

Present system of appointing councillors to be retained, says assistant minister

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Datu Dr Penguang Manggil

SIBU: Sarawak will stick to its present system of appointing councillors for a term of two years, which has been working very well all this while.

Assistant Minister of Local Government and Housing Datu Dr Penguang Manggil said this yesterday when asked to comment on federal Minister of Housing and Local Government Zuraida Kamaruddin's statement about the government's intention to extend the term of service of local authority council members to one term of five years, instead of one or two years as currently practised.

Zuraida, who was met by reporters after opening the Second Local Authority Empowerment Convention in George Town recently, said the tenure of five years per term was the same as that held by assemblymen and members of Parliament. She had also noted that some states offered one year and others two years, which was too short a term to gain useful knowledge and experience.

On this, Penguang said: "Local government is under the State List; that is, under the residual function of the state, and as such Sarawak has its own Local Authorities Ordinance that governs the administration and functions of the local authorities in Sarawak. As such, we are not obliged to follow what the federal government is doing."

Furthermore, the Marudi assemblyman said the present system of appointing councillors for a term of two years had been working very well as it allowed for the reappointments of those who were performing, while enabling the government to replace those who were not up to the mark.

"We have been practising this system for ages as a matter of policy (consistency) and it has been proven to work very well in Sarawak. Why change just because you want to follow what Peninsular Malaysia is doing?"

"And we have no intention to do so," he pointed out.

Additionally, Penguang said: "We have been following this policy consistently regardless of who the minister-in-charge is."