

Guan Eng laments being victim of false information

Malaysiakini.com

November 16 ,2011

by Susan Loone

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today lamented that he was a 'victim of false information' by the media when announcing a major traffic alleviation project in the state worth RM8.5 billion on Monday.

Lim, who is DAP national secretary-general, said that when he made the announcement in Kuala Lumpur, it was wrongly reported in the media that the project, dubbed the 'Third Penang Link', would involve a land swap deal in Gurney Drive.

The third link involves an underground tunnel from Gurney Drive to Bagan Ajam on the mainland, and when completed, would be the fourth connection between the island and the mainland after the ferry services, the 13.5km Penang Bridge and the Second Penang Bridge which is expected to be completed in 2013.

However, Lim denied proposing a new project, or approving any reclamation exercise related to the plan to ease massive traffic congestion plaguing Penang in the last few years.

"I am a victim of false information. I never approved any reclamation exercise. This is not a new project, but one that has been approved under the previous government," he told reporters in Penang today.

"We have to comply by the agreement which has been signed earlier or we will get sued... we would have been sued many times already... how much money do we have to pay them?" he queried.

'Shocking media reports'

The project, which appears to be the state's largest infrastructure exercise to resolve the island's severe traffic congestion problem, involves the construction of three by-pass highways and a sea tunnel linking the island to the mainland.

He added that developers could also propose to implement toll payments to recover costs.

Lim said he was shocked to read media reports saying that the swap deal involved prime land along the tourist belt of Gurney Drive.

He clarified that the land is off Tanjung Pinang, near Gurney Drive, and reporters who attended the press conference that day did not know the exact location of the place.

"Some reporters who attended the media event had not even come to Penang before. (When they asked where was the prime land), I pointed out to them that it was near Gurney Drive... they know where that area is," he said.

He explained that the projects would involve toll charges, although the state government would have preferred not to make the charges.

'Newspapers that never speak the truth'

"Frankly, we do not want to charge toll, but don't you think the federal government will jump? We want to show that we are not out to kill the federal government or the two Penang bridges," he said.

Lim told those who were "jumping up and down" after hearing his announcement in the media that he had proposed nothing new.

He added that he was referring to "some newspapers, especially those which never speak the truth, go off

tangent” when reporting the issue.

“If they are not happy about the land swap deal when it was announced previously, why didn’t they object? Is it because it was suggested by their own party?” he asked.

Lim advised the public not to be misled by the reports which made him appear as if he was announcing a brand new project and land swap deal.

“The reclamation project is the same as the one approved by the previous government. We have no choice but to comply (with the agreement) or else (we will be) sued till our last sen,” he reiterated.

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