

**Azhar Ibrahim threatened with legal action**  
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Penang councillor Mohd Yusoff Mohd Noor has threatened legal action against state opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim for 'wild accusations' that he was involved in the approval of plans to demolish Malay villages in Jelutong.

He has demanded a public apology from Penang assemblyperson Azhar, before the month of Ramadhan, for issuing 'baseless statements' about him, inciting anger against him among villagers for their eviction woes.

Yusoff (left), who is Jelutong PAS deputy chair, claimed he was never involved in any plans to develop the area, nor was he in anyway linked to the eviction exercise currently besetting the Jelutong villagers.

"Such plans for development can only be approved by the municipal council president and eviction notices come from developers," he said.

"The eviction on June 29, when the villagers received their notices to leave their homes the next day, also came as a surprise for us," added the Jelutong mosque committee chairperson.

"When we heard about it, we went door to door to meet the villagers. We finally managed to get a three-month extension, with the help of Jeff Ooi, Jelutong MP," he told a press conference in Jelutong yesterday.

#### Outpouring of political venom

Yusoff was responding to Azhar's recent comments that the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) had given the go-ahead for development in several Malay villages like Kg Jalan Pokok Asam after Pakatan Rakyat took over the state in 2008.

He had also expressed disappointment that a municipal councillor who is also a mosque committee chairperson and PAS member did not protest at the demolition plans.

He also charged that PAS leaders, Deputy Chief Minister Mansor Othman from the PKR and the other Malay state exco dare not open their mouths when the victims are from their community, as they would unhesitatingly obey Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's orders.

He claimed that when the Kg Jalan Pokok Asam matter was raised during BN's rule, the state had imposed a condition that development approval would only be given once issues of relocation and compensation were settled.

But in the case of the Pakatan government, approval was given even before any amicable agreement was struck, added Azhar, a former state exco.

There are nine families urgently affected by development plans in Kg. Jalan Pokok Asam, as they would have to vacate their land by October.

The approximately three acres of land in Jelutong had been earmarked for development in 2007, with the developer submitting plans to build high rise apartment and shoplots there in July 2008.

The state delayed approval of the plans for two years, and the MPPP finally gave the green light this February, after it was satisfied that the developer had complied with its guidelines, said Yusuf.

#### Better compensation

The families, who were all the time living on private land, are demanding a better compensation package, including a RM120,000 double -storey housing unit with three rooms per family plus relocation to an area within Jelutong.

Malay/Muslim leaders from PAS and PKR continue to face criticism from Umno for not doing enough for the Malay community, accusing them of being subservient to the PR government which is headed by the DAP.

Parit Buntar MP Mujahid Yusuf Rawa, who was also at the press conference, defended Yusof, saying Azhar's remarks have sown confusion among the villagers, who have started to detest Yusof although he lived amidst them.

NONEMujahid (left) had earlier cautioned the villagers not to be taken in by Umno's as it capitalises on their woes.

"The role of PAS and PKR is to resolve this issue amicably, not by politicising it and victimising the villages further," he said.

Mujahid said the party had proof that the recent demonstration held outside the Jelutong mosque was initiated by Umno to turn the matter into a racial issue.

"We have a different argument from Umno. Chinese villages are also going to be affected by these development projects and we will help them as it is our policy to do so," he said.

"We do not consider this a racial issue. This is a legal issue that revolves around the proper kind of compensation the villages are entitled to. So, Umno, please stop your blabbering and let us handle it professionally and officially," he added.

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