

Gerakan leader heckled at Penang Speaker's Square
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A Kedah Gerakan leader's maiden speech at the Penang Speakers Square yesterday drew brickbats from a group of senior citizens, when he criticised Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for being 'biased' in implementing state policies.

It was uncertain, however, if the hecklers were members or supporters of DAP.

NONEKedah Gerakan secretary Tang Hing Lye lambasted Lim for allocating more state funds to the Malay community.

This caused the group, all men over 50, to jeer loudly in the Hokkien dialect, telling Tang to "keep quiet and go home".

"This place is for the DAP," they shouted, but Tang ignored the insults and continued to express his scathing views on Lim, who is also the DAP secretary-general.

Tang claimed that Lim had given better treatment to the Malay community by setting aside RM24 million for the bumiputera (Islamic affairs) welfare fund.

This is triple the sum of RM8 million allocated for non-bumiputera (for Chinese, missionary, religious and Tamil schools in Penang), he said.

NONE"Where is the justice here? He accuses BN of having policies that are unfair to the people. How about his own policies?" asked Tang (left).

He also poured scorn on Lim for whining about the higher toll charge for the planned second Penang bridge. The charge is tagged at RM9.40 or 30 percent more than the current amount.

"When (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department) Koh Tsu Koon was (Penang) chief minister, there were already attempts to increase the toll charges, but Koh did everything in his power to maintain the cost at RM7," claimed Tang.

"I challenge Lim and ask him: does he have the power to make sure there is no increase in toll charges for the new bridge? (Lim) claims to be smarter than Koh but is he able to do this?"

'No attention to grouses'

Undeterred by the jeers, another Gerakan member Rich Too spoke about maintaining the harmony of a multi-racial Malaysia.

NONEHe slammed politicians who constantly play the race and religion cards for political mileage and blamed them for forgetting how the country first came about.

"There is a lot of talk for a multi-racial Malaysia but all this remains talk. We want the government to implement policies that benefit all races," added Too (left), who is a Penang Gerakan Youth exco member.

Former state PKR Women's wing chief Aminah Abdullah, who was speaking for the fourth time since the square was launched in May, said she has raised many issues about Jelutong, where she resides, but said that none of the grouses have received official attention.

Not a single person from the state administration under Lim has responded to any of her complaints nor met her to discuss the issues she raised, she claimed.

"The chief minister seems to have started this Square just (for self-gratification or syok sendiri). If this is all the Speakers Square is for, it would be better to close down this platform," said Aminah, who runs a NGO in her community.

NONE She also challenged Lim to quit as head of state if he cannot listen to the plight of Penangites, adding that "there are many others who can do the job".

About 80 people had gathered at the square to hear the speakers, who braved the drizzle and hubbub from the crowd to share their thoughts.

Plainclothes police personnel and special branch officers carrying videocams were seen trying to blend in with the crowd, joining in the laughter when speakers cracked jokes.

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