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EC to consider jurisdiction of local authorities

IPOH, Tues. - The Election Commission will consider a proposal that the jurisdiction of local authorities be taken into account when delineating constituencies.

Election Commission secretary Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar said the Commission would seek to find "middle ground" as the proposal, while difficult to implement, had valid points.

The suggestion was raised during a local inquiry here today, when appellants voiced concern that State Assemblymen would be less effective in providing services to the people when required to run around to liaise with several local authorities.

Wan Ahmad said public services, such as road maintenance, drainage and garbage collection were the responsibilities of local authorities.

"State Assemblymen and MPs should concentrate on bringing development to the area, such as setting up new schools and mosques," he said.

Today's inquiry was chaired by EC chairman Datuk Wira Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman in the presence of his deputy Datuk Abdullah Zawawi Mohamed and five other commissioners.

The 100-odd appellants were led by Abdul Rahman Said Alli who is Perak Consumers Association president.

The EC, on a two-month tour since Oct 1 to collect feedback on the redelineation exercise, is expected to display the new maps of constituencies for the second time in January.

Wan Ahmad said this would be followed by a report to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Cabinet, adding that the new constituency boundaries would be ready to be debated in the March-May parliamentary session.

He said feedback from Malacca, Sabah, Johor and Perak on the exercise showed that most complaints were about the relocation of polling districts, while some objected to the names of the new constituencies.

In today's inquiry, Rahman objected to the creation of Simpang Pulai state seat and appealed that the constituency boundaries of Rapat Setia and Teja be maintained.

"The creation of the third state seat would not ease the workload of State Assemblymen because of the overlapping jurisdiction of local authorities.

"For example, the future Teja State assemblyman would have to deal with Ipoh city council, Kinta Selatan district council branches in Kampar and Batu Gajah," he said.

Currently, the EC proposes to create one new parliamentary seat and seven more State seats in Perak.

Wan Ahmad said the redelineation exercise was based on balancing the number of voters, keeping villages, towns and cities from being split into separate constituencies and keeping constituencies within the same district administration as far as possible.