

Lim : from ex-prisoner to Penang CM
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He has indeed come a long way - from the solitary existence as a political prisoner to newly-minted Penang chief minister. MCPX

DAP leader Lim Guan Eng, who was sworn in today, did not forget those lonely days when at his maiden press conference as chief minister, he urged political activists to persevere in their struggle.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 sworn inLim, 47, bagged the coveted chief minister post after the DAP-led opposition secured a more than two-thirds majority in the state at last Saturday's general elections.

The new chief minister, who made his debut in Penang in his two-decade-long career as a politician, won the Air Putih state seat as well as the Bagan parliament seat.

This is the first time a DAP-led government will rule the state, which was under Barisan Nasional's Gerakan since 1969.

Lim is believed to be the first former prisoner to hold such a high public office.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 vipHe was sworn in as Penang's fourth chief minister this morning before the Penang governor Abdul Rahman Abbas at the governor's official residence Seri Mutiara.

Also present at the ceremony were his father, Kit Siang - a party stalwart - and his wife, Betty Chew, herself a state assemblywoman for Kota Laksamana in Malacca, as well as their children and siblings.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 shake handsOutgoing CM and Gerakan acting president Dr Koh Tsu Koon and wife were also present despite that his party was completely wiped out in the state, leaving it without any seat.

The DAP and PKR newly-elected representatives, including president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, were also at the ceremony but conspicuously missing were 11 elected representatives from Umno.

Both emotional and excited

At his press conference after the swearing-in ceremony today, Lim said his one-year experience behind bars over a politically-charged case has made him a much stronger person.

"When you are in jail, you lose all your humility. You have to fight everyday to stop yourself from turning into a mere digit. They want to suck you out completely but you must fight, persevere and come out stronger.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 sworn"When I was in jail, I never imagine that I will be CM one day. This is a huge transformation for me - from a jailbird to CM," he told

reporters after the one-hour press conference at the chief minister's office in Komtar, Penang.

A jovial Lim, who is DAP secretary-general, conceded he was excited over the new post, which he described as a "rare and distinguished honour".

"I am emotional and excited, that's why I want to give my best shot possible. I want to bring positive changes which are permanent and have lasting effects," he stressed.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 hugsIn 1998, when he was Kota Melaka MP, Lim was imprisoned after he was convicted under the Sedition Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act for alleging that former Malacca chief minister Rahim Tamby Chik of committing statutory rape.

Eleven years before that, he was held under the Internal Security Act for 18 months when the government launched a nationwide crackdown on dissents and activists, dubbed 'Operasi Lalang'.

Lim unveiled a set of plans for the state government today, where he aimed to introduce a series of reforms ranging from doing away with the New Economic Policy in favour of a non-race-based policies to requiring government officials to publicly declare their assets.

"Today is the start of a new day. It has been raining for the last few days but when I woke up today, I saw that we have a new dawn," he said, with his father Kit Siang sitting next to him.

Kit Siang: My birthday wish

Asked by reporters for his comment, Lim senior said the his son's victory in this election was a birthday wish came true for him - Kit Siang celebrated his 67th birthday last month.

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 lim kit siang"This is a high point of my 42-year political career. During my birthday on Feb 20, I made a birthday wish that we can succeed in Penang and Guan Eng can succeed to become the CM to lead Penang. That birthday wish has come true," he said to applause from party leaders present.

When asked whether he would offer any guidance to his son, the seasoned politician quipped: "Oh yes, I will tell him quietly."

Kit Siang, who led the DAP in a failed bid to take over Penang in 1995, however politely declined to make any further comment: "It's enough, this is the CM's press conference, not my press conference."

lim guan eng penang cm ceremony 110308 lookingGuan Eng's wife, Chew (right), meanwhile said she would leave it to the party to decide on her position on whether she should continue as a state assemblywoman or to assist her husband in Penang.

"He has gone through a lot, and this will make him a better CM," Chew said when asked about her husband's new role, adding that she would also need time to adjust to taking on her additional role as Penang CM's wife.

Interestingly, the first bouquet sent to Lim's office today to congratulate the DAP's

"historical win" was from the controversial RM25 billion Penang Global City Centre developer, Abad Naluri.

"So fast?" a surprised Lim said when told by a journalist on this. The new CM added that previously it had been very difficult for him to meet with the developer.

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