

user over state-organised art contest themed 'Ubah'

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By Susan Loone

An open art competition themed 'Ubah', organised by the Penang State Museum and Art Gallery, has raised questions whether the DAP had exerted its influence to promote its 2013 general election slogan.

'Ubah' (change) was the party's battle cry in the 13th general election held on May 5.

The DAP again led Pakatan Rakyat to victory in Penang, after wresting the state from the BN in 2008.

NONE Asked to comment, museum assistant curator Fairudz Ikhwan Zulkifli nuked the speculation and said the themes for art competitions were proposed and decided by the state art gallery committee.

Fairudz denied that politicians were behind the selection and decision-making process.

"The Penang Museum and Art Gallery is under the purview of the state government but all members of the sub-committee are non-politicians," he said.

The art portfolio was under state executive councillor Chong Eng, but is now under Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, who also oversees Penang heritage issues.

Although Fairudz admitted that the theme appeared to be associated with "something", he denied that it has anything to do with politics.

Despite being a government agency, the Penang Museum and Art Gallery has always remained neutral, he said.

"This is art. It has nothing to do with politics. In art, we do not have political considerations. This is just coincidence," he explained.

Fairudz expressed the hope that contestants would visualise the theme with an open mind.

"Artists often come up with new ideas and opinions. They may want to change (ubah) their way, or medium, of drawing. It's up to them to interpret the theme,"

he said.

'Full autonomy'

The state government's arts, culture and heritage commissioner Julio Lee, who was appointed by and reports to Lim, said the state art gallery enjoys "full autonomy" in organising such events.

"As for this issue, I need to find out the details before making comments," Lee said.

The deadline for submissions is Sept 30.

NONEThe DAP has already been criticised for floating the party's mascot - the Ubah hornbill, a huge attractive, but privately sponsored RM60,000 PVC toy-like object - in the Sungai Pinang.

Still, the mascot, which was floated until Sept 1, was immensely popular with the public, who dropped by daily at the IJM Promenade to view it.

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