

**Guan Eng defends criticism against PKR 5
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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng today defended his stance in criticising the five PKR assemblymen who abstained from voting against a motion on land reclamation by Barisan Nasional (BN).

Lim, who also received brickbats for slamming the five, said the motion on land reclamation was not the same as the one against the Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) project that was mooted by the previous administration years ago.

DAP backbencher Danny Law Heng Kiang, who was in the opposition in the Penang legislative assembly in 2002, tabled a motion against the PORR project and two MCA backbenchers abstained from voting.

At the time, Lim's father, Kit Siang, called on BN to respect the decision of the MCA reps who abstained from voting.

Lim said both issues were different, with the motion against PORR not coming from BN and that the project was not even finalised.

"The difference is that the PORR had not been finalised (and was never built until today) unlike the land reclamation projects that were approved and finalised by BN.

"Now, the Umno motion proposes to postpone land reclamation approved by BN that could result in compensation to be paid not by BN, but by the present Pakatan Harapan state government," he said in a statement today.

"This was patently unfair and was the reason why 23 Harapan state government reps opposed Umno's motion. Opposing Umno's motion would also show our disapproval of BN approving 3,241 acres for land reclamation," he said.

He argued that abstaining or supporting Umno's motion would let BN and Umno off the hook for such failure to protect public interest.

Lim said although the issue has caused the confidence of the Penang Pakatan Harapan administration, the five remained as state government representatives.

"At the present moment, their duties as Pakatan Harapan government reps will continue as normal, together with their government constituency allocations. The state government will assess their role and performance in government-related tasks," he said.

The motion by Pulau Betong assemblymen Muhamad Farid Saad was tabled last Friday, leading to a heated argument in the House.

He had asked the House to compel the state to subject all land reclamation projects to

public hearings.

He also wanted all new land reclamation projects to be put on hold pending a detail study on their environmental impact, and to be cancelled if they were bad for the environment.

DAP rep Teh Yee Cheu was the sole government backbencher who voted to support the motion but apologised soon after and is now facing action from his party.

Lim had been arguing that it was BN that first okayed land reclamation projects in Penang, and what Farid wanted could cause the government to go bankrupt if it went back on its deals on approved projects.

He also said the federal law already stated that such projects must go through detailed environmental impact assessment and public consultations, which the state government had followed.

“Would Lim Guan Eng be praised for permitting the Penang government to go bankrupt for paying compensation, so as to stop reclamation projects approved by the previous BN government that will only benefit BN cronies?” he asked.

“I do not believe that I was elected to allow Penang to go bankrupt. I am willing to be condemned than praised to keep Penang free from bankruptcy with a healthy surplus for us to undertake investment in building public infrastructure, education and innovation,” Lim said.

He said if the state was to stall any of the remaining reclamation projects approved by the previous government like the Tanjung Pinang land reclamation project by E&O Bhd, it could entail compensation costs of up to RM1 billion, which might bankrupt the state. – November 2, 2015.

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