

## **Tale of two rallies at Penang's Komtar**

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**By Susan Loone**

Komtar, the administrative hub of the Penang government, saw a flurry of activities today, with two groups holding rallies - one in support of the Hindu Endowment Board and the other against Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng..

The anti-CM rally was in protest of Lim for allegedly selling off a plot of land reserved for a mosque in Bayan Mutiara.

At 2pm, a group of 32 NGOs proclaiming their support for the state government and deputy chief minister II P Ramasamy (right) staged a short rally on the ground floor, before handing over a memorandum to Lim, which was received by his special assistant Maziah Mokhtar.

This group, led by S Rajan from the Weld Quay Welfare Guidance and Awareness Computer Club, carried banners condemning DAP assemblypersons RSN Rayer (Seri Delima) and A Thanasekhran (Bagan Dalam) for intervening in the Penang Hindu Endowment Board.

Some of their banners read 'Rayer and Tana musuh dalam selimut (hidden enemies), Traitors to the Indian community' and 'We demand outsiders to stay away from PHEB'.

Rajan said the group has collected about 500 signatures from Penang residents who want the two politicians to keep their hands off the board, which is run by Hindu devotees and is under the purview of the state government, while the appointment of board commissioners is approved by the state governor.

"Many of our students have benefitted from the various educational programmes for the Indian community, that is why we want it to continue as it is now," he told reporters.

During the 20-minute rally, the 50-odd protesters pledged their allegiance to Lim and the Pakatan Rakyat government.

They also praised the endowment board for having implemented projects like scholarship funds which benefitted poor Indian students.

The group was responding to DAP national chairperson Karpal Singh who wanted Ramasamy's four political appointees to be dropped from the board.

The two top DAP leaders had met head-on after Ramasamy told the press that the party should not have 'godfathers'. He responded to Karpal's comment that the DAP should not allow 'warlords' to announce the candidates for general election, ahead of the central committee's decision.

Rayer and Tanasekran were involved in lodging complaints against Ramasamy, who they claimed organised a rally against them during the party's state convention recently. Ramasamy has been cleared by the disciplinary committee of such wrongdoing.

**Allegation of selling mosque land**

Meanwhile, at 3pm, on the 3rd floor of Komtar leading directly to the state administration counters, a group of 30 gathered demanding to see Lim over his purported sale of the mosque land, which he had denied.

NONEThis group led by Penang Perkasa Youth chief Risuan Azuddin (holding loud hailer) handed over a

letter to Maziah, giving the CM seven days to answer to the allegations, which had been highlighted by state Umno Youth chief Shaik Hussein Mydin.

Lim is suing Shaik Hussein and Umno-owned Malay language daily Utusan Malaysia, who quoted the latter in an article alleging the CM was “arrogant and rude” for selling the plot of land.

Risuan said he does not mind if Lim continues to implement development projects around Penang with his “cronies”, but warned him not to touch mosque land or hurt the sensitivities of the Muslim community.

“This land should be reserved for a mosque, a place of worship, and should not be sold to any developer. Don’t start arguments between the different communities,” he told reporters after a 15-minute rally that started after Friday prayers.

“We want him to answer the allegations. We will find him no matter where he is to hear his explanation,” he added.

The police had earlier allowed the rally to be held.

Yesterday, Lim clarified that 102.3 acres of Bayan Mutiara land was sold by open tender, and that there was no sub-division of title. The entire plot was sold by Penang Development Corporation to Ivory Properties Group Bhd.

He said the local government has standard requirements for schools and places of worship to be part of any new development project, urging Umno to wait for the new plan to be publicised before accusing the state of marginalising Muslims.

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