

## Guan Eng told to apologise

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By SHARANJIT SINGH

Penang chief minister asked why he is keeping quiet over Court of Appeal decision

GEORGE TOWN : Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has been told to apologise to the people for misleading them over the Tang Hak Ju land case in the wake of a Court of Appeal ruling that the state government need not pay RM40 million compensation to the businessman.

State Barisan Nasional working committee chairman Datuk Dr Teng Hock Nan yesterday revealed that the Court of Appeal had, on Jan 11, ruled in favour of the state government and overturned a Penang High Court decision awarding Tang the amount.

Dr Teng said instead of RM40 million, Tang was only given RM500,000 for incidental expenses after the Court of Appeal overturned the High Court decision, which Lim had billed as "the biggest land scam in the history of Penang".

"The decision has vindicated us and cleared us of any wrongdoing," Dr Teng said in reference to the previous Gerakan-led state government.

"The surprising thing is that Lim has kept quiet about the decision and has not said a word about it although 10 days have passed since the verdict was handed down.

"His silence is deafening and is completely opposite to all the noise he was making when he went round saying that this was the biggest land scam and scandal committed by the previous state government."

Dr Teng said it was now clear that Lim was just hell bent on politicising and exploiting issues to mislead the people and to paint a negative picture of the previous Gerakan-led administration.

He recalled how the entire state cabinet had been stirring up the issue and making all sorts of accusations just to gain political mileage.

"They even went to the extent of tabling a white paper at the state legislative assembly, despite knowing full well that the case was in the appeal stage.

"The white paper was filled with all kinds of vicious assumptions and accusations.

"They used words like 'land scam' and 'scandal', which has criminal connotations but we waited patiently for the court process and we are now vindicated."

Dr Teng said Lim should withdraw all baseless accusations and apologise for misleading the people, as well as withdrawing the white paper report on the case.

The Tang Hak Ju case dates back to 2002 when the businessman applied for a 4.3ha plot of land in Seberang Prai to extract rocks for quarrying purposes.

Tang's application was approved by the authorities.

However, the authorities later cancelled the title issued to Tang in 2004 following complaints from the original landowners -- the Hock Teik Cheng Sin temple and the Hokkien Hoay Kuan Province Wellesley Association.

Tang subsequently sued the state and the High Court awarded him RM29.36 million, plus interest, dating back to Jan 24, 2005.

After Pakatan took over the state government, Lim and his executive council immediately went on the offensive and called it the biggest land scam in Penang.

Deputy Chief Minister II P. Ramasamy was quoted as saying that the scandal had had a great impact on the present state government as millions had been siphoned off from its coffers.

A white paper on the so-called scam was tabled at the state assembly last year and bulldozed through despite objections from BN assemblymen.

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