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Pas doesn't have the expertise to develop Kedah

NO VISION: Despite some good ideas, most of the state government's plans are half-baked

COME June 2014, some 100 families will be the proud owners of a low-cost house in Kampung Dulang Besar in Yan, Kedah.

Located some 70km away from Alor Star, the Rumah Sejahtera Rakyat is the latest effort by the Pas-led state government to provide affordable housing for the poor.

Built together with Yayasan Zainuddin, a foundation set up by former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, the units cost RM50,000 each.

Officiating the ground-breaking ceremony, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak was grateful to the foundation and many relevant authorities for helping to provide affordable housing for the people.

The housing project should be a success considering Daim, the financial wizard who had successfully brought Malaysia out of the economic doldrums in the mid-1980s when he was the country's finance minister, would be expected to keep close tabs on its progress.

However, little could be said about the "report card" of the Pakatan Rakyat state government's in handling economic issues.

Critics of the Pas-led state government have decried the latest socio-economic project as just window-dressing, considering the general election is just around the corner.

And they have good reasons to be sceptical.

Take the latest two mammoth projects announced by Azizan in the past few weeks.

One is the Ladang Rakyat (people's estate) rubber plantation being developed near Gunung Inas in Kulim and the other, the proposed fruit plantation near the Pedu dam.

Both projects drew sharp criticisms against Azizan's administration and more importantly, they are from residents staying in the two areas.

Although mere kampung folk, thousands of people living near Pedu know the possible consequences when man offends Mother Nature.

Clearing some 400ha of forest reserve will have a devastating impact on the man-made dam, meant to irrigate the 96,000ha of padi fields in Kedah and Perlis.

As for the estate near Gunung Inas, concerns of flashfloods and river pollution were raised.

"It's just typical of the Pakatan Rakyat state government which wanted to do big things but don't have the expertise to do so.

Their programmes are either half-baked or become riddled with controversies," said Tan Keng Liang, the Kedah Gerakan Youth chief.

He said while Azizan could be credited for re-developing the abandoned Plaza Tunku Yaacob in Alor Star, the menteri besar had bull-



ON THE FRONTLINE

Noor Adzman Baharuddin
NST
Kedah/Perlis
bureau chief



Kedah Umno Youth chief Badrul Hisham Hashim with a sample of river water from an area near Pedu where logging is rampant

dozed the re-development project and ignored pleas for compensation from the complex's buyers.

The state government had also drawn the ire of a nearby madrasah committee when it planned to demolish the madrasah for the RM500 million Aman Sentral shopping-cum-residential complex.

Tan commended the state government for building a new campus for the state-owned Kolej Universiti Insaniah in Kuala Ketil.

"It is near completion, but the authorities are faced with the daunting task of paying the salaries of its staff, workers and some contractors."

Universiti Utara Malaysia's senior lecturer in political and international studies Md Shukri Shuib has likened the act of indiscriminate land clearing for timber by the Pakatan Rakyat state government to finance its projects to one who only knew how to withdraw money from the automated teller machines.

He said the timber trees are like cash to the state administrators, but they don't know how to use the CDMs (cash deposit machines) to replenish the state coffers.

"There is simply no long-term planning. They have some good ideas but lack know-how and have no vision," he said.

Despite the bevy of criticisms, Azizan remains unperturbed.

"There are so many things we want to do, but we have little time and if we are given another five years, we can do it all," he said when asked to comment.