

'BR1M not mere goody, rationalises subsidies'

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By Nigel Aw

The 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) cash handout should not be viewed as mere goodies as it is part of the plan to rationalise the country's subsidies, says MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu.

The cash aid allowed for more targeted assistance to families with an income under RM3,000 compared to the current subsidy system, he told a forum on the general election.

"If I drive a car and spend RM3,000 on petrol, the government gives RM1,000 subsidy, but if someone in a kampung with low income spend RM300 on petrol, he only gets RM100 subsidy.

"How can I get RM1,000 subsidy and the poor man gets RM100? Government money is for helping the poor, not the rich," he said.

In contrast, Gan (right in photo) said Pakatan Rakyat's slew of promises such as free education and abolition of toll was unsustainable.

However, DAP central executive committee member Liew Chin Tong rebutted that this was an admission that BN planned to slash subsidies after the general election.

"Thank you for being intellectually honest and letting the cat out of the bag, you made a clear link to subsidy rationalisation.

"This means prices will go up after the general election," he said.

Liew defended Pakatan's promises, saying they will be funded by clamping down on corruption and illicit financial outflows.

In contrast, he said BN planned to sustain its cash handouts such as BR1M through the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) after the general election.

"60 percent of the population have a household income under RM3,000 a month, that means they cannot afford to pay tax.

"GST is going to impose tax on everyone, (which) means they (low income earners) will have to pay tax too," he said.

However, Gan said GST was the way forward, pointing out that most nations, particularly developed ones, have already implemented the system.

'Early Kluang campaign'

Gan, who is a MCA's potential candidate for the Kluang parliamentary seat, was unusually aggressive while Liew, who will also contest there under DAP, was equally if not more aggressive at the night's forum.

Liew (left in photo), when speaking on corruption, had highlighted the mismanagement of the double-tracking project in relation to Kluang.

"If it was not for corruption which plagued the double-tracking project for more than ten years, Kluang would have a good rail system which it depends on for development," he said.

He added this was more so as 20 percent of Kluang's population worked outstation.

Gan, however, attacked Pakatan's manifesto, pointing to Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim's gaffe that a manifesto was not a promise.

He also relentlessly attacked PAS for its theocratic ambitions and criticise DAP for working with them.

At one point, Liew mischievously remarked that he hoped Gan would be able to contest in the coming general election, to which the latter replied: "I know you're turning this into your Kluang campaign, I will not be pulled in".

Also present at the forum were PAS central committee member Mujahid Yusof Rawa and Umno supreme council member Saifuddin Abdullah.

The forum entitled: "What are the three key issues that will determine the outcome of the 13th general election", was organised by Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli) in partnership with Youtube and KiniTV.

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