

Penang CM reassures Malays on rights
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 14, 2008

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today told Malays that their rights will be protected, ahead of a street protest over concerns they could be sidelined. MCPX

jeff join dap pc 310707 guan engLim Guan Eng from DAP was sworn in on Tuesday after a stunning performance in weekend polls which handed Penang and three other states to a three-party opposition alliance.

Lim, who will govern one of the nation's richest states and the only one dominated by ethnic Chinese, said the DAP would not alienate any community.

"There have been all sorts of rumours that we are going to do this and that," he said after talks with Malay-based civil society groups.

"But I have told them that this government will be a friend to everybody and they understand this," he said.

However, at least 1,000 people defied a police ban to gather outside Lim's office in Komtar after Friday prayers, chanting, "Long live Malays. Malays will not disappear from Penang," a witness said.

penang komtar umno protest 140308 anwar traitor bannerThe group, led by senior officials of Umno - which has dominated Malaysian politics for half a century - dispersed an hour later.

Protest leaders said they were angry over Lim's plans to dismantle the New Economic Policy (NEP), a decades-old system of positive discrimination for Malays.

"Any decision taken against the spirit of the NEP will be seen as an attempt to marginalise the Malays," said Umno division chief Musa Sheikh Fadzir.

Malays in Penang overlooked

penang komtar umno protest 140308 anuar ibrahimThe opposition, including the DAP but also the conservative Islamic party and the multiracial PKR, have said they want to sideline the NEP because it fosters cronyism and corruption.

Opposition figurehead Anwar Ibrahim slammed Umno for organising the rally.

"Umno failed to protect the interest of the Malays and that is why they were rejected in the election," he said, adding that Malays backed the new stance in Penang.

"Umno has been in power so long, why didn't they help solve Malay problems in the state?"

penang komtar umno protest 140308 angerAzmi Abdul Hamid, the president of Malay welfare group Teras, said the civil society groups were happy with their meeting with Lim.

"We are glad to have received a reassurance that the interests of the Malays in Penang will

not be neglected," he said.

"The Malays in Penang have been overlooked for far too long, including during the previous state government, and we hope all this will change."

penang komtar umno protest 140308 very angryLim urged Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to ignore calls by Umno in Penang to scrap the various million-dollar development projects previously approved in Penang.

"Instead of respecting the outcome of a democratic process they are now sulking and venting their frustration at the people," he said.

Among the projects in the pipeline are a major bridge to connect Penang with the mainland and a monorail transit system.

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