

**Set up RM3.2mil Democracy Fund, Penang urged
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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng was urged to set up a Democracy Education Fund to help civil society and NGOs organise activities to promote democracy.

Pantai Jerejak (PKR) assemblyperson Sim Tze Tsin said this fund can be utilised by NGOs promoting free elections, workers' rights or press freedom.

Political parties regardless of their ideology, residents associations and village committees can also use this fund to organise activities that promote democracy, he added.

"For example, NGOs can organise a workshop on democracy; Suaram or MyConstitution can hold seminars on the constitution; Bersih and Mafrel can organise activities on free elections; and journalists can seek financial aid to carry out training," he said.

"(With this fund) citizen journalists can ask for assistance to buy equipment while residents associations and village committee can hold forums to update the people about the latest political developments," he added during the debate on the 2011 budget, at the Penang state assembly yesterday.

pkr weekly pc 151107 sim tze tsin Sim (left), who is also a former political aide to PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim, said he was moved to propose the idea because Umno and Barisan Nasional continue to play up racial sentiments to incite the Malay community so that they can regain lost support.

This year alone, he added, Umno has staged various demonstrations which included protesting the state government's alleged ban on the annual Maulidur Rasul procession, which turned out to be untrue.

They had also distributed doctored photos of Guan Eng allegedly butchering a cow and accused mosques in Penang of using the CM's name in place of the Agong, he further said.

This was followed by demonstrations by Komtar traders and by 'gangsters' in Umno Youth who torched Lim's photo, and last week, Umno once again staged a demonstration outside the state assembly where a protestor nearly brought down the gate of the building, he stressed.

Concept a success in Germany

Sim said the concept of a 'Democracy Education Fund' was not new as it was already in place in countries like Germany, who after suffering the Nazi era; begin to realise how important democracy was.

The project was so successful in Germany, he added, that the European country has now become a democratic and stable nation within a short period of time since 1945, and has achieved great economic growth.

"Penang should lead the way in democratic transformation as it is the epicentre of the 2008 political tsunami," he said.

"Therefore, I would like to propose that the state government allocate only RM2 per citizen for this fund; we have about 1.6 million people, therefore the fund would amount to about RM3.2 million," he added.

Sim proposed that an executive committee be established under Deputy Chief Minister I Mansor Othman to approve and monitor the fund.

Mansor can be assisted by former Bar Council chairperson Yeoh Yang Poh, added Sim, where all requests for money and its approval be reported annually based on the principles of competency, accountability and transparency, he added.

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