

**Muhyiddin claims it was Pakatan that copied BN  
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By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 9 — Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) continued to engage in a war of words over the “authenticity” of their respective polls manifestos, with the former accusing the latter today of incorporating existing government policies into their election pledges.

BN deputy chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin argued that the opposition coalition lacked experience and in-depth knowledge to know that most of its proposed policies on welfare and plans to cut car prices have already been implemented.

“It’s actually the other way around. It was them that copied us,” Muhyiddin (picture) told reporters after an awards ceremony for SPM top scorers here.

He added that the allegation made by PKR yesterday that the ruling coalition’s 17-thrust manifesto was a “ciplak (bootleg)” of the opposition’s was baseless.

Citing PR’s popular cheap car prices idea, the Umno deputy president noted that BN was already aiming to reduce price tags on cars under the Asean Free Trade Agreement as well as other free-trade programmes.

“We were already doing it... the difference is that we would do it gradually whereas they want it now without taking into consideration its impact on the auto industry,” he said.

Muhyiddin cited another example where PR had pledged to build 150,000 affordable houses, a key issue for the upcoming polls. The BN number two argued that affordable housing had been a key government policy under his coalition’s rule.

“They only want to build 150,000 affordable houses while we had promised one million,” said Muhyiddin.

Yesterday PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli slammed BN’s manifesto as a bootleg version of PR’s pledges. He had also claimed that only 14 per cent of its rivals’ promises is original while 15 per cent was stolen from the federal opposition bloc.

The PKR leader added that 71 per cent of BN’s manifesto was about the coalition’s current programmes.

“Copying us, especially in major things like making cars cheaper, getting rid of toll, giving individual taxi permits, detailing the role of the government in creating homes for the people instead of leaving it to the private sector, building homes for estate workers, and giving fair aid to schools, shows that Barisan Nasional has finally accepted the fact that Manifesto Rakyat is good, workable, and that it fulfils the people’s wishes,” he said.

BN pledged to gradually reduce the prices of cars by 20 to 30 per cent, while PR has promised to cut excise duties on private vehicles by 20 per cent annually until the tax is abolished by 2018.

While both manifestos may appear to be almost identical, Muhyiddin argued that BN’s

pledges are based on a holistic approach and concrete data.

PR, on the other hand, merely announced populist measures that could push the country's high deficit to 11 per cent from the current four per cent.

"We have taken into account all factors and we have done our calculations if we are to implement our pledges for five years (one term) and they are based on realistic data and most importantly in the context of reducing our deficit," he said.

Muhyiddin claimed "experts" calculation on PR's promises which include continued subsidies on basic goods, free education and abolishing toll, would augment public debt.

Other BN leaders have used the same argument to counter PR's offers to voters but the federal opposition pact maintained that its "pro-people" policies can be financed by money saved from plugging "leakages" and weeding out corruption.

But while PR and BN are hawking their respective election manifestos as the gold standard, political pundits say both are scant on how to implement their solutions to the country's problems and lack a larger policy framework that unites their proposals.

Analysts The Malaysian Insider spoke to agreed that both coalitions are taking a populist, vote-buying approach in their manifestos, addressing issues they see as being important enough to swing the votes of the "kingmakers" in what has been tipped to be the closest election fight in the country's history.

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