

Confusion abounds in S'gor local councils
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Local councils in Selangor appear to be entangled in a mess, with some swearing-in ceremonies cancelled today and some former councillors reportedly elevated to lead the new advisory task force being unaware of their new positions.

It has been confirmed that the swearing-in ceremony of both Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) and the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) have been cancelled.

According to some councillors, the cancellation was abrupt and some members were not informed in time.

anthony thanasayan "It was a rather embarrassing moment for me when I turned up at the MBPJ headquarters all dolled up," wrote MBPJ councillor Anthony Thanasayan (left) on his blog.

It is understood that the appointment letters for both councils have yet to be issued although the list of councillors had already been distributed to the press on Tuesday night.

The delay has also been attributed to last minute lobbying by Pakatan Rakyat component parties and unofficial ally PSM for positions on the councils.

New advisory council

Similarly, checks with three key figures on the newly-established local council advisory council show they have yet to receive official appointment letters.

On Tuesday, Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim announced that the state will form a local government advisory council, which will be led by Micheal Soon, Sharifuddin Bidin and Abdul Rahman Moharam.

All three would therefore relinquish their posts as councillors in Petaling Jaya, Hulu Selangor and Kuala Selangor respectively.

According to Khalid, the advisory board's top responsibilities include improving the delivery system for the local councils, restructuring waste management and handling crime.

"I have no idea about this new taskforce. In fact, I don't even know if I am reappointed as councillor as my term is supposed to end today," said Abdul Rahman when contacted.

Similarly, Sharifuddin said he only found out about his new role through media reports.

"I have not received any call from (state exco member in charge of local government Ronnie Liu), I only knew about it from reading the newspaper," he said.

Soon was unavailable for comment.

NGOs not in advisory council

NGOs working alongside local government were also taken off guard.

"It appears to have emerged out of the blue. We were not informed of this," said Coalition of Good Governance (CGG) chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah when contacted.

Nor was an official invitation sent for a representative from CGG to join the 20-person task force, she said.

In the state government press advisory on the matter, it is stated that members of the advisory council will be made up of those from NGOs and professional bodies, for example, CGG.

Maria also said that the objectives of the advisory council appear quite vague, especially concerning its relationship with the local councils.

"There is also the concern about the power of the council. Would it override the full board meetings? They should not announce such things in the media if details are still unclear," she said.

She added that the advisory council could only serve to smoothen local council activities if the mayors and council presidents were included.

"The mayor and council presidents should be on the advisory council because these people represent the stumbling block for the councils.

"There's no point having NGOs to advise, and the councillors proposing it, and then the mayor rejecting it," she said.

Appeasing grassroots leaders

Meanwhile, Coaliton of NGO and Professional Asspointed Councillors (Conpac) pro-tem chairperson Tan Jo Hann opined that the the new advisory council appear to be a way to create more positions at local government level.

"It is no secret that the political parties are under a lot of pressure from grassroots leaders who are suggesting their people for positions and threatening to withdraw support otherwise.

"And the sad part is NGOs become sacrificial lambs. The parties cannot touch each other's quotas so they dig into the NGO quota," said Tan, who is also Subang Jaya municipal councillor.

He added that it is known that many of those appointed under the 'NGO quota' also play significant roles in political parties.

According to Tan, Conpac and CGG have contacted Liu to arrange for a meeting with the menteri besar about the appointments and the new advisory task force.