

Opposition's Populist Promises Ploy To Woo Young Voters, Says Analyst
Bernama
Aug 24, 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- The series of populist promises of the Pakatan opposition pact are poorly designed and merely aimed at gaining popularity among voters, without giving serious thought to the country's financial status, said a political analyst.

These promises are a political gimmick and a ploy to win over the votes of the younger generation struggling to build their lives by paying back education loans and considering buying a house and a car, said Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani.

The Dean of the School of International Studies of Universiti Utara Malaysia said this was definitely an election strategy as such promises are obviously attractive to lure the young to vote for Pakatan.

"Cheaper cars, abolition of toll, free education and a minimum wage of RM4,000 for every family will lessen their burden. This is one of the election promises of Pakatan. Although seen as an alternative to Barisan Nasional's policy, the only thing that worries many critics is the absence of a mechanism, formula or approach to implementing it.

"Pakatan, so far, has not provided enough information and a formula on how to implement the policy," he told Bernama when asked whether such promises may bankrupt the nation if Pakatan were to come to power.

To counter such promises, Dr Mohd Azizuddin said, the ruling government had to come out with an attractive agenda and a new policy.

"If not, the people will buy Pakatan's idea and vote for them because promises like scrapping PTPTN (National Higher Education Fund Corporation) and providing for cheaper cars and lower fuel prices are attractive agendas. Psychologically, Malaysians love something free and cheap," he explained.

Admitting that free education is not a fantasy and can be done, Dr Mohd Azizuddin, however, said that the country could possibly face a deficit as the government has to spend much money to provide the funds.

Therefore, Pakatan, if they come to power, will increase the tax on individuals and companies, like how Sweden and Norway have raised income tax on workers," he said.

If PTPTN is scrapped, the government will have to bear the loss of RM43 billion and abolishing duty for cars will reduce the country's tax revenue by RM4.6 billion a year, he added.

Dr Mohd Azizuddin said comprehensive studies were needed before implementing such policies as people still want more information, especially on the mechanism and formula, pertaining to the proposed policies.

"If they are practical, proceed to implement them. But if they are impractical, better not to so, and please do not promise the people something that cannot be achieved," he said.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and other leaders have expressed "serious doubts" over the opposition's election plans as their approach only shows that Pakatan is only interested in getting to office.

"We have a comprehensive, cohesive, credible and realistic programme and roadmap to get Malaysia to be a high-income nation. But all that we have in mind is predicated on a strong mandate from the people," the prime minister was quoted as saying.

Najib said Pakatan's promises of free education and a higher minimum wage "are far too far-fetched" and a stark difference to what the Barisan Nasional is offering.

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Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=689536>