

Penang CM lashes out at daily for 'rewriting history'
MalaysiaKini.com
July 1, 2012

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has lashed out at MCA-owned newspaper The Star for what he claims as a "dishonest attempt to rewrite history" by blaming the Pakatan Rakyat-led state government for Penang's hillslope development woes while ignoring that they were approved by the previous BN administration.

"In its enthusiasm to lynch the Penang PR state government, The Star has ignored the fact that Pakatan-led Penang government did not approve any development projects above 250 feet.

"At the same time, the MCA-owned paper makes the startling claim that there are Pakatan or DAP assemblymen who agree with The Star that the hills in Penang are dying under Pakatan's stewardship. Nothing can be further from the truth," he said in a statement today.

In contrast, Lim said the state had imposed stringent guidelines - developed by an independent professional committee led by Oxford geotechnical engineer Gue See Saw - for the hill slope projects approved by the previous state government.

"Whilst these new hill slope guidelines have caused unhappiness amongst developers about the legality of implementing these technical guidelines retrospectively, the state government is determined to compel compliance.

"And yet The Star and its BN accomplices continues to tag on the Penang Pakatan-led government as pro-developer and even claim that there is a gag order imposed by the state government and MPPP on those who wish to speak out on hill projects," he said.

Lim refuted the alleged gag order, adding that what existing was a mere reminder not to discuss cases that were being heard in court as they could be sub judice.

He added that there was no need to respond to "partisan figures" quoted by the daily, but addressed resident George Aeria who claimed to have supported Pakatan in the last general election and was quoted by the newspaper.

Bankruptcy possible

Responding to Aeria who wanted all hill slope projects approved by BN to be cancelled, Lim said the move was not feasible as it would require huge compensation to be paid out to developers, a sum which the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) and state government cannot afford.

"As an estimate to the possible compensatory costs involved, Boustead Holdings Bhd is making a claim of RM60 million from MPPP following a reduction of the height of its building from 12 storeys to five storeys in the George Town Heritage area to comply with the 18 metre height requirement of Unesco World Heritage City Guidelines.

"Again the 12 storey height limit was approved to Boustead by the previous state government, which broke its promise to Unesco that no such approval five storeys would be given.

Based on the Boustead experience, if reducing the height by a mere 12 storeys to five can

attract a claim of RM60 million, the state or MPPP would have to fork out hundreds of millions of ringgit or even billions to cancel all the hill projects approved by the previous administration," he said.

This, he said, would bankrupt MPPP or the state government at the expense of 1.6 million Penangites.

Instead, Lim added that Pakatan has opted to manage the hill projects approved by the previous BN government with stringent hill slope safety guidelines.

"We know this decision will not make existing hill slope residents like George Aeria happy. For that reason, we would respect his choice should he decide to switch back his support to BN and trust the very party that has caused the problems in the first place.

"George Aeria will have to think through carefully whether BN can be trusted not to approve new hill projects above 250 feet or be able to cancel existing projects BN had approved prior to 2008," he said.

The only guarantee the Pakatan-led state government can do now, Lim said, was to ensure no more such projects are approved and to continue enforcing its stringent guidelines.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/202427>