

Guan Eng: 'Crony capitalism', not welfare state, will bankrupt Malaysia
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 7 — Lim Guan Eng today countered Datuk Seri Najib Razak's criticism of Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) welfare state concept by telling the prime minister that it is the Barisan Nasional (BN) government's practice of "corruption and crony capitalism" that will bankrupt Malaysia.

In his Thaipusam message here today, the Penang chief minister insisted that the implementation of a welfare state was meant to empower the poor and the weak, instead of fattening the pockets of rich cronies.

"There is no reason for Najib to be opposed to a welfare state which will make nearly all Malaysians winners, especially the poor, unless he is concerned about the few capitalistic cronies who will be the real losers," Lim said.

The DAP secretary-general appeared to be responding to Najib's attack on the welfare state concept during a function yesterday when the prime minister claimed it would only lead to "very serious economic problems".

Najib, in pitting his administration against PR's "welfare state", boasted that it is the former that strives to provide a social safety net for Malaysians, to ensure wealth is fairly distributed.

"We are not a welfare state. All countries that practise a welfare state end up facing very serious economic problems," Najib said, in an apparent reference to PAS's "Negara Berkeadilan" concept.

"But we practise a social safety net and give priority to welfare. Then we can create a fair and just society that is balanced in sharing wealth," the BN chief added in his 15-minute speech during the function.

Disputing Najib's claim, Lim today pointed to the staggering flight of illicit monies from public coffers under the present BN administration's system.

Najib said yesterday that the implementation of a welfare state would lead to "very serious economic problems". — Picture by Choo Choy May
He highlighted the latest Global Financial Integrity Report on Malaysia, where it was revealed that a whopping RM1,077 billion of illicit capital had left Malaysia from 2000-2009.

Lim coined the 10-year period "a lost decade of corruption", adding that it was no wonder why Malaysia's ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index had plummeted recently to its worst-ever spot in history at No.60.

The Bagan MP, who is currently serving his first term as Penang chief minister, also castigated the BN administration for refusing to follow in his government's footsteps by implementing an open tender system for the awarding of contracts as well as compelling all

Cabinet ministers to declare their assets in public.

"The refusal of the BN federal government to follow the Penang state government's historical initiative of publicly disclosing the assets of the chief minister and EXCOS, does not lend confidence to BN's commitment to integrity in leadership and public accountability.

"BN has also failed to implement an open tender system resulting in crony capitalism," he said.

As examples, Lim cited reports on plans to build the RM7.07 billion West Coast highway for the longest concession period of 60 years and the government's refusal to abolish toll charges for the North-South Expressway and Penang Bridge.

"Rising inflation has made life more difficult for Malaysians and their children.

"These social programmes (under the welfare state) may cost billions of ringgit but not to the magnitude of the RM1,077 billion of illicit money taken out of the country," he said.

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