

Malaysia: Release findings of feasibility studies on local elections, PSM tells Nga

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Parti Sosialis Malaysia says the results can help the people determine the pros and cons of local council polls.

PETALING JAYA: Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) has called on housing and local government minister Nga Kor Ming to disclose the findings of feasibility studies his ministry conducted on reviving local council elections, which have been suspended since the 1960s.

Nga said yesterday the government was in no hurry to reintroduce local council elections, after Umno and PAS criticised Kuala Lumpur DAP chairman and Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai's recent proposal for Putrajaya to restart local government elections in the capital city first.

Nga, who is also the DAP deputy chairman, said local council elections were not the ministry's priority at the moment as it was focused on rolling out 5,000 public facilities each year.

In a statement today, PSM secretary-general A Sivarajan reminded Nga that one of his predecessors, Zuraida Kamaruddin, had said in 2018 she was confident local council elections could be held within the following three years (by 2021).

Sivarajan said that on July 14, 2020, Zuraida told the Dewan Rakyat several feasibility studies on local elections had been conducted between 2018 and 2019.

"We demand that Nga reveal the findings of the studies so that we can have an objective assessment of the pros and cons of local elections," he said.

Sivarajan noted that Zuraida had also told the Dewan Rakyat an operational committee made up of NGOs and community leaders had been tasked with preparing papers on the perceptions of the public towards local council elections.

He said Zuraida also stated that the committee would be tasked with carrying out awareness programmes so that the public would understand its role if the elections were carried out.

However, on Aug 6, 2020, Zuraida said Perikatan Nasional would not go ahead with local elections in the wake of objections from Umno MPs, he said.

Sivarajan stressed that local council elections were an important component of a working democracy as they allowed MPs, assemblymen and local councillors to carry out their "clearly defined roles" and not overlap with one another.

"PSM argues that local council elections are the rakyat's priority and that the government should not capitulate to unsupported fears based on ethno-racial arguments," he said.

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