

Come home to a rules-based Penang, says CM
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MELBOURNE, March 27 — Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng returned home yesterday assured of the attractiveness of the state as a destination for investors, and of the mood for change among Malaysians in Melbourne.

Lim was in Melbourne from Friday leading a delegation to promote Penang as an investment and tourist destination, and on a drive to recruit talent among Malaysian professionals and business.

He inaugurated Penang Festival as a strategic partner of Fiesta Malaysia as officials of InvestPenang and its Career Assistance and Training (CAT) Centre updated students, professionals, and Australian and Malaysian business on developments and the thrust of industrial strategies in Penang.

"Business in Victoria were receptive to the prospects of linkages between them and industry in Penang," Lim summed up his three-day visit to The Malaysian Insider.

Among the indications to him was participation at a business briefing he presented, co-hosted by the Victorian Department of Business and Innovation and the Australia Malaysia Business Council (AMBC) Victoria.

Victoria Governor Alex Chernov hosted a dinner attended by government and industry leaders. Present were Victorian Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for Aviation Gordon Rich-Phillips, and head of Linfox logistics group Lindsay Fox.

At the AMBC briefing, Lim was reminded of the state of industry in Victoria, reliant on upscaling its manufacturing in the two-speed economy of Australia against states endowed with mineral resources.

Lim, a graduate of economics and accountancy from Melbourne's Monash University, sympathised with the needs of the Victorian economy, raising the prospects for complementarity between the two states.

Lim and Mohamad Rameez (right) at the AMBC briefing. Penang, as with Victoria, lacked natural resources. Both had to build on their human talent to be competitive to better internationalise in engaging globally. There were prospects to strengthen the value chain in the respective economies by building on global supply chain, without either having to relocate industry.

Victoria had strengths in research and development in high-level manufacturing sectors such as biotechnology, nanotechnology and solar energy that lent themselves to collaborative partnerships.

Lim cited the success of American industry Honeywell developing avionics in Penang for Boeing's Dreamliner aircraft.

Penang is the most active among Pakatan-ruled states to look outwards for investment. With six per cent of Malaysia's population, it accounts for 36 per cent of foreign direct investment.

Penang has been successful in winning investment from Singapore, and Lim is encouraged by response from Hong Kong, with the increasing number of daily direct flights between Hong Kong and Penang.

Lim speaking to Malaysians at the Chinese Association of Victoria. Lim said the aim was to transform Penang into an international and intelligent city. Just as Melbourne was the cultural and sporting capital of Australia, Penang was likewise in Malaysia.

Among those on the Governor's dinner guest list was Penny Hutchinson, director of Arts Victoria. On Lim's itinerary was an afternoon with Parks Victoria and the Royal Botanic Gardens of Melbourne, where he was given an overview of parks and garden management.

At each of his stops, Lim spoke about Penang's green credentials. He hoped to initiate exchanges with Parks Victoria that would help support the Penang Botanic Gardens and facilitate a greener and cleaner Penang.

Of his visits abroad, Lim, who is secretary-general of DAP, acknowledged the co-operation of federal agencies in their foreign postings such as those from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wisma Putra).

Turning to Consul-General in Melbourne Dr Mohamad Rameez Yahaya, who was with Lim at the AMBC briefing as well as at Fiesta Malaysia, he said: "When we are outside the country, we are all Malaysians."

At a meeting with more than 200 Malaysians on Sunday, Lim shared Pakatan's vision of rules-based governance, and allayed them of any concerns.

"It is time to stop racial and religious division," he said. "At heart, we are all Malaysians."

He detected a mood for change, he told The Malaysian Insider.

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