

PGCC: Former state gov't 'did not mislead Abdullah'
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Former Penang executive councillor Dr Teng Hock Nan has accused Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng of playing a political game over re-zoning the site of the proposed Penang Global City Centre (PGCC) project.
MCPX

"Why there is so much publicity on a simple issue? Either he is naïve about how to re-zone the land or taking potshots at the previous administration to gain cheap political mileage," said Teng (left).

He was commenting on Lim's call last Sunday to predecessor Dr Koh Tsu Koon to guide him "on how to re-zone the project site to its original zoning" since it was the previous administration that had reclassified the site about a year ago.

"Either he already knows about it or he can learn about it from relevant officers (and government authorities). He should not blame the previous state government."

He said the former Gerakan-led state government did not mislead the public or the federal government about the project, which was launched by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi last year.

The developer had organised the ceremony on an "iconic concept", said Teng, and the premier was fully aware that the project had not been approved by the Penang Island Municipal Council at the time.

penang global city centre 170907 pak lah officiate "If one were to recall the PM's speech, he called on the state government to expedite the project," said Teng.

Originally earmarked as a recreational and open space zone, the Penang Turf Club (PTC) site in Jalan Batu Gantong, George Town was re-gazetted under the Penang Structural Plan 2020 on June 28, 2007 as a new development zone, a move believed to be expedited for the PGCC project.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976, the state planning committee, in which the chief minister is the chairperson by legal requirement, re-gazetted the land for commercial use in pursuant to the Structure Plan.

As current chief minister and head of the state planning committee, Lim now has the final say on approving or rejecting the project and the type of development to be carried out, noted Teng.

Claims brushed off

Project developer Abad Naluri Sdn Bhd had bought the PTC site, which had been classified as Grade One land, for RM488 million.

PTC members, who lodged a police report alleging discrepancies, claimed that the re-zoning

exempted Abad Naluri from paying a premium estimated to be worth RM200 million to the state government for land conversion.

However, Teng, who was in charge of the local government portfolio, brushed aside such claims as being off the mark.

He said that, with Grade One land status, the need to convert the PTC site did not arise and that a premium would not be charged on non-existent conversion - all that is needed to facilitate new development is to re-zone the site.

The state government would earn revenue when the local council imposes a levy on the developer for the project. The quantum would depend on the type of development involved.

penang global city centre 170907 buildingsHe said a government would only agree to a project after carefully considering all aspects of modern development projects such as traffic dispersal, access of public transportation and multi-purpose use to the public.

Abad Naluri is an associate company of Equine Capital Bhd controlled by businessman Patrick Lim, who is known to be a close friend of Abdullah. Equine Capital holds 25 percent of Abad Naluri.

The PGCC, located in the heart of Georgetown, has been billed as the country's largest private sector development project. It is also the single-biggest component of the Northern Corridor Economic Region development plan, launched last August.

The proposal includes two five-star hotels, a performing arts centre, retail complex, two office towers, residential properties, world-class convention centre, observatory tower, parking space, monorail transportation and public arena.

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