

Guan Eng: Land scam hits Penangites for millions

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Susan Loone

The Pakatan Rakyat led state government is not about to take the blame for the infamous Tan Hak Ju land deal which has cost Penangites millions.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said Penangites are still waiting for the Barisan Nasional to apologise for the millions already paid to the businessman involved in the Seberang Perai land deal.

lim guan eng press conference on bicycle lane 251111 1In 2005, during the BN's administration, Tan sued the state for RM40 million for taking back the approval for the quarrying land which he had purchased in 2002 as the ownership had been in the possession of two organisations since 1969.

In 2007 the Penang High Court had ordered the state government to pay a RM29.4 million compensation to Tan for not properly processing his application for the plots.

A recent court of appeal decision on Jan 10 had cut that sum to that RM500,000 but Lim contended that the state has already forked out RM14.7 million to the businessman in 2008.

He added that there was no guarantee that the state government would recover this amount of money as Tan was had appealed that decision to the federal court.

"RM14.7 million is still the people's money, and we have paid out this amount to Tan," Lim, the DAP secretary-general told Malaysiakini.

"The previous BN administration has yet to apologise for the losses but has instead launched an attack demanding the present state government's apology for labelling the case a scandal," he added. 'We did not steal RM40 million'

RNONEcently, BN working committee chairperson Dr Teng Hock Nan (right) said that Lim and his state officials must apologise for describing the land deal as a scam when it was clearly not so.

Teng, a former Penang executive councillor, had also asked the state to withdraw a white paper it presented at the state legislative assembly in April last year which pointed out the BN's involvement in the deal.

"They made it look as if we stole the RM40 million," lamented Teng.

According to the White Paper, Tan's application for the 4.2ha land was initially approved by the state, without the necessary nod from five related government departments, then cancelled upon discovering that land belonged to two other organisations.

The document also accused Teng of not properly cooperating with the state when it launched a probe into the matter in 2008, which the former has vehemently denied.

It was reported that the state could have been spared the legal suit if it had compensated Tan with RM1.8 million when it withdrew the approval of the land.

But Teng had reasoned that the then state government could not do so as Tan did not produce the relevant documents.

Meanwhile, Lim continues to hold the previous BN administration responsible and accountable for the

"scandal".

Lim said a "scandal is a scandal", and has refused to retract the label, nor grant the BN an apology for using the term .

Instead, he queried if Teng was planning to apologise soon for making Penang poorer by RM14.7 million.

"Is Teng going to pay for this? When will he apologise for this losses?" Lim asked.

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