

## **Pakatan saved Penang from financial ruin in 2008, says Ramasamy**

**Free Malaysia Today**

**June 12, 2017**

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### **Ramasamy debunks Barisan Nasional's claims over the state's finances adding that it had the lowest debts compared with other states.**

GEORGE TOWN: Penang could have been in ruins if not for Pakatan taking over the state in 2008, Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy said in denying claims made recently by the state opposition.

Ramasamy, who is also the state executive councillor in charge of the economic planning unit, said claims by the state Barisan Nasional (BN) that Penang was knee deep in debt is wrong, as its finances were managed well.

He said Penang recorded the lowest debt levels over the years, and the DAP-led government had even saved Penang's largest municipality, Seberang Prai Municipal Council (MPSP), from near bankruptcy after taking over the state in March 2008.

MPSP recorded a surplus of RM14.57 million in 2009, after a year-on-year loss under the BN government from 2000 to 2007.

It was reported the council was in the red for nearly eight years, recording losses of RM5.06 million in 2000, RM39.04 million in 2003, and eventually rising up to a staggering RM57.08 million in 2005.

A total of RM230 million was lost for the period 2000 to 2007.

Ramasamy said the case in point for MPSP was just the "tip of the iceberg", as more state agencies had been in the red after decades of BN rule.

He said smaller agencies such as the Hindu Endowments Board had only RM3,000 in cash when it took over in 2008. Today, he said, the board has over RM800 million in cash and assets.

"Contrary to what was said by those doomsday prophets in the BN, Penang has been successfully managed by Pakatan for the past nine years.

"If Penang can be termed as a 'failed state' by those kleptocrats in the BN, then it would be elementary to term other states controlled by BN as 'ruined states'.

“When we took over, the state was over RM600 million in debt. Today, our debts are the lowest in the country at about RM60 million,” Ramasamy told FMT.

Ramasamy also gave an example of BN’s “good practices”, citing a plot of federal government land in Nibong Tebal which was sold to a private company at a loss of RM15.2 million.

Last April, the Penang government revealed that a 3.4 hectare land belonging to federal agency Perda valued at RM16.6 million was sold to a private company for RM1.42 million.

It was sold off after Perda had problems with the soil conditions on the site, among other things.

On Sunday, BN’s Strategic Communications Team painted a bleak future for Penang, as it claimed the government was spending too much and might pass on the extra expenditure to its people.

It put out an extensive list of wrongs done by the present Penang government and predicted that Penangites “will be hit with further increases in charges, fines, state taxes and water rates to help the state government cope”.

Ramasamy called BN claims “hogwash”, saying reports have proven that people from neighbouring states were migrating to Penang as the opportunities were better.

“Penang’s debts are the lowest in comparison with other states, more affordable homes are being built for those in the lower income categories.

“It has the highest number of cultural and heritage sites and today it is regarded as a popular state for tourist attractions,” he said.

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Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/06/12/pakatan-saved-penang-from-financial-ruin-in-2008-says-ramasamy/>