

## **Guan Eng breaks silence on alleged sale of mosque land**

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**By Susan Loone**

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has broken his silence over the purported sale of a plot of land reserved for a mosque in Bayan Mutiara, following strong opposition from Umno.

Lim said when the 41.6 hectare of land was sold by open tender, there was no sub-division of title but the entire piece had been sold.

The prime land, located at the south of Penang bridge in the Free Trade Zone, was sold by Penang Development Centre to Ivory Properties Group Berhad, for RM1.2 billion.

He added that the developer will only do sub-division of the title after submission of new plans to the Penang Municipal Council for approval.

“The new plans and sub-division of title have not even been submitted, how can Umno claim that the mosque or school land has been sold or disappeared?” he queried in a statement today.

“Umno must remember that there are standard requirements for schools and places of religious places of worship including surau or mosques that are compulsory by local government or must be included in any development project,” he added.

‘People-centric government’

Lim said that Umno can only claim that the mosque or school land has been sold or disappeared if the new plans does not include these places.

He added that as a “people-centric government”, Pakatan Rakyat has consistently held to its fundamental principles of not allowing land for schools or places of worship to disappear.

He stressed that by consistently telling lies and even stoking racial and religious tension, Umno is creating racial and religious hatred against the chief minister and state government.

“Creating hatred against a non-Malay and non-Muslim based on lies shows that 1Malaysia is an empty slogan designed to deceive the people to vote in the coming general elections for race-based extremist parties in BN,” said Lim.

Yesterday, Lim threatened to sue Penang Umno Youth chief Shaik Hussein Mydin and the party-owned Malay language daily Utusan Malaysia, for playing with religious sentiments and slandering the state government.

In the report titled ‘Guan Eng biadab tergamak jual tapak masjid’, Utusan quoted Shaik Hussein accusing Lim of “arrogance and rudeness” for selling the plot of land planned for a mosque which has been approved in the Bayan Mutiara original development plan in 2006.

Lim explained that he decided to take the two entities to court so that he could “expose the truth” of the land deal, where he said his previous clarification was never published in the mainstream media.

‘No religious issues under BN’

In an immediate response, Shaik Hussein said he had never raised religious issues until Lim became chief minister, following Pakatan’s victory in Penang in 2008.

Shaik Hussein said Lim is not aware of how “kamching” (friendly) Penangites were with each other regardless of race or religion.

He warned Lim not to “create friction” between Penangites of different races, as the latter were even closer to one another than people in Malacca, where the latter had served as assemblyperson in the past.

He said that as a Muslim, it was his right and duty to ask questions about what happened to the plot of land which was supposed to be reserved for the mosque.

“During Gerakan president Koh Tsu Koon’s tenure as chief minister prior to 2008, we never had such problems, we Penang people are very kamching,” he told reporters in George Town today.

Shaik Hussein has vowed to face Lim in a court battle, and said he would counter-sue the chief minister the day he received a legal notice from the latter.

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