

Pakatan to make Selangor voters shareholders of water concessions
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By Syed Jaymal Zahiid

SHAH ALAM, April 19 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has upped the ante in the Selangor race by vowing last night to make its citizens shareholders of the state's water industry as part of its Election 2013 manifesto.

The pledge was one of the 17 offered in the pact's Selangor manifesto which also included promises to provide cheap housing, better education and one that attracted a rousing response — RM500 cash aid for couples getting married for the first time.

Caretaker Menteri Besar and PR elections director for Selangor Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim (picture) said at the unveiling of the document themed "Continuing Excellence" here that the state's voters will be given real "ownership" of its water assets through shares.

"Once we are successful in restructuring the concessionaires of the water industry every Selangor citizen will have the opportunity to hold shares issued by the water company owned by the state.

"From there on, the Selangor people will be the real owners of water in this state," he said in his speech at the manifesto launch.

The proposal will be a follow up to Abdul Khalid's cheap water policy, a key component of his first-term administration.

Selangor is now locked in a legal battle with concessionaire Syabas over the right to keep water tariffs low. The state government had since offered to buy Syabas for more than RM9 billion but the concessionaire has so far refused to take up the offer, a delay Abdul Khalid claimed was aimed at sabotaging his government's popular cheap water programme.

PR's opponents Barisan Nasional (BN) has also promised to give free water as a part of its Selangor polls manifesto unveiled the previous day.

The coalition had also pledged to provide affordable housing, a key issue for young voters in a state where soaring property prices have made it hard for them to own homes.

Other notable offers made by PR are training programmes to create more employment, land ownership and development, better public transportation including an integrated terminal hub here, the Selangor capital, and improved security.

It also promised cash aid of RM1,000 to enrolling students whose parents earn less than RM3,000 a month.

Abdul Khalid said a PR government would also continue to protect freedom of information and accountability through its Selcat committee.

"Policies that characterise the Selangor people's government previously will be continued by PR to administer the Selangor state in the second term," he said ahead of the May 5 general election.

Nomination Day for the country's 222 federal and 505 state seats is on Saturday and

political parties have 15 days of campaigning to convince the 13.3 million eligible voters with their promises and pledges.

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