to improve living conditions.

He stressed that the BN had proposed that the state seek funds from the federal government to upgrade these public flats.

"But what we see now is that the Pakatan government has sold the land identified for housing purposes to commercial entities to build a health centre instead," he said.

"They (state) can say they have written to the federal government but has received no reply, but why don't they pursue the matter instead of sending just one letter?" he queried.

"They can implement (build public housing) using the state reserves," he stressed.

'Redundant with many discrepancies'

Meanwhile, on the issue of hillslope development, Chang Yeow said the BN team has been asked to discontinue looking at the documents released by the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) as the list is "redundant and has many discrepancies".

The minutes of meetings to approve projects above 250 feet have been declassified by the MPPP following denials that the previous BN administration did not approve such plans.

"They have listed the same project as two projects and there are some which are below 250 feet. We cannot trust the list any more," he said.

Chang Yeow threw the ball into MPPP president Pattahiyah Ismail's court, saying "she knows what happened, she should act professionally and do not need to hide or be afraid".

He claimed that the state does not need to approve the 19 projects, although they are categorised under the 2007 structural plan as "special projects".

According to Pattahiyah, these are project approved between April 2008 to May this year which are above the 250 ft guideline as they had previously been given the nod as special projects under the State Structural Plan of 2007.

"They can impose new guidelines. The planning approval is on a yearly basis and the compensation would not be a big amount," said Chang Yeow.

"They keep saying this will bankrupt the state government but for the sake of the environment and the people, we are willing to face it and find other sources of income," he added.

"I do not think developers will sue unless they want to close shop," he added.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd  
Source: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/203853>