

**DAP denies its MPs 'twisted' parliamentary replies**  
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**By Susan Loone**

State BN publicity chief Tan Cheng Liang has recently alleged that DAP MPs have manipulated the federal government's parliamentary reply on the Penang free port status.

Tan , who is MCA state wanita chief, had allegedly said that the DAP MPs had purposely selected parts of the reply which benefitted them but covered up those which did not.

She was referring to Prime Minister Najb Abdul Razak's reply to Bagan MP and Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng on June 19, that the federal government was considering the state BN chief Teng Chang Yeow's free port proposal.

The reply came days after the Finance Ministry, also under Najib, had issued a written reply to Bukit Bendera MP Liew Chin Tong on the same issue.

On the said reply issued on June 13, the Finance Ministry had said that the issue of free port does not arise as Penang already has five free trade zones.

This answer was distributed to the media in a press conference called by DAP on June 15, when the party launched its 'Return the Port to Penangites' campaign in Penang.

Najib's 'afterthought'

Tan's remark earned a rebuke from Penang DAP chief Chow Kon Yeow who said the allegations were "serious as it amounts to accusing the party's MPs of contempt of Parliament".

"We want to deny the allegations by giving facts. On June 12, the ministry also replied to my question on the same topic," Chow told reporters today.

"The reply was similar to the one issued to Liew, which is why we did not distribute it on June 15, when we launched our free port campaign," Chow added.

"This is the real situation. We did not twist, hide or were selective of the facts," stressed the Penang executive councillor.

Chow denied that it was possible to manipulate the replies when DAP cannot foresee what Najib would say on June 19, in response to questions by Lim.

He said the DAP could anticipate Najib's reply but suspected that it was an 'afterthought'.

He added that it was possible the reply to Liew on June 13 by Finance Ministry officials were indeed the "real position of the free port".

"When it was reported on June 15 and 16 in the media, the Penang BN must have panicked and contacted their masters in Putrajaya to come out with a new reply," Chow said.

"We do not care about their reply but to accuse us of manipulation is an outright lie and false accusation," he added.

Chow urged Tan - the former Jawi assemblyperson - to withdraw the accusations and apologise for her baseless remarks.

He stressed that the parliamentary reply has not been amended or doctored as the DAP had distributed "the real copy".

Chow said it was up to Najib now to explain what he meant by saying he would consider the new concepts proposed by the state BN.

He added that if the federal government had the political will, they must implement the free port status now instead of using the issue as a "bait" to garner votes for the coming general election.

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