

Umno rapped for blaming violence on Pakatan

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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has condemned Umno for trying to politicise the recent controversial incidents in the state by blaming it on the opposition parties.

Pakatan Rakyat is a federal opposition coalition, while Umno is an opposition party in Penang.

"Don't blame the opposition parties when it is Umno that plays the fires of racial and religious hatred, unlike the opposition's focus on price hikes in sugar, petrol, power tariffs and highway tolls," said Lim.

Lim reminded Umno that the state government had never organised any demonstrations.

He added that his administration was "severely criticised" when he had advised an anti-price hike demonstration by NGOs to be postponed after the Chinese New Year.

Over the last 10 days, Lim said Malaysians witnessed "ugly scenes of racial hatred and violence" manifested in these incidents attended by top Umno leaders, elected representatives, members and supporters in Penang.

He listed these incidents to include two rallies against the "I love Kangkung" flash mob - organised by PKR's Machang Bubuk assemblyperson Lee Khai Loon in Seberang Jaya - on Jan 18 and in Alma on Jan 19.

In Seberang Jaya, threats of a repeat of the May 13 racial riots were heard, while in Alma, two unknown persons were attacked by several protestors for allegedly uttering racist words.

"Despite this (the Seberang Jaya rally) being organised by PKR, DAP had been blamed, with senior leader Lim Kit Siang and myself targeted and threats of May 13 riots issued," he said.

"In Alma, pictures of myself, Kit Siang and Khai Loon's effigy had been burnt whilst a motorist was assaulted, beaten up and had his motorcycle stolen," Lim alleged.

Lim also reminded Umno that for the first time in Malaysian history, a senior Malay assistant district officer, Abu Hassan Osman, was openly assaulted on Jan 21 in front of 35 police officers who were supposed to be protecting him in Teluk Bahang.

"Even though Abu Hassan's shirt was torn after the attack, the assailants were not immediately arrested, but only after I contacted state police chief Abdul Rahim Hanafi," Lim lamented.

'Why is this an issue now?'

"Abu Hassan was leading an enforcement team to demolish 14 empty, abandoned or new structures, and not illegal stalls already operating for years, after receiving complaints from local Malay residents," Lim clarified.

Lim also pointed out a memorandum submitted by a Muslim NGO banning the open sale of pork in several parts of the island that was supported by the Umno Youth Tanjung division.

"Such open sale of pork and the hanging of meat in stalls have been practiced ever since British colonial days and even when BN was in power," Lim reminded.

"Why should this be an issue now, and when these areas are 95 percent non-Muslim residential areas?" he added.

State Umno liaison chief Zainal Abidin Osman has distanced the party from these incidents, saying that it had not been the organiser of these events, although some of its leaders were found participating in their own capacity.

Lim said these incidents were clearly directed to distract attention from the price hikes in sugar, petrol, electricity power tariffs and highway road tolls.

In contrast, the state government did not increase costs of its services such as quitting rent, assessments, water tariffs and business licenses.

Lim also condemned the controversial "Allah is great, Jesus is the son of Allah" banners found outside five churches in Penang, including one in Butterworth.

On Monday morning, two molotov cocktails were hurled into the compound of the Church of Assumption, along Farquhar Street.

Police are probing the banners under the 1948 Sedition Act and the molotov

cocktails under Section 436 of the Penal Code that deals with arson.

Lim stressed that this is a critical hour with shadowy extremist and racist forces conducting sustained aggression to destabilise the state's unity and peace.

"But DAP reaffirms its firm and uncompromising commitment to protect, preserve and promote respect for cultural diversity, racial and religious harmony by rejecting both violence and hatred," he added.

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