

Noisy protest against Guan Eng outside state assembly
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A group of 100 people representing Komtar traders and Parti Cinta Malaysia held a noisy demonstration in front of Penang state assembly this morning to protest against the water tariff hike and land acquisition in Balik Pulau.

NONEThey demanded to meet with Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, but were kept at bay by two locked gates outside the building.

Shouts of "cowards" and "Allahu Akbar" could be heard as they shook the main gate vigorously.

The Penang state assembly had kicked off its session yesterday.

NONEOne of the protestors chained himself to the gate, while others cheered him on.

A placard carried by the demonstrators says: Kami tidak rela tanah kami dijadikan 'business' kerajaan negeri (We don't want our land to be used for the state government's business).

Azian Ariffin, who represented the landowners in Balik Pulau, claimed that the group wanted to meet the chief minister in peace.

NONEAccording to him, the protesters want to hand a memorandum to him personally, not through his representative.

He said 29 lots owned by Malays and 12 by Chinese are being reclaimed to make way for an institute of higher learning.

Azian said that none of the landowners want to move out because the land is part of their legacy.

The matter stems from the state government's acquisition of more than 80 hectares of land at about RM100 million for an education hub of excellence.

In January, Lim had explained that it is a priority to develop Penang as a "high-tech, creative and innovative knowledge-based economy".

The project, he said, will attract international schools, university branch campuses, hospitality schools and science centres. Work is due to start in a year or two.

However, the state Umno has objected to the project on the basis that one campus will be that of a Singapore university, that Malay-owned land has been affected, and that compensation has been low.