

Don't incite religious sentiments, Lim warns Umno

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By Susan Loone

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has issued a stern warning to Umno not to whip up religious sentiments over the dead body of a Muslim convert who was nearly buried according to Buddhist rites.

He said Umno appears like a moderate party with its 1Malaysia concept promoted by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, however, it's approach to racial and religious issues has not changed.

"I want to warn Umno not to play with religious sentiments. The body of the convert has been handed over to the Muslim religious bodies," Lim (left) told a press conference today.

"The problem has been resolved amicably between the Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAIPP) and the family concerned. Both are happy with one another," he added.

The deceased, Khoo Boo Soo, 55, from Air Itam, who converted to Islam without his family's knowledge, was finally buried according to Muslim rites last Friday.

But on Saturday, state Umno liason chief Zainal Abidin Osman said the misunderstanding showed that the DAP-led government has not been effective in managing MAIPP.

Zainal said the misunderstanding could have been avoided if the MAIPP chairperson - state executive councillor Abdul Malik Abul Kassim - had been able to handle the matter positively.

He criticised the state administration for delaying the burial for several days as Muslims should be buried within a day.

"This is not only a religious issue but touches on the sensitivities," Zainal was quoted by the Malay daily Utusan Malaysia yesterday.

'Don't play with religious sentiments'

Meanwhile, Lim, also the DAP secretary-general, alleged that Malay rights pressure group Perkasa and "some extremist groups" supported by Umno were at the Chinese funeral parlor to snatch the body.

"They wanted to take the body just like that. Imagine if it had happened. The man was converted in Indonesia, not in Malaysia, so there was a need to ascertain the matter," he said.

"No one can just snatch a body like that. This is a stern warning to Umno not to play with racial and religious sentiments."

Lim also lamented that Umno continued to accuse the DAP of interfering with the religious issues of the Muslims.

He queried Zainal's (right) motive in raising the issue when Khoo's remains was handed over to MAIPP after it was proven that he converted to Islam.

Funerals are sad times and one must understand the emotions of the family, Lim said.

"We never interfered in Muslim affairs. We let the facts and rule of law to proceed as normal.

"Zainal wants to win elections, he wants to win votes, but please don't use racial religious sentiments against the non-Malays and non-Muslims," urged Lim.

"This just goes to show that Umno is anti non-Malays and non-Muslims and have no respect for family feelings when they have just lost a loved one," he added.

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