

**PKR man decries Penang's 'interference' in councils**  
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Penang municipal councillor Lim Boo Chang is crying foul over the alleged interference of the state government in local council affairs.

“Of late the council is being unduly pressured by the interference of the state government,” the councillor said during his speech at the full meeting of the Penang Municipal Council today.

In particular, he claimed that in one particular area, enforcement actions must go through a certain state assemblyperson before anything can be implemented.

“As I am also well aware, the assemblyperson also often called upon the council's office to ask for enforcement (raids),” he claimed, relating further that the elected representative in question had also personally involved himself in a raid.

This, Lim (right) claimed, runs counter to the Local Government Act 1976 which stated that no assemblyperson must play a role in council affairs.

“Enforcement orders being referred to the assemblyperson may lead to abuse, preferential treatment and selective prosecution, where the spirit of without fear or favour in enforcement is sacrificed for political influence, and worse, to sabotage political rivals.”

The councillor fears that such practices, if allowed to continue, may lead to abuse of proper council procedures and lead to a culture of political patronage.

He called upon the council to act in the strictest sense of the law and stop any assemblyperson from hijacking enforcement powers of the body.

“Here, I urge the assemblyperson to apologise to the council and at the same time, the council chairperson shouldn't stay silent in this issue as she is the protector of the image and functions of the council.”

Such interference, he said, is just one of the symptoms of the far-reaching state intervention which saw many matters ramrodded through the council without proper debate.

Lim also pointed out that two recent meetings, the briefing on the sPICE project and a special council meeting on the budget, were closed to the media and public.

He said that closing the meetings to the media and the public contravenes section 23 of the Local Government Act, which requires that such meeting be made public and open to all.

Warning the council of the popular maxim that “power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely!” he reiterated that the council must remember that there are check and balance in a democracy, and the council should stay true to its role of safeguarding tax payers' interests and not be just a “rubber stamp” for the state.