

Penang to push for council elections

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By A Sangeetha, The Malay Mail

The Penang state government insists on carrying on with local government elections despite the dismissal by a federal minister that the elections, which desisted in 1964, were not necessary.

NONE "We will not be deterred by Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan's (right) statement that the local election is unnecessary.

"He obviously does not follow or understand local elections," said state local government, traffic management and flood mitigation exco Chow Kon Yeow.

"Regardless, we plan to continue our effort which began in 2008 to push for the elections. Recently, the Federal Court postponed the decision on the application for leave to hear the case to June 27."

Following the failure of not receiving a commitment from the Election Commission (EC) to conduct local elections, the state and former Aliran president P Ramakrishnan had previously filed an application for leave in the Federal Court.

"The case is still very much alive," Chow said.

tunku abdul rahman He said first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman promised to reinstate the local government elections during a parliament sitting in 1965 after the elections ceased in 1964 following the Indonesian insurgency.

"More than 40 years have passed since the promise was made. There was also the Athi Nahappan Report in 1968 that also strengthened the call to elect local councillors," he said.

Two days ago, Abdul Rahman reportedly said local elections were unnecessary and not the "only way" to elect local council heads as the "person" could be elected based on popularity.

Part of Pakatan Rakyat manifesto

He also reportedly said this would result in the elected person not working and the electorate having to "deal" with him for an entire term as opposed to an appointed

councillor who could be replaced for failure to perform.

Chow instead responded that Abdul Rahman's remark on this was a different matter because the choice of electing or appointing a councillor and their performance were beholden to how a local council is governed whether efficiently or lackadaisically.

NONELast year, the Penang legislative assembly passed the Local Elections (Penang Island and Province Wellesley) Enactment to restore the third vote that was part of the Pakatan Rakyat's manifesto in the 2008 general election.

The Act has adopted a bulk of clauses from the repealed Local Government Elections Act 1960.

According to the federal constitution, the ninth schedule and Article 113(4) allows for the state legislature to hold local elections.

The state also gazetted a notice to set aside the exemption of Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1974 that disallows local councils from holding elections.

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