

Pakatan safer in Kelantan and Selangor, says Penang CM
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 — Lim Guan Eng has played down the strength of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in Penang, saying it is only the third safest state for the federal opposition to retain in an election that must be called by May next year.

The Penang chief minister told The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview the safest state for PR in its first federal polls as a formal coalition was Kelantan, which has been under PAS rule for 22 years.

"Then Selangor, then only Penang. (Tan Sri) Khalid (Ibrahim) is the smartest menteri besar or chief minister in the country and he is stronger than he appears.

"He makes sense in meetings and I think Selangor is stronger than it looks," he said, dismissing the suggestion that Penang was a "safe deposit" for PR as "appearances are deceiving."

Kedah is the fourth state controlled by PR and was recently rocked by a split in the state leadership of PAS, which heads the administration there.

The Bagan MP had come under fire from politicians and the public for suggesting last week that Barisan Nasional (BN) could "eat eggs (win zero seats)" in the state.

But he told The Malaysian Insider in a recent interview that "I did not say they will 'makan telur'."

"I said if we are vigilant and we work hard, and we get 90 per cent of the non-Malay support and 40 per cent of the Malay support, then they can 'makan telur'. But it's going to be hard," the DAP secretary-general said.

He said reports of his speech at a fundraising dinner had taken his statement out of context as he had also told supporters not to "take for granted we will win as there is no guarantee in politics."

"I'm giving a worst-case scenario and best-case scenario. Worst-case, we lose power. Best-case, we get that result (a clean sweep).

"But you think you'll either get the best or worst? You won't. It will be somewhere in the middle. But you must strive for the higher target," he explained.

Penang has been repeatedly lauded by the international press for its economic growth and Lim has also praised its residents for attracting the most manufacturing investment of any state in Malaysia for two consecutive years.

But he said that "Selangor also has the same achievements" and dismissed Umno's claim

that Kelantan voters are tired of the lack of development under PAS.

"They are more tired of corruption," he said, making specific reference to allegations that Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and her family had abused RM250 million in public funds meant for a national cattle farming scheme.

Despite the National Feedlot Centre (NFC) scandal that has stretched since October last year, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's approval rating surged by 10 percentage points to 69 per cent in a survey conducted last month.

But Lim said "I don't deny Najib's popularity but he cannot contest to be the MB of Kelantan, Kedah, Selangor or CM of Penang. He is contesting to be PM of Malaysia."

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