

Teng denies slandering Penang CM
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Penang BN working committee chairperson Dr Teng Hock Nan is furious over allegations that he had disparaged Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng in a remark he claimed he did not make.

Teng was reportedly said that Lim had compensated a businessman with RM14.7 million to further his "own personal interest".

Teng, who is also state Gerakan chief, said he was unaware of how Lim had obtained the statement as none of the newspapers had reported the matter.

Lim, irked by the remark which he described as a "serious slander", has threatened Teng with a legal suit unless he apologises and retracts the alleged claim.

It is learnt that the remark was published in Utusan Malaysia on Feb 7.

"I do not remember ever making that statement. It is mere heresay and another classical example of Lim trying to divert attention from the case," Teng told a press conference yesterday.

"All we want is for him (Lim) to withdraw and apologise for using the 'scam' word which he used to describe the case... Instead of taking it positively, he creates something out of nothing," he added.

Error by government official

In 2008, the Penang High Court ruled that the state should compensate businessman Tan Hak Ju for withdrawing the approval for his application for a plot of land in Seberang Perai.

Tan then sued the state for RM40 million as the approval was withdrawn due to the land being already owned by two Hokkien associations.

The case happened before Pakatan Rakyat took over the state administration, and the new government had alleged that the case was a "scandal" by BN, which the coalition had strongly denied.

BN conceded it was a mistake committed by a government officer handling the matter, and the individual had since been reprimanded for his error and transferred to another department.

Recently, the Court of Appeal ruled that the state has to compensate Tan with RM500,000, but the latter is appealing the decision.

Lim turning into an 'absolute authoritarian'

Teng said this may be the first time a government administration - either federal or state - is initiating a civil suit against "an individual who speaks against the authority".

He categorically denied issuing the statement, urging Lim as chief executive officer of the state to verify the information before accusing him for making it.

Teng opined that Lim is using the alleged statement as an opportunity to attack BN.

He added that Lim was currently using his position to silence dissenting voices and building himself into "an absolute authoritarian, who is untouchable".

"But we will not be intimidated by this and will continue to expose whatever weaknesses we find in the state government and we will do it professionally.

"If he is a gentleman, he should apologise for wrongly accusing me," added Teng.

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