

Guan Eng-Nik Ali spat remains at status quo
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The spat between Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and state development officer (SDO) Nik Ali Nik Yunus remains at status quo, as the right to sack SDOs belongs to the federal government.

Lim said the state executive council had done what could be done and explained whatever it needed to explain.

"We will now leave it to the people to decide whether the 'little Napoleons' like Nik Ali should have his place in the civil service," he told reporters, in Penang today.

He said under the civil servants' code of conduct, no civil servant was allowed to make any public statement that could tarnish the government's image.

"In this context, it is clear enough that Nik Ali has breached the code of conduct but the state government has no power to take any action as he is a federal servant," he said.

In the past few weeks, Lim had criticised Nik Ali on his role in three projects – the arches at the Botanical Gardens, the alleged illegal sand mining in Balik Pulau and the stop-work order on the construction of the Defence Ministry's multi-storey air force school building in Tanjung Bungah.

On Monday, Nik Ali hit back at Lim, saying that the chief minister was ignorant of the role of an SDO.

Nik Ali had also insulted Lim by uttering words like biadab (disrespectful) and dayus (coward).

It was reported yesterday that the Penang government had demanded a public apology from the SDO for allegedly using rude words against Lim during a press conference.

However, Lim who is also the DAP secretary-general, said he would seek legal advice on certain newspaper reports with negative remarks that might tarnish his image.

"I hope the mainstream media would publish their reports accurately without bias," he said.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Koon said the spat should be resolved amicably and professionally.

He said the matter should be handled wisely and cited as an example the time Dr Lim Chong Eu was the chief minister of Penang (1960-1990).

He said the founder of Gerakan despite leading an opposition government in Penang before joining the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, had always maintained good terms with the federal government in the interest of the people of Penang and dealt directly with government agencies when problems cropped up between the state government and them.

"He never directly criticised anyone or engaged in polemics. That was the reason a spat like what happened between Guan Eng and Nik Ali never surfaced then," he told reporters after launching phase five of the Bar Council's My Constitution campaign in Putrajaya today.

- Bernama

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