

## **Pakatan MPs dispute Ng's direct negotiations view**

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**by S Pathmawathy**

Opposition parliamentarians today disputed Tourism Minister Ng Yen Yen's view that advertisements are best handed out through direct negotiations.

DAP MPs Teresa Kok (Seputeh) and Tony Pua (Petaling Jaya Utara) contested the minister's statement insisting that competitive pricing can only be determined via an open tender process.

NONE "The ministry must not make unfounded excuses as to why it chose to engage in direct bookings, as opposed to open tender processes," Kok (right) told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

Citing the 2010 Auditor-General's Report stating that 72 percent of the advertisements contracts secured by the ministry were via direct negotiations with various providers and without the approval of the Finance Ministry, Kok said: "Such a mismanagement of government process - and public funds - is unfair on the rakyat, especially during times of financial struggle."

Pua, showing a list of tendered-out advertisement contracts by various ministries in neighbouring Singapore, reiterated that only an open tender process could outline the cheapest price.

"For Ng to say that open tender is not feasible, it is complete nonsense because in Singapore, every single ministry, whenever they do advertising, they call for a tender," he added.

NONE "This is evidence that we can have an open tender for advertisement and countries that do this get best prices, but in Malaysia we don't do it and certain parties get more money," mocked Pua (left).

Selangor Times' advertising executive Timothy Loh, who was also present, pointed out that from his decade-old experience in the business the best quotations are set through open tenders.

"Say I'm one of the bidder and I submit my bid for a tender from an advertising agency and I have 20 or 30 clients with me for the contract - and when I get the contract I can always negotiate with the advertising agency, newspaper or publication and I can definitely get a better rate than direct negotiations," he said.

Kok also rubbished Ng's statement that advertisements were handed out through direct negotiations to save on 15 percent spent on commission for "middlemen".

'Weak argument'

"This seems to be a very weak argument, as it is common knowledge that through a competitive open tender process, media agencies would offer highly competitive prices and cater proposals to match the market rate," she noted.

She urged the ministry to comply with the Treasury's policy directives and to practice ethical contract agreements.

Kok also called for prompt investigations against the Tourism Ministry and for it to respond to the problems highlighted in the audit report.

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