

Penang Pakatan in talks on when to hold state polls

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By Susan Loone

Pakatan Rakyat parties in Penang are already in discussions on when to hold state elections but cannot reach a decision yet on whether to have separate or simultaneous polls with the federal government.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the Pakatan Rakyat parties in Penang are already in discussions about the matter but have yet to come to a conclusion.

It is learnt that some may be in favour of a simultaneous election with parliamentary polls to capitalise on state and party human resources.

However, several leaders prefer to stretch it longer until next year so that many of the state's programmes which benefit Penang voters can be channelled before elections are called.

Still, Lim, who is DAP secretary-general, reiterated that the timing of when Penang would go to the polls would depend very much on the day that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak dissolves Parliament.

He added that many in Pakatan have stated their views but an agreement as to when state polls would be held has not been reached yet.

Lim stressed that the decision on the date of the election would also be based on "current situations".

"So whether we would hold separate or simultaneous elections with the federal government will be announced only when Najib dissolves Parliament," said Lim after handing over the management of the local council public toilet to Lone Pine Hotel today.

'Anti-hopping law first'

On the chances of having state polls separately or simultaneously with the general election, Lim declined to comment.

In this, Penang is lagging behind its counterpart in Selangor which has recently announced that its state polls would not be held together with the 13th general election.

Penang BN are already mocking the state government on the delay in announcing its decision, saying the leaders are afraid their misconduct would be exposed if the polls are to be called now.

The polls are expected to be held soon, with Najib issuing his strongest hint yet that it may be held in November, although there are still views coming from Umno leaders that the premier might complete his full term until March next year.

Meanwhile, Lim has also somewhat dropped hints about why the state administration cannot announce its poll decision yet.

"We would like to pass the anti-hopping law first in the state assembly," he said, referring to the draft which will be tabled in the coming sitting in November.

The law would prevent state assemblypersons from shifting parties after the elections, and the motivation for such an Act came about after several Pakatan parliamentary and state representatives jumped ship, affecting its stake on power.

The clearest example of how party hopping can devastate political parties was in 2009 in Perak, when three Pakatan reps quit and became BN-friendly, handing over the state back to BN, without fresh elections being held.

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