

'BN double-faced over Penang port privatisation'

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The BN has been condemned for "dishonesty and political cheating" over the privatisation of the Penang Port, a hot topic in the state since it became known that an Umno-linked tycoon had won the bid for it.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said his rivals were "playing the double-faced game" of opposing the port's privatisation but on the other hand, Seaport Terminal (Johor) Sdn Bhd (Seaport) is allowed to finalise its takeover by December this year.

Lim said the federal government has given a letter of award to Seaport Terminal without disclosing any details and providing any assurances to Penangites on the future of this public utility.

The DAP secretary-general urged the federal government to come clean by confirming Seaport director Mohd Sidik Shaik Osman's recent statement on the matter.

"What is the point of Penang BN opposing this privatisation exercise while it is another fait accompli that not only deceives others but also oneself?" Lim asked in a statement today.

Like BN, the Pakatan Rakyat state government and several stakeholders have expressed regret at the take-over of the port by business tycoon Syed Mokhtar AlBukhary.

Both coalition are running separate but similar campaigns to call for the port to be run by Penangites.

Today, Transparency International-Malaysia president Paul Low (right) slammed the privatisation exercise as "violating the practices of good governance and transparency".

Low had urged the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to look into allegations by the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce that the disposal of the Penang Port contravenes the Anti-Competition Act.

Sketchy details on privatisation

Lim said Penangites have the right to know the terms of this deal as there have only been sketchy details, while Mohd Sidik had declined to state the amount of capital injection by Seaport into the Penang Port.

Mohd Sidik had however remarked that there would be a capital expenditure of RM1 billion by 2017 and RM4.7 billion by 2022.

Lim asked if the privatisation exercise would be automatically terminated if Seaport fails to invest these sums of money.

“And why has Seaport refused to immediately undertake the RM353 million dredging of the port channel project?” he queried.

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