

**Guan Eng justifies hiring Singapore consultants**  
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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today explained that Singaporean consultants were appointed for the state's affordable housing project to ensure its quality and delivery.

For these reasons, Lim said the state government has decided to appoint the best instead of "merely imitating the best".

The consultants - Surbana International Consultants, the privatised arm of Singapore's Housing and Development Board - is widely acknowledged as providing the best affordable housing in Asia if not the world, he added.

The company, which has an office in Kuala Lumpur, was chosen for its expertise in the design, planning, implementation and management and it is not involved in building or construction, he stressed.

Lim (left) said the open tender for building and construction will be held separately probably at the end of this year.

"The state government regrets the actions by Umno to racialise the issue by asking why local Malaysians cannot do the job but instead we have to go to Singapore," Lim said at a press conference.

"Pandering to anti-Singapore sentiments is not only a racial provocation but also double-standards when it is okay for Singapore to come to Iskandar, Johor, but not to Penang," he added.

Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman, penang umno chiefHe was referring to criticisms from Barisan Nasional leaders that Malaysians had been insulted as the state had chosen to appoint Singaporean consultants for the job.

State Umno liason committee chief Zainal Abidin Osman (right) has urged Lim to reconsider engaging the consultants, saying that Penang is not short of local expertise.

He expressed doubt that the foreign firm could understand the feelings of the local community on how best to build the units, saying mainlanders are not mentally prepared to live in high-rise buildings like Singapore.

'Umno's extreme tactics'

Lim said such extremist tactics by Umno will not work here because Penangites support the Pakatan Rakyat government's "sincere efforts" to provide the best affordable housing for the poor.

He added that the time has come for the poor not to live in a box but with dignity.

"Every Penangite should live in a home and not in a box. Every Penangite, including the poor, deserves their dream home. And the state government intends to allow them to share this dream," he stressed.

Lim then produced a letter of support which he received yesterday from renowned architect Raja Kamarul Bahrin Ahmad Shah, saying that quality and delivery matters in affordable housing.

He said he was happy to obtain the support of one of Malaysia's foremost architects.

He added that in the letter, Raja Kamarul endorsed Penang's decision to appoint HDB Singapore as the

consultant because they have the track record of the best builder of quality affordable housing.

RM500 million derived as profits from the sale of the Bayan Mutiara land is being used for the affordable housing project on the mainland and the island.

The first project in Batu Kawan, launched recently, comprises 12,000 units over 200 acres built over 10 years.

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