

## **Penang BN and Pakatan against port privatisation**

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**By Susan Loone**

The Penang BN appears to be united with Pakatan Rakyat on the issue of the privatisation of the Penang port to businessman Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary.

The DAP recently launched a campaign urging the port be returned to Penangites after the government had confirmed that Syed Mokhtar (right) won the bid to privatise it.

And at a press conference in Penang today, Penang BN chief Teng Chang Yeow urged the federal government to return the issue of privatisation to the National Economic Council for review as the deal was not inked yet.

"We will send a delegation to the prime minister to express our views collected from the people," he said.

However Teng quickly tried to distance himself from the possibility of being on the same page as DAP, saying "we do things differently".

When asked to confirm BN's stand the matter, Teng was dodgy but said "you can infer whatever you want" when asked if the press could infer that the coalition had a similar stand on the issue.

Teng, a former state executive councillor, was told that the finance minister had said in a parliamentary reply to Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong that the issue of a free port did not arise as Penang already boasts five free industrial trade zones.

"When I raised the matter with the PM, he did say he will look into it positively. If we become the government and we do not do it, then you ask us why," he stressed.

Teng, (left) the Gerakan secretary-general, said that the issue of a free port was raised by BN as part of a blueprint to turn the state into a tourism haven.

He added that at a May 15 press conference in Penang, he had announced the development of a blueprint for the state, which would be realised once BN recaptures the state government.

"The idea was raised with the PM who had agreed to look into it positively upon getting the feedback and support from the people," he said.

"BN Penang has also announced that it would carry out a series of dialogues and a signature campaign in support of the idea to convince the federal government," he added.

On whether there was an open tender for the privatisation of the port, Teng said he did not want to delve into the "technicalities".

On whether privatising the port without an open tender was a "political liability" to the BN, Teng said "I don't know how it works, I am not in the federal government".

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