

'BN manifesto won't cure nation's ills'

MalaysiaKini.com

April 7, 2013

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COMMENT Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in unveiling the BN's manifesto yesterday expressed confidence in winning the next general election, using sweeping promises of cash handouts and incentives.

However, what is striking is the similarity between the "copycat" BN manifesto, which appears to be copied straight from Pakatan Rakyat's 'Pakatan Harapan Rakyat' manifesto, especially on:

Reducing car prices;

Increasing police personnel to fight crime;

A pan-Borneo Highway stretching 2,300km from Sematan in Sarawak to Serudung in Sabah; and

Making prices of all goods in Sabah and Sarawak uniform with Peninsular Malaysia.

BN's manifesto clearly overlooks the 4Ds problems of Deficits, Debts, Deceit from corruption and brain Drain, which have caused Malaysia to be caught in a middle-income trap. Many find it hard to believe that in 1966 Malaysia's GDP per capita of US\$350 was ahead of South Korea's US\$130.

Almost 50 years later, Malaysia has improved to US\$9,977 while South Korea jumped further ahead of Malaysia to US\$22,424.

According to the Washington-based financial watchdog Global Financial Integrity, Malaysia has seen an illicit capital outflow of RM872 billion over 10 years from 2001 to 2010, behind Mexico's RM1,450 billion and China RM8,360 billion.

However, if we view the statistics in per capita terms, Malaysia is actually the world champion in illegal capital flight. Over 10 years from 2001 to 2010, every Malaysian has lost RM31,000, while every Chinese in China lost RM6,400.

Farmers should get loans, not minister

Instead of giving out loans to farmers who breed cows, the family of a cabinet minister who has never reared a cow is given a RM250 million loan, which is misused to buy condos.

We can see some of the worst excesses in Sarawak, where wealth controlled by families of state government leaders are openly flaunted.

Such corruption has only exacerbated an existing brain drain. Since Merdeka in 1957, more than two million Malaysians have left the country and there has been no concrete effort to arrest the brain drain, much less reverse the situation.

Our debt has worsened. As of Dec 31, 2012, the federal government debt stood at RM502 billion, which is an increase of 89 percent if compared with the end 2007 debt of RM266 billion.

Our deficit has also worsened. The federal government projected deficit of RM 59.7 billion in the 2012 budget is the highest in Malaysian history.

The last time this country ran a budget surplus was in 1997, when Anwar Ibrahim was the deputy prime minister. Since 1997, we have experienced 15 consecutive years of budget deficits, which is why we want Anwar as the new prime minister to turnaround the deficit budget into a surplus budget.

In contrast with the BN's dismal financial performance, Pakatan state governments have recorded surplus after surplus every year, and even reduced our debts sustainably.

Penang reduced its debt by a whopping 95 percent, or RM600 million, from RM630 million as at March 8, 2008 to only RM30 million by the end of 2011.

All this was achieved by running a clean government, based on our CAT governance of competency, accountability and transparency.

In contrast, we have a Sarawak chief minister who escapes unpunished for not only refusing to cooperate with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), but who also condemns MACC as dishonest and naughty.

Unless the BN manifesto addresses the 4Ds issues of debt, deficit, deceit from corruption and brain drain, the BN's "A promise of hope" will remain an empty promise.