

'Penang BN not competing with CM for ideas'

Susan Loone

MalaysiaKini.com

May 15, 2012

Is the BN reluctant to revive Penang's free port status because it feels that Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng will hijack the idea and claim it as a Pakatan Rakyat achievement?

Questioned by reporters, state BN chief Teng Chang Yeow countered that the coalition is not competing with Pakatan for ideas on how to improve Penang.

When Teng had first mentioned the free port proposal, both the state government and Bukit Gelugor MP Karpal Singh had called for the status be restored before the 13th general election.

Teng said the free port project remains a proposal and if approved by the federal government, it will be implemented only if the coalition recaptures Penang.

He also said the announcement of the project is all about timing and that it is just a coincidence that this has come up after his appointment to head BN in the state.

"If he (Lim) has wanted it, he should have mentioned it four years ago, not now. Why hurry to compete with ideas?" Teng replied, after chairing his first state BN committee meeting in Penang yesterday.

"I have come up with a comprehensive programme for Penang. (The) free port is just part of it, to make this state a tourism haven."

Yesterday, the state BN leaders had revealed an "alternative " social economic **transformation plan** to recapture and develop the state. The blueprint covers balanced development of both the island and the mainland, which is predominantly home to the Malay community.

He was also asked if the proposal is merely to entice voters to return their votes to BN which had performed dismally, winning only 11 of the 40 state seats in 2008.

Teng denied that it was bait to fish for votes, also saying the proposal has been discussed with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who is willing to review it.

Feedback from people

The state BN would also like to see if the people support the proposal, Teng said.

"We will reveal our mechanism to get feedback from the public. We will tell you later how we are going to get an accurate response from the rakyat," he said.

"If the people support the idea, we will implement it once we are the state government, (as) we have to work with the federal government to achieve it."

Teng said the revival of the free port status would have to be implemented carefully as it will involve amendments to current financial laws.

Asked if the public would question the BN's motive, given that it had several decades to revive the status but has not proposed it until polls are around the corner, Teng said Penang needs "a new engine of growth".

The manufacturing sector has reached its peak, he noted, and although the state still needs high technology investment, jobs created by this sector would not be as much as tourism.

"The services sector is a major contributor to job creation. Penang has relied too much on manufacturing which is a very risky situation.

"We need another engine of growth if we want to become a high income state. This is not an election manifesto. The services sector has a lot of room for improvement."

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/197939>