

## **11MP marginalises Pakatan states**

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**By Kow Gah Chie**

Opposition figures claim states held by Pakatan Rakyat have been left out of the 11th Malaysia Plan while BN-strongholds are the focus of development projects.

For instance, none of the six new hospitals announced were located in the states of Kelantan, Selangor and Penang, said Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin.

"The 11th Malaysia Plan should be a national economic blueprint, not a BN-stronghold blueprint," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

Similarly, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said his state was literally abandoned in 11MP.

"It's imbalanced. Penang has no allocation whatsoever... I also feel that the plan is not very dynamic, lacks innovation," he said.

Lim said that to be dynamic and innovative, the plan must do away with the traditional method of crony capitalism.

Similarly, Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang said the decision to exclude Penang as one of the "growth catalyst cities" had "defied logic".

"I also want to finish off DAP in Penang... But pls do it properly. Excluding Penang as growth catalyst cities under 11MP is going to backfire!" wrote Tan, who originates from Penang, on Twitter.

When asked to respond to these claims, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Wahid Omar said projects identified under the 11MP was needs-based and that there was no favouritism.

Wahid cited the Central Spine Road, which aims to link Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan, and expansion of the Pengkalan Chepa airport as examples of projects that will benefit PAS-ruled Kelantan.

### **Four 'major' cities**

Earlier today, Bukit Bendera MP Zairil Khir Johari said that the exclusion of Penang from the four cities to be developed under 11MP was a result of "petty politics".

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's 11MP speech had named four "major cities" - Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baharu, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu - as targeted to be developed as "growth catalyst cities".

"According to the 11MP, the four cities were chosen based on their 'potential in terms of population size, GDP contribution, existing major infrastructure, concentration of higher learning institutions and geographical advantage.'

"On each of these criteria, there is nothing that suggests why Penang should be sidelined," said Zairil.

"Based on all the above criteria as set out by the 11MP itself, Penang more than qualifies to be chosen as one of the top four cities to be included in the planned master plan for cities.

"Therefore, its exclusion is nothing less than a travesty that could only have been based on petty and narrow-minded politics," he said.

Three of the cities named in 11MP are in BN-ruled states, while the capital city is administered by the federal government.

### **'Major exclusion'**

Zairil said the "major exclusion" of Penang stood out because the northern city is "the most well-known and developed city after Kuala Lumpur, as well as the most liveable city in Malaysia".

"The exclusion of the city-state is also incongruent with the criteria used by the government itself," he said.

The MP argued that Penang has the second highest population distribution in the country and was a major GDP contributor the country, as recognised in the 11MP itself.

"In 2014, Penang's GDP was RM71 billion, which is the fifth highest after Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor and Sarawak.

"More importantly, Penang ranks third highest in terms of GDP per capita after Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak, with about RM46,019.

"This means that Penang is a key contributor to the Malaysian economy, as evidenced by its leading role in the manufacturing, healthcare and advanced services sectors."

Zairil pointed out the strategic northern location of the city-state made it a natural hub for the region in terms of logistics and "more focus into expanding and integrating the existing infrastructure in order to create a world-class urban conurbation".

Penang was formerly governed by BN component party Gerakan until a shock defeat in the 2008 general election to DAP ended its long rule over the northern state.

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