

## **'Advice to postpone rally is not bowing to Umno'**

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An annoyed Lim Guan Eng has rubbished a claim that his administration had bowed to pro-BN groups, by advising the NGO coalition dubbed 'Turun', to postpone its protest against price hikes in Seberang Jaya last Sunday.

Lim, the Penang chief minister, shot back in reply to a reporter's question: "How is that so?"

He said rallies by Bersih had previously been postponed but the electoral reform coalition had not been accused of bowing down to Umno.

"I take great objection to allegations and conclusions that we have bowed to Umno for advising postponement due to the current tense situation," he said.

"Penang will be targeted because this is the only state ruled by a non-Muslim chief minister ... we are willing to face all criticism, but will not compromise on our duty to ensure public order and security."

At the anti-price hike rally, Solidarity Anak Muda Malaysia spokesperson Badrul Hisham Bahardin had informed the crowd that "the CM advised us to postpone this but we have proven that we are peaceful".

One of the organisers - Jingga 13 - was not happy with the advice which was relayed by PKR assemblypersons Dr Afif Bahardin (right) and Lee Khai Loon, and said leaders must stand with the people in their sufferings.

Asked if his advice would be seen as a damper on civil liberties, which includes freedom of speech and assembly, Lim said the state has to ensure public order.

"How can the advice be seen as compromising civil rights? We did not ask that it be banned as we do uphold the right to freedom of speech," he replied.

"How can calls to take a step back be seen as compromising civil rights? We did not ask for repression of laws. It is an unfair allegation."

Advice came from consensus

Lim said his advice to postpone the rally came about by consensus of all state excos and Pakatan assemblypersons who had attended a security meeting last Friday, noting that the duty of the state is to ensure public order and racial and religious harmony.

"I make no apology (for this) even though you are not happy with my answer. If you want to hear more, I will say I am sorry," he told the reporter who questioned him.

He clarified that the advice had been offered because of several incidents during the two anti-DAP rallies that followed the kangkung-themed flashmob, and a scuffle during enforcement operations against illegal hawkers in Teluk Bahang.

In the Teluk Bahang incident, assistant district officer Abu Hassan Osman was assaulted and had his shirt torn, by members of several local groups, including Perkasa, in front of 35 police personnel.

"That was serious enough for us to try and stop others from taking an opportunity to fan the fires of racial hatred. We had to be pro-active but we did not stop the group from rallying on Sunday," Lim explained.

'Racism must be condemned'

Lim was also asked whether all politicians should desist from being at loggerheads with each other on a daily basis, so as to not inflame supporters who may then react violently.

"You know who comes up with such statements. We did not organise any demonstrations," Lim said, when visiting the Assumption Church in Farquhar Street today.

This was a pointed reference to Malay NGOs who had organised two demonstrations - in Seberang Jaya on Jan 18 and Alma on Jan 19 - against PKR's Machang Bubuk assemblyperson Lee Khai Loon (right) for 'insulting Malays' with a kangkung-themed flash mob.

At the Seberang Jaya rally, a warning of a repeat of the May 13, 1969 racial riot was displayed on a banner, while in Alma, several protestors beat up two men who had allegedly made racist remarks.

Lim said racism must be condemned.

"We uphold freedom of speech but do not want it to be used as an opportunity to incite racial and religious hatred," he added.

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