

Committee set up to probe Penang BN land sales
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Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today announced that a special exco committee will be set up to probe questionable land deals allegedly transacted below market value or for free under the BN administration prior to 2008.

This appears to be part of the Penang government's counterattack against BN allegations that Lim had ordered the sale of Penang Municipal Council's land in Taman Manggis along Jalan Zainal Abidin.

BN leaders have claimed that the land was meant for an affordable housing project during the BN administration, and complained that Lim's administration has instead sold it to a private developer to build a private hospital.

They also claim that Lim and four other DAP leaders has an interest in the hospital project, but to date has not produced any proof to back this claim.

Lim in a statement today said Penang exco member for local government and traffic management Chow Kon Yeow will head the probe.

Chow's scope will involve at least 4,000 acres of state land, which includes:

The sale of 980 acres of land off Tanjong Tokong, at the price of RM1 per square foot in 1990 and 1999

The sale of 750 acres of land in Batu Kawan at between RM3.05 to RM4 per square feet in 2004

The sale of 80 acres of prime land in Pulau Jerejak without open tender at RM3.72 per square feet

1,600 acres of reclaimed land off Butterworth given for free with recipient having only to pay reclamation costs the construction of a highway.

500 acres of reclaimed land awarded without open tender for the Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project

"The Penang state exco at its meeting on Sept 7 has decided to set up the committee.

"All government departments especially the Land Office, the two local governments and Penang Development Corporation (PDC) are directed to give full cooperation to Chow," said Lim.

BN ploy backfires?

Cheap land sales or even land given for free by the former BN state government came into focus when they attempted to make an issue of the Taman Manggis land to implicate Lim's administration.

Lim however rebutted that the sale had been carried out by open competitive tender and meant for a private hospital project to promote medical tourism in Penang.

Lim said as Penang Gerakan chief Teng Chang Yeow has been unable to prove claims of DAP leaders' personal interests in the hospital project, BN and especially Gerakan has "lost all honour and credibility".

"And why did BN never announce to the press until now that the 1.1 acre (plot) was reserved for public housing in 2003, nor (built) from 2003-2008, especially when the so-called public housing project was also not marked in the layout plans?" Lim said.

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