

Minister: Local gov't polls not suitable and costly
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PARLIAMENT Local government elections are not suitable for Malaysia as they involve high costs which instead could be used for development projects for the people, said Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government Minister Abdul Rahman Dahlan.

He said the indirect costs involved would be burdensome to smaller local authorities, especially those with deficit budgets.

“Although local government elections are practised by some countries, the turnout is usually very low.

“Taking into consideration low turnouts, the results of local government elections will not reflect the true picture on the wishes of the local residents,” he said in a written reply to Lim Lip Eng (DAP-Segambut) in the Dewan Rakyat today.

Lim had wanted to know why the government was not allowing local elections in the country.

Abdul Rahman also said frequent changes in the leadership line up of local councils would affect the smooth implementation of policies and programmes formulated at the federal level for the benefit of the people.

Another factor, he said, was that the short terms for elected councillors would cause them to pay more attention on getting re-elected rather than wholeheartedly discharging their responsibilities and duties.

“Also taking into consideration the imbalance in racial composition in urban and rural areas, it is feared local government elections will result in local councils that will look more into the interests of a particular race,” he said.

Referring to councils in Sabah and Sarawak which are not governed by the Local Government Elections Act 1960, he said enactments need to be made by the two states in order to hold local government elections.

In August last year, the Federal Court ruled that the Penang government did not have to powers to conduct local government elections.

- Bernama