

State gov't to bid for Penang port
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The Penang government has today declared that it would like to bid for the federal-owned Penang Port Sdn Bhd (PPSB) under an open tender process.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has written formally to Finance Minister Najib Abdul Razak expressing the state's wish to buy over the ministry-owned port.

"We are fully supportive of (Prime Minister Najib's) public pronouncements that key privatisation and project awards are conducted in a transparent manner and open to international tender to maximise revenue, in which Penang state wishes participate," the letter e-mailed to Malaysiakini today said.

The bid comes in the wake of recent speculation that the Putrajaya leadership is seeking to privatise PPSB, with Singapore's AsiaOne news channel reporting that tycoon Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary is set to take over the port.

NONEPPSB is the corporate arm of the Penang Port Commission (PPC), which is headed by MCA president Chua Soi Lek, appointed by Najib last month.

The PPSB has become a bone of contention between the state and federal leadership since the Lim-led Pakatan Rakyat (PR) took over the state in the 2008 general elections.

Lim earlier this week had questioned Chua's appointment as the PPC head, saying that he was 'surprised' that the federal government did not choose a Penangite for the position.

Chua replaced former Jawi assemblyperson Tan Cheng Liang on Nov 15, with Najib citing 'structural reforms' for the appointment as a reason for the move.

In the letter requesting federal government to enter into discussions with his government, Lim had said the intention was to transform the port into a 'halal food manufacturing hub'.

"If Penang is successful in purchasing Penang Port, we will bring in both local and foreign technology partners including local Malays, to operate the port and its facilities at world class standard," Lim said.