

Tan: Removal at request of Najib, not Chua
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Former Jawi assemblyperson Tan Cheng Liang has downplayed her removal from the position of Penang Port Commission (PPC) chairperson, saying it was at the request of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for the sake of 'structural reforms'.

NONE Tan (right) said her successor MCA president Chua Soi Lek had met her last Friday to clarify that he did not seek her removal, but that he was sent by Najib to undertake the reforms due to the privatisation of the port.

Tan said the port needed "structural reforms" since the duties between it and Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB), the corporate arm of the former, often overlapped.

She said Chua, a former health minister, can raise the issues arising from the privatisation of the port at the National Economic Council in the Prime Minister's Department.

"If there were any problems, Chua can raise the issues directly with the PM, there is no need to go through a few levels like it would be for me," she told reporters after packing up her stuff at the office.

NONE Problems often arose between the two entities as the PPSB was under the Finance Ministry, while the PPC reported to the Transport Ministry.

At times, PPSB was slow to respond to communications from the PPC, and seemed to have "more powers" than the latter, although it was supposed to regulate port duties.

The PPC had rented out its premises to PPSB for only RM1 per year, while it had to rent an office in another venue.

However, Najib had eventually agreed to allow PPC to set up its offices at level 2 of the Penang International Cruise Centre.

Experience will ensure enhancement of PPC's functions

The Prime Minister's Office announced Chua's appointment in a recent statement, saying that the year-long appointment will be effective up to Nov 14 next year.

NONE It said Chua's experience as a former cabinet minister and Johor executive councillor will ensure the enhancement of the port commission's functions as the supervisory body and facilitator for the development and expansion of Penang Port.

Meanwhile, Tan said she was aware that several companies had submitted their proposals to take over the port services.

However, she declined to comment further on the matter.

On the proposal by Bukit Bendera parliamentarian Liew Chin Tong to merge the two entities - PPC and PPSB - rather than full privatisation, Tan said it was suggesting that the old model be revived.

"Whatever it is, solving the structural problem of the port is the main consideration," she added.

NONETan said she has delivered "three gifts" to Penangites during her tenure as PPC chairperson.

"I have indentified the structural problems between PPC and PPSB and submitted reports to the Prime Minister's Department," she said.

"I have also been involved in the opening of the Penang International Cruise Centre and the PM has agreed to the privatisation proposal," she added.

Tan apologised if her previous performance could not match the standards of "certain people".

On Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's comment that Chua was not a Penangite, Tan also questioned the former's place of origin, Malacca.

"Remember, whenever we accuse people, three fingers will point back at us," she said, taking a jibe at Lim.

"We are all Malaysians, please do not differentiate who is Malay or Chinese or who comes from which state any more; whoever is capable, let him or her do the job," she added.

Tan said it was good that a chairperson to the port was finally appointed as the position had been left vacant for three months, during which time the directors could not even call for a meeting and were unable to submit their budget report to the Transport Ministry.

She said she did not mind being removed as chairperson as the appointment was only for a year.

"If I do not go now, I would still leave someday," she said.

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