

**Pakatan better finance managers than BN, says Pua  
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 — All debt will be collected to benefit the public instead of bailing out “crony companies” should Pakatan Rakyat (PR) win Putrajaya, the DAP’s Tony Pua pledged today.

He also compared the pact’s latest win in recouping the RM392 million debt from Talam Corporation to Barisan Nasional’s (BN) recent closed-door settlement with Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli over Malaysia Airlines (MAS) losses as proof.

The DAP publicity chief has been crowing over PR’s success in recovering within its first term in power the multimillion ringgit debt owed to the state government by the property developer compared to the previous BN administration, which he said had allowed the company to pile up over the years.

“The new Pakatan Rakyat state led by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim has demonstrated that with political will, no company will be able to escape from paying its debts to the government,” Pua (picture) said in a statement.

The Petaling Jaya Utara MP said Selangor had more than doubled the state’s reserves to a whopping RM1.9 billion as at May this year compared to the RM733 million in 2008.

“This stands in stark contrast with the BN federal government which continues to fund itself with debt and deficit,” he said.

He said that as a result, the PR administration in Selangor could afford to spend “hundreds of millions more” on welfare and grants for the state’s residents, listing the RM130 million on subsidised water so each household could enjoy a certain amount of water free, cash aid for senior citizens and the RM300 million infrastructure grant from the Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI) as examples of money recovered and used for public benefit.

As the window for the 13th general election, which must be held by next April, narrows politicians from both PR and the ruling federal coalition have been raising the ante on winning over support by trumpeting the changes wrought through their economic, social and government policies.

Pua contrasted Selangor’s move to recover the Talam debt with the federal government’s decision last month to write off a staggering RM589.15 million owed it by former MAS chairman Tajudin during the latter’s tenure at the helm of the national carrier from 1994 to 2001.

Both MAS and Tajudin had settled out of court for an undisclosed sum their long-standing lawsuits and countersuits, with the 65-year-old businessman seeming to come out on top.

Tajudin was a poster boy of former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin’s now-discredited policy of nurturing a class of Malay corporate captains on government largesse during the Mahathir administration.

“As a result of such massive bailouts as well as write off of debts owed by crony companies, the federal government debt has increased by leaps and bounds from RM242 billion in 2007 to RM363 billion in 2009 and RM456 billion in 2011,” Pua said.

He added that the sum did not include the “unseen debts” Putrajaya had guaranteed, which he said totalled RM117 billion as at December last year.

“The above examples offer incontrovertible testimony that Pakatan Rakyat will be much better managers of the country’s finances compared to BN,” he said.

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