

Penang Dapsy challenges MCA to price-hike debate

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Penang DAP has openly challenged the state MCA to a debate to determine who is responsible for the recent price hikes in the country.

Penang Municipal Councillor Chris Lee said state MCA Youth chief Lee Beng Seng should not be talking about price hikes by Pakatan Rakyat governments when their party at its recent annual general meeting passed a resolution to support the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Chris said that the GST, to be imposed in Malaysia in April next year, will affect many levels and unlike Singapore, a high-income society, it has not been tested before implementation.

"Let's debate and let's see who is right or wrong and let the people decide as we would have to provide facts to support our arguments.

"At the end of the day, it is the people who will decide whether we stay (in government)," said Chris, who is state DAP Socialist Youth (Dapsy) deputy chief, at a press conference today.

"Supporting the GST shows that MCA has been quiet all the time before and after the general election. It is hoping that people will forget about all this (as the BN will again provide sweeteners) before the next polls," he added.

Chris said it is now up to Lee to respond to him so both can decide on a date and venue so that the public can be invited to attend.

"Let's do this," quipped Chris, who was accompanied by Bukit Bendera Dapsy chief Mohd Hariszuan Jaharudin.

Chris was responding to Lee's statement yesterday urging Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng to "acknowledge" several price hike measures implemented by the Pakatan administration and urged the latter not to stir up "populist sentiments".

Lee said in the Pakatan-helmed state of Selangor, the Subang Jaya Municipal Council caused commercial licence fees to soar in excess of 400 percent.

He added that the Penang government also increased the land conversion fees

levied on developers while imposing a room levy on all hotels, and pumped up parking fees.

He stressed that the MPPP also recently proposed to increase the commercial building permit fees.

Lee also pointed out that the salaries of Selangor state lawmakers had been revised upwards significantly.

'Lee should get his facts right'

Hariszuan said Lee should get his facts right as Pakatan has always been consistent in its struggle to ensure the people's welfare.

"He needs to check his facts before criticising the Pakatan government. It seems the BN is out of creativity and ideas and are resorting to half-truths and even outright lies to carry on their agenda," he said.

He defended the 400 percent increase of licensing fees in Selangor, saying an appeals committee will be formed to look into individual cases.

"There is a big difference between taxing companies which is only once a year and taxing the rakyat with the GST 365 days a year. This is a crazy comparison," said Hariszuan

"I notice that MCA only makes noise when price hikes or in this case, tax hikes, hit businessmen but they remain quiet when the ordinary folk are affected," he added.

On the price increase of parking in Penang, the matter remains only a proposal and the purpose is to reduce congestion.

On the salary increase in Selangor and Penang, Hariszuan countered that "in politics we need to attract the best minds and talents to make our administration great".

"What is the point of paying low and the result is corruption and mismanagement like what our nation has turned into?"

Hariszuan also said Penang has taken steps to reduce inflation of property prices by preventing buyers who are out to make a quick profit that will affect the average citizen's affordability for a house in the long run.

Other efforts by Pakatan governments to help the people include free water and an equitable economic agenda, unlike Prime Minister Najib Razak's 10 percent entertainment allowance cut for ministers, he added.

"But Penang's efforts are constantly being undermined by the federal government, for example, in the area of transportation," said Hariszuan.

"If the BN is sincere about performances, decentralise the powers of the federal government and let the people decide who performs better," he added.

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