

**Stop KTMB takeover by Syed Mokhtar's MMC, says PKR
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By Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 — PKR today urged the federal government to stop plans to give state-owned Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad's (KTMB) operations to a company owned by logistics tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary.

Syed Mokhtar's Malaysian Mining Corporation (MMC) was reported to be planning a takeover of the ailing KTMB, but PKR questioned why an open tender was not carried out.

PKR strategic director Rafizi Ramli said the government had broken its promise that all contracts would be awarded through open tenders.

Rafizi said the government must reveal details of any KTMB privatisation contract. — File pic "What are the government's conditions to ensure that KTMB assets and land, estimated to be worth RM50 billion, do not fall into private hands?" Rafizi asked at a press conference today.

He had expressed fear that the proposed takeover by MMC was an attempt to increase its landbank, saying that it was important for details of any KTMB privatisation contract to be revealed.

KTMB is the operator of the national railway line, while the assets and land are owned by Railway Assets Corporation (RAC).

"Although the assets are parked under RAC, the operator has a big clout on how the assets are utilised," Rafizi later told The Malaysian Insider.

"We want certainty and confirmation. What is happening to the RM50 billion landbank? What is the fine print?"

Rafizi also asked for the Najib administration to guarantee that the interests of the current KTMB staff will be protected.

The KTMB Workers Union last week said that it would organise a demonstration in October to protest the MMC takeover over fears that its members would lose their jobs.

Rafizi said that Putrajaya has to "avoid another private project paid by taxpayers' money" by considering the form of financial aid to be offered to MMC.

He said the takeover could possibly be funded by government-backed bonds, alleging that it has always been the practice for state projects that are privatised.

Rafizi claimed that the KTMB privatisation would give the tycoon a "monopoly" over the nation's railways, saying that this would place the federal government at a disadvantage in future plans to upgrade the transportation system.

"He will be in a position to squeeze the public," Rafizi said.

Rafizi pointed out that a consortium linked to Syed Mokhtar was awarded the multi-billion MRT rail project.

Syed Mokhtar also owns the Senai airport and major ports in the country, including the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) and Pasir Gudang port.

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