

DAP appointees reject PSM petition on local polls
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Municipal councillors appointed by the DAP have refused to sign a petition to restore local council elections organised by Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM), saying the matter is already before the court.

Armed with the petition, PSM and several NGOs visited the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) yesterday to get the support of the councillors to restore local elections but those from the DAP refused to sign it.

PSM central committee member Choo Chon Kai (right) and few other NGO representatives submitted a memorandum to a representative of MPPP president Patahiyah Ismail and tried to collect signatures for their petition before a full council meeting started yesterday.

Choo said only six councillors signed the petition - five from PKR and one from PAS - but none from DAP.

"When we approached them, the DAP councillors tried to avoid us and refused to sign the petition. They asked us to refer to the party's council whip, Harvinder Singh," Choo told Malaysiakini.

"We then spoke to Havinder, who asked us why they should sign the petition when the issue of local council elections has been taken to court.

"We explained that this is a method to strengthen and highlight our support for the agenda (to restore local elections). But he merely gave the same response," Choo added.

'Possible they were instructed not to sign'

He said it was possible the DAP councillors had been instructed by Harvinder not to sign the petition.

Choo is surprised about this, since all 14 Seberang Perai Municipal (MPSP) councillors, including DAP members, signed the petition when the PSM-led group approached them last week.

PSM, together with Jerit, Suaram, Northern Green Youth and Badan Bertindak Rumah Ganti Rumah Selesa (Ragas) have been visiting various local authorities in the country, to get local councillors to support the restoration of local government elections.

They visited the Johor Bahru Tengah Municipal Council on May 14, but none of the

councillors there would support the petition.

When contacted, Havinder explained that DAP councillors did not reject the idea of bringing back local elections.

He said the Penang government had supported the idea all along, since Pakatan Rakyat took over the state from BN in March 2008.

"We have made a lot of efforts on the matter, including passing a local government election law and bringing the matter to the Federal Court," Harvinder said.

"But we don't see any of the NGOs showing their support in the court. If they are really serious about it, please go to the court and show your support," he added.

He denied giving any instructions to DAP councillors to tell them not to sign the petition.

In June last year, the Penang government obtained permission from the Federal Court to proceed with a petition to restore local government elections.

According to its lawyers, the state has the power to reintroduce local government elections as this is provided for under the 1960 Local Government Elections Act (revised 1991).

A similar petition was also filed by former Aliran president P Ramakrishnan(above, right).

They are seeking the negation of Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1976, which nullifies all local government elections.

Penang has held local council elections for the George Town City Council and the Butterworth town council since 1951, but local council elections were abolished nationwide 48 years ago, on March 1, 1965.

In an attempt to restore local council elections, the Penang legislative assembly gazetted the Local Government Elections (Penang Island and Province Wellesley) Enactment on July 5, 2012.