

SUARAM Lauds Selangor For Holding Village Elections
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Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) supports the move by the Selangor State Government to hold elections for the post of village (JKKK) chiefs. By allowing villagers to choose a leader directly, instead of having one appointed for them, Selangor has led by example in the call for local elections to be revived. This is a meaningful achievement for participatory democracy in Malaysia.

We encourage the Selangor State Government keep up the momentum for democratic change and to further explore ways to hold elections for local governments. This first step in holding elections for villages shows that elections at the local level is feasible. Local elections are not impossible as claimed by PM Najib Razak last year when Selangor and Penang called for the EC to facilitate elections for its respective local governments. Selangor has shown, in spite of relatively limited resources and experience, it has managed a successful election with clear and fair rules, including the use of indelible ink - something which the Federal Government strangely refuses to adopt.

Instead of continually playing up the rhetoric of fear, the Federal Government and the Election Commission should take a serious look at Selangor's efforts at devolving decision making. We believe committees like JKJKs, which have a role to play in representing the interests of its constituent members, i.e. villagers, can benefit from having direct elections. This will encourage people to play a more active role in community issues. By having direct elections, the person holding the post of village chief is made directly accountable to his/her constituents (villagers). In essence, direct democracy and participatory democracy is the way forward for the organic development of communities.

We therefore call on the UMNO-Barisan Nasional Federal Government to respect the people's demands for free and fair elections. It has to restore local government elections and stop the spiteful practice of duplicating committees like JKJKs, which amount to a wastage of taxpayers' monies. JKJKs - Federal appointed village committees - have no real reason for existence except to legitimise the Barisan Nasional's money politics at the local level.

In Selangor now, there should not be any reason for BN to fear the Pakatan Rakyat State Government would exercise unfair advantage and control over JKJKs. Village chiefs are now elected through a democratic process. BN should learn from Selangor and accede to the people's demands for fair elections. Governments must be elected by their people, not appointed as political appointees. Restore local government elections now!

Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)

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