

BN will offer to buy disputed Penang land this week
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By Opalyn Mok

GEORGE TOWN, Sept 24 — Barisan Nasional (BN) will issue an official letter of offer to purchase Taman Manggis by this week.

The coalition will be paying RM24 million for this piece of land that has been locked in controversy for the past several months.

Tanjung BN Youth chief H'ng Khoon Leng said BN was currently in the final stages of setting up a company, Taman Manggis Phase Two Development, to purchase the land.

"We are now finalising the appointment of directors for the company and once that's completed, we will issue the letter of offer to purchase the land," he said.

H'ng said the letter of offer to purchase the land will have a set of conditions which the state government has to fulfil before BN pays the RM24 million for the 0.4ha plot.

The controversial Taman Manggis land has been the centre of a dispute between the Penang state government and BN recently with BN component Gerakan hurling accusations that the land was sold below market value to Kuala Lumpur International Dental Centre.

Kuala Lumpur International Dental Centre had won the tender to purchase the land at RM232psf or a total of RM11 million.

To date, the purchaser is yet to obtain a permit to build a private medical specialist centre and so the land title has not been transferred to the buyer yet. This makes it possible for the state government to still sell the land to another purchaser.

Penang BN Youth chief Oh Tong Keong had cried foul over the sale of that piece of land, accusing the state government and the Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng of corruption.

He claimed that the land was initially earmarked for Phase Two of the Taman Manggis affordable housing project for the poor .

The previous government, which was under BN, had built a block of 18-storey flats on the land next to the 0.4ha plot under Phase One of the project.

Oh also said the land could have been sold at RM450psf or RM24 million instead of at RM232psf.

Lim had responded immediately by offering to sell the land to BN for RM24 million and, early this month, delivered an offer letter of sale to the Penang BN Youth.

The Penang BN Youth has also questioned links between the successful bidder of the land and Lim's current rented residence at a posh bungalow in Pinhorn Road.

In a related issue, Nibong Tebal MP Tan Tee Beng said he will show the original copy of his father's sale-and-purchase agreement for a luxurious condominium that he bought in Gurney Drive once the Taman Manggis land was sold to BN.

"The Taman Manggis issue is a matter of public interest and I am representing my father to ensure that the land is sold to BN to be developed for affordable housing before we will show the S&P agreement for my father's condominium," he said.

Tan is the son of former Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) president Datuk Tan Gim Hwa.

Lim's political secretary Ng Wei Aik had questioned Gim Hwa's ownership of a condominium unit at Silverton and asked how much he had paid for it.

Tan Tee Beng said he was not representing BN but was speaking out on behalf of his father.

"The moment Taman Manggis is sold to BN, I will hold a press conference and also invite Ng to it so that he can see for himself the S&P agreement of the condominium unit," he said.

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