

BN pledges Penang free port, 20,000 affordable homes

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In its manifesto launched in Penang today, the state BN has pledged to restore Penang's free port status, a cry it has made since last year, although this is similar to Pakatan Rakyat's campaign pledges.

The manifesto states that with the free port, Penangites would be able to enjoy duty-free consumer goods and services, cheaper food and beverages, more job opportunities created by the retail industry and strong economic growth.

It added that tourists would be able to enjoy duty-free shopping, and investors will enjoy tax exemption for goods imported into and exported from Penang, thus making business conditions more conducive and competitive.

Though 2,000 short of what was promised by the Penang Pakatan Rakyat government, the BN has pledged to build 20,000 low- and medium-cost homes and introduce rent and purchase schemes for the lower income group.

Pakatan had mentioned during the launch of the coalition's manifesto on Monday, that they will build 22,000 affordable homes in Penang should they regain power.

Penang BN also offers to provide a monorail system to address the island's traffic congestion and implement an efficient public transportation system.

The coalition said they will do this through strong financial support from the federal government and by gazetting Penang as a free port.

Communities to benefit from the manifesto includes women, voluntary patrol members, hawkers, students, senior citizens, retirees, pensioners and rural folk.

Religious groups are also not left out when the state under BN issues out Temporary Occupancy Licences to places of worship and provide them with annual allocations.

"Each of us in the party understands the problems that Penangites face and Penang BN is working hard to show our strength and ability as a team to cater to the multitude of problems in our pluralistic society," said the manifesto.

'Closing the island-mainland gap'

"We have a plan to develop Penang so that we can close the current gap between Penangites on the island and Seberang Perai in terms of income, cost of living and quality of life," it added.

The other features in the manifesto include:

1. Set up government childcare centres in every district and provide human resource matching for women who quit job due to family commitment to re-enter the human resources market.
2. Provide free annual personal insurance to voluntary patrol members, coordinate patrolling and enhance cooperation between patrol members and the authorities.
3. Abolish hawkers' licence fees and set up a hawker's gallery.
4. Provide free annual health screening for senior citizens.
5. Offer a RM3,000 annual loan to the top 1,000 students pursuing tertiary education.
6. Channel assessment fees of low-cost and low-medium-cost flats into the Joint Management Board (JMB) for maintenance projects.
7. Build 20,000 low- and medium-cost houses and reintroduce the 'Rent and Sale' scheme for the low income group.
8. Establish an International Off-shore Finance Centre (IOFC).
9. Provide a 10 percent rebate on assessment fees for traders and shopkeepers who go green.
10. Practise community consultation in policy making.
11. Automatically extend leasehold land on a less than 30-year lease to 60 years.
12. Set up an Innovation and Dynamo Park for youths.
13. Introduce incentive scheme to companies that employ retirees and pensioners.
14. Create lucrative employment opportunities for the rural folk through primary economic activities.

15. Abolish motorcycle toll on the Penang Bridge.

16. Maintain traditional kampong with the upgrading of rural facilities and organising of Homestay programmes.

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