

Penang state gov't relents uses federal Merdeka theme
Free Malaysia Today
August 24, 2015
By FMT Reporters

CM Lim Guan Eng says decision was made so Armed Forces would participate and thereby allow for the royal salute to be given to the Governor.

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang government has finally given in to pressure to change its controversial Merdeka Day "Bersih" theme to that of the federal theme of "Sehati Sejiwa" (One Heart One Soul).

For the past five days, the state government stuck to its guns, saying it would use its own "Bersih, Cekap, Amanah" (Clean, Efficient, Trustworthy) theme for state-level Merdeka celebrations.

However their insistence led the Education Ministry issuing a directive banning all schools in Penang from participating in any state-level celebrations, a decision that was emulated by the armed forces and the police, which would have left the parade contingent robbed of at least 2/3 of its participants.

Facing the prospect of putting out a skeletal parade in Bandar Baru Perda, Bukit Mertajam on August 31, the state government decided to switch to the "Sehati Sejiwa" theme set by Putrajaya.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng in announcing this at a press conference in Komtar on Monday, said that his executive council had decided to stick to the national agenda although "with a heavy heart".

He said that if the armed forces did not participate, the Penang Governor, the Yang Di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas, would not receive a royal salute as was the tradition during the Merdeka parade.

"We feel it was unacceptable, as the governor is a symbol of our constitution and he must be given the royal salute during the Merdeka parade," he said.

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Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2015/08/24/penang-state-govt-relents-to-using-federal-merdeka-theme/>