

No more municipal councillors in Pahang
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Starting today, there are no municipal councillors in office in the whole of Pahang.

After five extensions since September 2008, over 200 municipal councillors in the state officially ended their tenure yesterday.

A state executive council meeting in Kuantan yesterday discussed the matter but Menteri Besar Adnan Yaakob wants to hold another special meeting on the issue - on a date to be decided later.

It is claimed that the delay was due to Adnan's intention to increase the councillor quotas for BN component parties and also to contemplate the reservation of a certain quota for non-partisan professionals, a practice that has been implemented in the Pakatan-ruled states.

Apparently, internal problems within the Pahang Umno are another hurdle for the state government in coming out with a new list of councillors.

Quota for professionals

State Local Government, Environment and Health Committee chairman Hoh Khai Mun said Adnan's decision to fix another day to resolve the issue showed that the state government was serious in addressing the matter.

"This will not bring any severe impact on the municipal councils because the council administrations are still functioning," he told Malaysiakini when contacted yesterday.

Hoh said the state government was still considering the adjustment of quotas for BN component parties and whether to reserve some positions for non-partisan professionals, as there were pros and cons in this.

"Although they can leverage on their professional knowledge to serve the people, they may lack political sensitivity and hence may not be able to meet the people's demand," he said.

Special meeting to be convened 'soon'

Hoh admitted that it was not appropriate to keep extending the tenure of the councillors, which was why the government decided to end their terms, even if it created a councillor vacuum in the state.

"Once the quota is decided, the state government will ask all component parties to submit their name lists for approval," he said, adding that the special meeting would be convened "soon".

The tenure of over 200 Pahang municipal councillors had ended in September 2008, but the state government extended their tenure of the councillors for up to five times, until yesterday.

According to media reports, some councillors had resigned during this period but the

vacancies were not filled, while some were "frequently" absent from council meetings. This had hindered the municipal councils from functioning smoothly.

Umno factions cannot agree on new list

A BN insider told Malaysiakini that the main hurdle in the appointment of new councillors was Umno, because the factions in the party could not reach consensus on the appointees.

"MCA has no problem. We interviewed the new candidates and came out with the name list, which is awaiting state government approval," said the insider.

On the issue of quota adjustments, he said Adnan was considering giving a bigger quota to the People's Progressive Party, which has strong base in areas such as Raub and Bentong.

However, the delay in the appointment of new councillors drew flak from DAP Tras assemblyperson Choong Siew Onn.

He said the two-year procrastination had prevented the municipal councils from getting new blood.

"Some councillors have reached retirement age and some are not performing, but their terms were extended again and again," he told Malaysiakini when contacted yesterday.

This showed that the posts of local councillors have become BN property, with no respect for the people's demands or adherence to the principle of meritocracy, he said.

Chong urged the state government to revive local government elections to make the councillors accountable to the people and not to political parties.

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