

Local Government Elections May Cause Financial Burdens For Residents - Muhyiddin Bernama
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PUTRAJAYA, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today expressed fear that the implementation of local government elections may cause financial burdens for residents, especially in tax-related matters.

He said this was because most local authorities had current account deficits, to the extent of depending on the federal and state governments' help to remain in operation.

In response to DAP's call for local government elections to be restore in Penang, Muhyiddin said the proposal should be scrutinised as the federal government had done so much to help local authorities in the state.

"Does it mean that when they hold local government elections, all matters concerning the local government will be managed by the local authority?

"Does it mean that they want to have the right to autonomy? If so, they have to find their own source of finance and among the easiest way is to increase tax rate, quit rent and licence tax," he said after chairing the Special Meeting on Cameron Highlands Flash Floods and Landslide Disaster, here Monday.

Muhyiddin said there was no reason to hold local government elections as the democracy system in the country had always been nurtured and upheld since the country obtained Independence in 1957.

In fact, he said Malaysia had a proven track record compared to other countries practising democracy, because Malaysia had not only carried out parliamentary elections, but also state elections, to ensure smooth running of the federal and state administrations.

"From the government point of view, I think it's inapt. To say that democracy does not exist just because we don't have local government elections is wrong," he said.

"We have history on why we suspended local government elections. Furthermore, the court had also ruled that DAP may not hold local government elections. So, there should not be a debate on this issue anymore," he said.

On Aug 14 last year, the Federal Court here ruled that the DAP-led Penang government did not have the jurisdiction to conduct local government elections.

Court of Appeal President Tan Sri Md Raus Sharif who chaired a five-member panel said the state government could not unilaterally exempt the application of Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1976 to the whole of Penang.

Section 15 abolishes the rights of the state legislatures to hold local government elections within the states.

Muhyiddin said the issue of local government elections had also caused disputes among members of the opposition pact.

"DAP says this, PAS says that. So, they probably have to solve their disputes first," he said.

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