

Penang CM defends Balik Pulau land acquisition
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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has warned Umno against "twisting" the state government's initiative to develop an educational hub in Balik Pulau by turning it into a racial issue.

He was referring to yesterday's protest outside the state legislative assembly, during which Malay landowners had vociferously objected to the acquisition of an 80-hectare site in Balik Pulau at low compensation.

"When we acquire the land, we give them compensation. (Of) the homeowners, there are only two Malays ...we will try and give them adequate compensation," he told reporters in the Parliament lobby today.

"Don't turn it into a racial issue when it is an educational matter. They (Umno leaders) said that we are only acquiring Malay land. When we first went through the process of acquisition, we did not even consider the aspect of racial background.

"It was an administrative matter done by our officer... so after Umno raised the racial issue we asked what was the racial background (of the people whose land was acquired). We found out that it is actually 21 percent Malay, while the rest are non-Malay, Chinese."

No matter whose land is taken, Lim assured that the "settlers or house owners will be given proper compensation".

In May, the Penang government had revealed its plan to turn Balik Pulau into an educational hub, inviting higher learning institutions to set up their campuses there.

"Not only foreign universities, even public universities are expressing interest, they want to set up a campus in Balik Pulau. What's wrong with (that?). We don't mind," said Lim, who is the Bagan MP.

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