

## **Sarawak referendum move dismissed as 'publicity stunt'**

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**By Richard T.W.**

**Both Sarawak BN and state opposition leaders criticise bid by PKR to table bill for non-binding 'citizens-initiated' referendum calling it a waste of money.**

KUCHING: The Sarawak referendum bill mooted by PKR is a waste of taxpayers' money as elections are enough for voters to express their views, says a senior leader of the ruling Sarawak Barisan Nasional (BN).

"The elections we hold every five years are already a form of referendum and the elected representatives have the mandate of the people to speak on their behalf," Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) supreme council member Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah told FMT.

PBB is the largest component party of the state BN.

"Why do we need to waste time and money holding a 'people's election' or referendum again for every important issue that arises?"

"Apart from that, the rise of social media has seen people being able to express their views in blogs, Facebook, and their views can be seen by the government of the day. This has enabled the government to get feedback to amend or prepare laws or policies," said Karim, who is also a state assistant minister.

He dismissed Batu Lintang assemblyman See Chee How's proposal as a "publicity stunt".

The Sarawak PKR vice-chairman will present a motion to table a private member's bill in the state assembly sitting from May 11 to 22 to provide for citizens-initiated referendums.

Meanwhile, opposition State Reform Party (STAR) president Lina Soo also criticised PKR's proposal, but for different reasons, saying the bill should have been drafted to allow for legally binding referendums.

She said an indicative referendum, which is non-binding, is "a waste of public money as the government can throw the results into the bin".

"A referendum is different because it binds the government to the majority vote on an issue. This is what we want."

She also said the bill should have been proposed in Parliament instead of the state assembly.

“Elections are under the jurisdiction of the Election Commission, which is a federal body. So why propose the bill in a state assembly?” Soo told FMT.

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