

## **Guan Eng defends voluntary patrol unit, says attacks are 'politically motivated'**

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**BY LOOI SUE-CHERN**

The Penang government will defend its Voluntary Patrol Unit (PPS) from the "politically motivated" attacks it has been getting lately, said Lim Guan Eng today.

The Penang chief minister asked why the PPS had only now become an issue as it had been set up four years ago.

"For four years, the members have done their jobs well in serving society. Why is it targeted now? It is because of political elements.

"This is politically motivated, a movement against the Pakatan Rakyat government because the questions about the unit's legitimacy are being raised by pro-Barisan Nasional parties.

"And just because of that, they want action to be taken against PPS. We will stand together with PPS and defend it because it has contributed to society," he told a press conference today.

Lim also said the issue had to do with the integrity of the state government and asked the people not to fall into the trap set by people "playing with fire".

"When Perkasa also made a report on this yesterday, you should already know. These are people who are always playing with fire, playing dangerous games.

"Remember who you are mixing with. The same organisation that beat up reporters... they are now asking for action against PPS."

Lim had been asked to comment on criticism against the PPS unit, which got into controversy after a man alleged that he was beaten up by PPS members.

Since then, the PPS which enjoys the patronage of the Pakatan Rakyat government has come under heavy fire. The state government has also been pressured by detractors to explain the legitimacy of the unit.

Lim said there was a certain small group of people from all levels of society making an issue of the PPS and reminded the detractors that the unit was set up by "a legitimate government chosen by the people."

"Don't forget that we have the largest mandate in Penang's history with 68% (popular votes). Don't mock the decision made by the people. Respect the people for the choice they have made," he said, adding that the PPS had done nothing wrong.

The PPS, Lim said, is made up of volunteers who do not get paid for the work they do and who help in emergency response and relief.

He said the PPS has also contributed to community policing activities to combat crime and has helped direct traffic at public events.

"They are not paid. The state just supports them by giving some equipment," he said.

Lim also hit out at inspector-general of police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, who said the police would investigate the activities and take further action.

In a statement yesterday, Khalid said the Registrar of Societies (RoS) had informed the police that PPS was not a registered organisation.

"The organisation is deemed illegal under Section 41 of the Societies Act 1966. Therefore, the police will investigate its activities and take action in accordance with the Act," Khalid had said in a statement.

Lim said the government thought Khalid's statement that the PPS unit was an illegitimate society "strange".

"His statement didn't make sense at all. Why? Because PPS was set up by the state government.

"It is not registered with RoS. That is nothing new. Everyone knows that. It doesn't have to be registered because it is a government setup.

"The state government has the power to set up an organisation like that, just like the JKKK (Village Security and Development Community)," he said.

If the PPS unit, which carries out voluntary duties similar to the JKKK such as patrolling neighbourhoods, was illegal, Lim said all JKKKs set up around the country were also illegal.

Lim also told Khalid not to get involved.

"It is not good (if he does). He should just do his job as the top cop to ensure security, and not politicise issues," he said.

Lim added that the police were welcome to probe into the unit and cooperation would be given.

Meanwhile, Penang police in a statement today said it had received 16 police reports so far on PPS.

The police said any organisation that was unregistered was illegal, and this included its activities.

"The police will investigate this case under Section 41 of the Societies Act 1966," the statement read. – August 27, 2014.

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