

Guan Eng sworn in as Penang CM
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Beh Lih Yi

Air Putih state assemblyperson and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng was sworn as Penang's fourth chief minister today. MCPX

Soon after the ceremony, which took place at the governor's residence at Seri Mutiara, Lim said his administration will do away with the New Economic Policy (NEP) in favour of non-racially-based policies.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 sworn in "We will run the government administration free from the NEP that breeds cronyism, corruption and systematic inefficiency," the newly-minted chief minister told a packed press conference.

"Instead, we strongly advocate a stakeholders' economy for all - irrespective of race and religions - and based on the principle of shared prosperity in an equitable manner," he said.

"We will implement an open tender system for all government procurement and contracts. We will also practise transparency by uploading information of such tender bids in an Internet portal to be set up in future for public access."

Also present at the press conference were a number of top party leaders including his father and DAP stalwart, Kit Siang.

Lim, in one of his first acts as chief minister, ordered top government servants to publicly declare their assets.

Those who will be required to make the assets declaration include the chief minister, state executive council members, speaker and deputy speaker as well as the respective heads of the Penang and Seberang Jaya municipal councils.

RM25b PGCC to be scrapped?

Among others plans that could raised eyebrows was the new state government's intention to review the controversial RM25 billion Penang Global City Centre (PGCC) project.

The PGCC project was undertaken by Equine Capital, a company controlled by Patrick Lim who enjoys close ties with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Locals oppose the project out of environmental concerns. The new chief minister said the project had aroused "much concern among the people in Penang".

Asked whether the project would be scrapped if it is found unsuitable, Lim replied: "Definitely it is one of the options but as I said, it is under review and (the findings) can go either way."

Lim stressed that he wants to foster a "harmonious relationship" with the federal government and is seeking a meeting with Abdullah, where he intends to express the views of the people which he received while on the hustings.

This include using national oil company Petronas' proceeds to fund the construction of the second Penang bridge project.

He stressed that the new state government is "a government of the people".

"We want the people of Penang to treat your government as your friend. And friends must work together and complement each other to make a dynamic Penang a reality," he said.

A government with little experience

The new chief minister was also asked whether he expects teething problem in his government as most of the elected representatives are fresh faces without much experience in government.

He cheekily rebutted: "We have no experience in corruption and abuses of power either." But he conceded that any new government would face problems.

When asked on the possibility of a merger between DAP and PKR, Lim said the parties' priority is to strengthen their working relationship in the coalition government.

Others plans for the state government include:

- * Attempt to restore local government elections. In the interim, the state government will review the current practice of picking political appointees as representatives in the municipal council. Professionals and representatives from NGOs will instead be appointed.

- * Adopt an investor-friendly policy and take active steps to attract local and foreign investments that create more high-paying jobs.

- * Review the incentive programmes to encourage the high-tech and manufacturing industries.

- * Introduce several strategic steps to culminate in a 'brain gain' effect.

- * Enact a Freedom of Information Act to allow full access to information that "does not harm public interest".

- * Government procurement through open tender and priority to be given to Penang-incorporated contractors.

- * Look into the possibility of cancelling the toll collection at the Sungai Nyior plaza that has triggered public complaints.

- * Waive all compounds and summons for offences involving parking and hawker licence

issued before March 11.

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