

## **Storm breaks out over demolition of Malay houses**

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**by Susan Loone**

A minor storm blew up in the Penang state legislative assembly today when Umno and Pakatan Rakyat assemblypersons slugged it out over who demolished the house of a Malay resident in Pantai Jerejak.

While Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng insisted that it was an Umno contractor who demolished a squatter house in the area to pave the way for a housing project, the Opposition vehemently denied that this was so.

Lim said investigations into the matter showed that the developer that carried out the demolition was Umno-linked Koperasi Tunas Muda, whose chairman is former Umno Batu Maung assemblyperson Mansor Musa.

"It is obvious here that it is not the Pakatan Rakyat government that demolished the houses," Lim said when winding up the state's 2012 Budget debate at the state legislative assembly.

"I say confidently that the state government has never demolished any house without providing proper compensation," he added.

Lim was responding to a question from Pulau Jerejak assemblyperson Sim Tze Tzin, who said an Umno-linked developer had demolished the house in his constituency.

'Developer not Umno-linked'

Bayan Lepas assemblyperson Syed Ameeruddin Syed Ahmad in his response said although the Koperasi Tunas Muda chairperson is an Umno man, the board comprises members from other parties as well, such as PKR.

Syed Ameeruddin said when the court ordered the eviction of the residents and the bailiff arrived at the site, there was nothing that could be done to stop the demolition.

"Attempts to stop the eviction by should have been made earlier by the assemblyperson of the area," he said, referring to Sim, who is also PKR Bayan Baru chief.

NONETeluk Bahang assemblyperson Hilmi Yahya (left) said Umno did not blame the DAP when villages were demolished by developers who were DAP members.

"We never stooped so low to blame DAP when the Seberang Jaya Municipal Council demolished hawkers stalls in Taman Pelangi," Hilmi said.

"Please show some humility. It is like DAP can do no wrong... this is not right at all."

Dato Keramat assemblyperson Jagdeep Singh Deo refuted the claim that nothing could be done when the bailiff arrived to evict the residents.

"The assemblyperson has the right to ask the bailiff to hold back the demolition," he said, adding that the bailiff acts on the order obtained by the developer, who may not want to hold back the exercise.

Deputy Chief Minister I Mansor Othman then said he had made efforts to intervene in several evictions, for example, in Teluk Kumbar and Balik Pulau, where the developers were willing to negotiate.

"Do you think we did not call Koperasi Tunas Muda developer to discuss it? The company did not want to (discuss the demolition) ," Mansor said.

"The house that was demolished without compensation belong to a PKR member, those who were Umno members got compensation," he said.

Developer has no sympathy

Lim said he was often accused of being anti-Islam by Umno, and anti-non-Muslims by Gerakan for increasing allocations for Muslim affairs programmes.

However, it was clear from this episode that those who marginalised the Malays were "none other than Umno".

The Umno-linked developer, Lim said, not only lacked sympathy but displayed arrogance in its attitude towards poverty.

"We feel the developer's act was not appropriate, especially when the company is chaired by an Umno person.

"Moreover, the house was occupied by a 70-year-old senior citizen with his wife and daughter, who is also a single mother," he said.

Lim added that the state government would help the family by asking the Penang Municipal Council not to approve any application for development until the family was provided with proper compensation.

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