

Penang BN 'suspects' CM involved in land scandal

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By Susan Loone

The Penang BN wants to know whether the sale of a plot of land in Taman Manggis - which it claims should be for public housing - was made to an individual with "connections" to Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

At a press conference today, state BN Youth information chief H'ng Khoon Leng displayed a list of shareholders in two companies, a medical specialist centre and a dental group, to drive his point.

Based on the information he had, H'ng claimed, a certain 'datuk', who has also been made a Justice of the Peace by Sabah and who is now living in Kuala Lumpur, is involved in both companies.

H'ng questioned whether this person's business network in Penang has 'connections' with the chief minister, and whether it was Lim who had suggested that the land be sold to establish a private medical centre.

"We suspect that Lim has some personal interest in this land sale as he sits on the tender board. So we hope he can clarify the matter to the general public," H'ng said in Penang today.

"We would like to know whether the CM knows the owner of the Kuala Lumpur International Dental Centre before the latter won the bid for the tender. If the answer is yes, we would like to know, since when?" asked H'ng, who is state Gerakan deputy Youth chief.

More exposes in store

Asked to elaborate on what he knew about the relationship between Lim and the 'datuk' that he was insinuating, H'ng said: "Let him (Lim) explain and answer our questions first. If he refuses to answer, then we will reveal more details about the relationship."

H'ng also revealed that the KL dental company offered to buy the land at RM232 per square foot, but according to the survey done by his team, the price for the plot was already RM400psf in 2006.

On the status of the land title, he said a lawyer from the BN wrote to the state land office last week asking for clarification, but was yet to receive a response.

The state government has said it was not able to build affordable homes on a 0.44-hectare site in Taman Manggis, off Jalan Zainal Abidin, as it could only accommodate 140 units.

State executive councillor on housing Wong Hon Wai said no application had been submitted to the Penang Municipal Council between 2001-2008 for public housing at the site - other than that

Wong said this in response to state BN Youth chief Oh Tong Keong's claim that Lim's administration was "taking land belonging to the poor and selling it to businesses".

Is there cover-up?

Oh, who was also present at today's press conference, said if Lim refused to explain the matter, the people would assume that there was "some cover-up" in the land deal.

Oh called for the minutes of meetings related to the tender application at the One-Stop Committee level at the Penang Municipal Council and information linked to the sale of the land to be released for public scrutiny.

"The sale of the land - which is supposed to be reserved for public housing - should be discussed and approved by the state executive council," he said.

Oh, who is also state Gerakan Youth chief, said the BN also wanted to know why the land was sold at half the price of its market value when it should have been worth RM22 million.

"We also consider it strange that the Land Office record still shows that the land belongs to the state government," he said.

"Has the Kuala Lumpur International Dental Centre been given special privileges to avoid paying taxes and land assessment fees?" he asked.