

**Apologise for land scam charge, Penang gov't told**  
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The Penang BN wants the Pakatan Rakyat government to withdraw a White Paper on a land scam that it presented to the state legislative assembly last year.

The White Paper, dubbed the "Tan Hak Ju land scandal report", was presented to the legislature in April by Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy, who had launched a probe into the matter in 2008.

In 2005, Tan Hak Ju sued the state government for RM40 million as compensation and interest for cancelling his application to purchase two plots of land 4.2 hectares in area in Butterworth for quarrying.

gerakan cirtisize penang pakatan state financial strategy 301010 teng hock nanTan's approval to purchase the two plots was later withdrawn, as the land had belonged to two associations - Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple and Persatuan Hokkien Hoay Kuan Province Wellesley - since July 1969.

State BN working committee chairperson Dr Teng Hock Nan (right) said today the state government should apologise for labelling the matter "a scandal", since this had been proven otherwise in a decision of the Court of Appeal in Putrajaya last Wednesday.

Teng said he was informed that the Penang government had won its case against Tan and was ordered to pay the businessman only RM500,000 instead of RM40 million as sought.

'BN did not steal RM40 million'

He said the land issue has been "politicised and exploited" to the hilt by the state government to mislead the rakyat, and to tarnish and destroy the reputation of the previous BN administration "while the case was pending in court".

Teng, a former state executive councillor, quoted several paragraphs from the White Paper that had labelled the deal as a scandal, thereby putting the previous administration in disrepute.

"It was as if we had stolen RM40 million!" lamented Teng, at a press conference in Penang, at which he was accompanied by his compatriots from Gerakan, MCA and MIC.

"We were worried that their constant harping on the matter would jeopardise and compromise the court decision," he said.

Teng said the allegations of a "scandal or scam" have been repeated by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, his two deputies, eight state executive councillors and 17 backbenchers in the state legislative assembly.

State's deafening silence questioned

"The allegations were made to tarnish and destroy the reputation of the previous BN administration, to show that we have committed a wrong... it is most unfair, irresponsible and vicious of them to do it," he added.

NONEHe also questioned the state's "deafening silence" over the matter, although it had been most vocal in condemning the BN's handling of the land deal in the past.

Teng said BN was waiting for Lim to announce the state's victory in the court case, but 10 days have passed, and no information had been released on the matter.

"We are very surprised and disappointed with Ramasamy (right), first for the White Paper, and then for not announcing the court's decision to the public," Teng said.

"We want Lim and his officials to withdraw words such as 'land scam' and 'scandal' related to the deal as these words have a criminal connotation, and to apologise to the people for misleading them.

Ramasamy, who is also Perai MP and Batu Kawan assemblyperson, could not be reached for comment.

When contacted, Penang exco member for Local Government, Transportation and Environment, Chow Kon Yeow, said the state has not issued an announcement on the matter yet as Tan can submit his appeal over the court decision in 30 days.

"This is not the final decision. We (state government) have not received a written judgment on the matter yet," the DAP Tanjung MP told Malaysiakini.

On Teng's request for the retraction of the word 'scandal', a label vehemently opposed by the BN, Chow said it was not possible for Tan to purchase the land in the first place if a scam did not take place.

"The appeal was only about the quantum of payment to be paid by the state government to Tan," he added.

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