

Penang CM slams PM, denies stoking racial tension
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 13, 2008
Beh Lih Yi

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has vehemently refuted Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's claim that he was stoking racial tension over the issue of dismantling the New Economy Policy (NEP) in the island state. MCPX

anwar chinese education pc 250407 guan engIn a sign that could signal the start of a rocky relationship between the federal and the state governments, Lim has instead slammed Abdullah for seeking to provoke racial tensions with his allegations.

"I said we will have an open-tender system (in Penang). What's the problem with that? Unless Abdullah doesn't like open tenders but corruption, cronyism and inefficiency.

"I don't understand what has it (abolishing the NEP) got to do with marginalising the Malay or the Indian community. I think he is not right, (he's) going on the wrong facts and trying to provoke (racial) sentiment," Lim told a press conference after witnessing the swearing-in of 10 of his state excos at the Dewan Sri Pinang today.

Yesterday, Abdullah expressed his dismay over the plan by the DAP-led state government not to practise the NEP, an affirmative action policy which favours the bumiputeras.

"Do not marginalise the Malays. I want to ask Lim Guan Eng what are his plans for the Malays in Penang. What are his plans for the Indians in Penang. What are his plans for other minority groups in Penang?" said Abdullah.

Who hold the shares?

At the press conference, the Penang CM argued that the NEP was a source of corruption, citing the example of the unequal distribution of wealth, including shares which were 'swallowed up' by a few selected individuals.

"If they want to help Malaysians, I asked these people to 'vomit out' some of the (bumiputera) shares... Who hold these shares? Perhaps (Umno Wanita chief) Rafidah Aziz," he claimed.

"We have not enacted any policy which marginalises a certain group. The only decision that we have made is to waive the (traffic and hawkers) summonses - tell me, which group loses out with that?"

In a sarcastic tone, Lim said the premier's criticism could have been linked to his revelation yesterday that the RM25 billion project of the Penang Global City Centre (PGCC) had yet been approved by the local authorities.

"I understand why he may not be happy with my decision on the PGCC, but the PGCC is not even related to a Malay developer," argued the Penang CM.

The PGCC is undertaken by developer Abad Naluri, an associate company of Equine Capital Berhad which is controlled by the premier's ally, businessman Patrick Lim.

Abdullah 'not informed'

Lim also suggested that the prime minister might have made his criticism without checking out the facts beforehand.

abdullah badawi floods johor 261206 "The PM maybe provoked by Utusan Malaysia - that I wouldn't know. (But) I understand, because when he launched the PGCC, he was not informed that the project was not even approved, still he went ahead and launched it - this could be just the same case," a combative Lim said.

Asked on his assurance to the Malay community in the state that they would not be marginalised, Lim reiterated that his government is for all races.

Meanwhile, PKR - DAP's ally in the state government - gave the party's backing to the Penang state government on the decision to do away with NEP.

"The NEP is no longer new - it has been there for 30 years and it has failed to a certain extent," said Bayan Baru member of parliament Zahrain Mohamed Hashim, who is also PKR state chief.

"It's time to explain to Malaysians about the Malaysian Economic Agenda which is fairer," said Zahrain, referring to the need-based policy advocated by PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

"The Malays would not be sidelined in the new state government, this is an assurance that Lim has given to me and it's the duty of the state government to ensure all communities are taken care of," said Zahrain.