

Penang Pakatan, Umno wings face off over land deal
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The Youth wings of Penang Umno and Pakatan Rakyat faced off today, with each group demanding that the other's leaders should quit politics over the Bayan Mutiara land sale.

It was peaceful and lasted only 10 minutes, but focused attention once again on whether or not the 103-acre plot of prime land had been sold via open tender.

At 10.30am, Pakatan representatives gathered in front of the Penang Umno building in Jalan Macalister to hand in a memorandum.

This demanded the resignation of state Umno liaison committee chief Zainal Abidin Osman and Kota Belud MP Abdul Rahman Dahlan, who had been pressuring Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng to come clean on details of the deal.

The groups eyeballed one another for 10 minutes without incident, before exchanging memorandum telling the leaders of the other side to quit politics.

Seberang Perai municipal councillor David Teoh and state PKR Youth chief Amir Ghazali (left), accompanied by 10 others, insisted that the Umno duo had failed to prove their claim that the land was sold via a negotiated tender.

Amir, who is also PKR Permatang Pauh Youth chief, said Zainal should keep his word and resign from all posts, following Lim's revelation yesterday that the purchaser selected by open tender had offered the best price for the property.

He claimed that Malays in Pakatan Rakyat are upset by the conduct of the two Umno leaders and their attacks on Lim.

"We are really unhappy with the way the two leaders play politics and (with their) politics of slander against the chief minister," he added.

Still unconvinced

Penang Umno Youth head Shaik Hussein Mydin, who had earlier weighed into the dispute, said he is not convinced by Lim's clarification.

He, too, produced a letter, which he handed over to the Pakatan representatives, calling for Lim's resignation on the basis that Umno has proven that the land was not sold via open tender. He was accompanied by 20 of his colleagues.

Shaik Hussein said since there had been negotiations between the developer and Lim about the payment period, the deal cannot be considered to have been inked via an open tender.

"Why should Zainal Abidin resign, it was Lim who started it first by saying he would retire from politics. He is trying to divert attention as there are elements related to breach of trust.

"The valuation for the price of the land was done in 2009. Such valuation is only valid for six months. The tender closed on Dec 31, 2010 and the contract was signed in November last year. How can he say this is the best price when it was evaluated two years ago?"

Shaik Hussein (right) reiterated his call to Lim to appoint an independent body like Transparency

International to decide, once and for all, the nature of the sale by the state-owned Penang Development Corporation.

"It's no use arguing through the media," said Shaik Hussein, who then challenged Lim to a debate on the issue at the Penang Speakers Square.

"But if the CM does not want to, we can debate with (his) political secretary Ng Wei Aik or Zairil Khir Johari."

Shaik Hussein reminded Lim that he had sent 23 questions to prove that the sale was conducted via negotiations, to which the chief minister has yet to reply.

Lim has consistently maintained that the land, located south of Penang bridge, had been sold at RM1.02 billion via open tender at RM240 per square foot.

This has been confirmed by the developer who won the bid, Ivory Properties Group Bhd, which also said that Lim had later asked for the period of payment to be reduced from eight to five years.

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