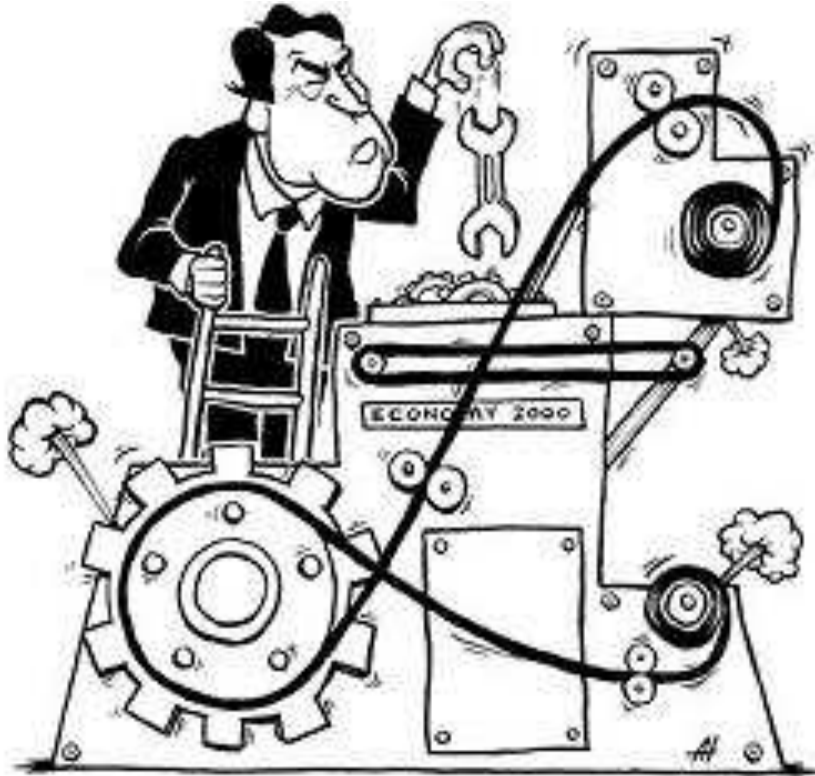


# The “Disruptive” Effects of Local Elections



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# Why is local democracy suppressed?

Local elections disrupt the system:

- Alliance/BN's fear of losing local elections
- Malay-Muslims' fear of losing dominance
- **Federal and State Governments' fear of losing control**

# Is our federalism normal?

	Malaysia	India	Australia
State Governments	Land Islam Local Government	Public order, police Public health Agriculture Land Local Government	Education, healthcare, transportation, land, welfare, local governments (whatever beyond Section 51 of the Constitution)
Local Governments (power delegated by state)	(appointed by state) Town planning Local business regulation Urban services	(elected) Poverty eradication, land improvement, education, social welfare, roads, housing	(elected) waste collection public recreation facilities town planning

# The drives for a strong Centre

## Fear factors:

- General challenges from below
- Ethnic rivalry in Malaya (since 1946) → inter-state and intra-state imbalance
- Secessionism of Borneo (since 1963)

# The options for a strong Centre

- Concentration of power at the top
- Creation of many small 2<sup>nd</sup>-tier governments
- Empowering 3<sup>rd</sup>-tier governments to weaken 2<sup>nd</sup>-tier governments

# Why cant we have more states?

Country	Population (M)	N (2 <sup>nd</sup> -Tier Divisions)	Average Population Size of 2 <sup>nd</sup> -Tier Divisions	The Most Populated 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tier Division	% of National Population
China	1340	32	3.13%	Guangdong	7.78%
India*	1204	36	2.78%	Uttar Pradesh	16.57%
USA	316	51	1.96%	California	12.13%
Indonesia	238	34	2.94%	West Java	18.09%
Thailand	64	76	1.32%	Bangkok	8.88%
Australia**	22	8	12.5%	New South Wales	32.10%
Malaysia	27	16	6.25%	Selangor	19.63%

\*India had only 14 states and 6 union territories in 1956

\*\* Excluding Jervis Bay Territories

# Why not just two tiers?

	Reality (top-heavy)	Alternative 1 (hour-glass three-tiered)	Alternative 2 (two-tiered)	Ideal (balanced)
Federal Government	Very strong (elected)	Strong (elected)	Strong (elected)	Strong (elected)
State Governments	Weak (elected)	Weak (elected?)	Strong (elected) *many	Strong (elected)
Local Governments	Very weak (appointed)	Strong (elected) *many		Strong (elected)

# States are the basis of Malay monarchies

- Perlis and Malacca are small enough to be a local government
- You can break up Sabah, Sarawak and Penang
- 10 other Malay states are too big to be mere local yet cannot be subdivided because of the royal institutions.
- These states also cannot become mere “ceremonial” because they are the basis of Malay monarchies



# Local democracy without Decentralisation

- Local councils may make state governments hollow
- Local councilors may overshadow state assemblypersons
- Local wards may overlap with state constituencies (in small states)

# The “Powerless” State Assemblies

Legislature	Federal Parliament	Penang Assembly	Selangor Assembly
Days	68	12	20
Sessions	3	2	3
Average Sitting time (Per Day)	8 hours 22 min	6 hours 2 min	5 hours 40 min
Total Sitting Time	560 hours 58 min	47 hours 50 min	112 hours 55 min
No. of Assemblyman	222	40	56
Ministers and Deputies/ ExCO	68	12	11
<b>No. of bills passed</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Days per bill</b>	<b>1.55</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Time spent on per bill*</b>	<b>10 hours 25 min</b>	<b>29 hours 50 min</b>	<b>16 hours 35 min</b>

\* Counted as part of Total Time Spent

Source: Nicholas Chan (Penang Institute)

# The “Powerless” State Assemblies

Legislature	Money and Finance	Commercial, industrial and trade	Education, Healthcare, Youth, Sports	Housing, land, works and transport	Law and Order	Religion, culture, human rights, environment	Others
Federal Parliament	11	5	5	4	8	4	6
Selangor Assembly	3	-	-	-	-	-	2
Penang Assembly	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Nicholas Chan (Penang Institute)

# Sub-optimal Local Councils

→ Dysfunctional Parliament and State Assemblies



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→ Dysfunctional Parliament and State Assemblies



# Why Local Elections Are Not Allowed

- To keep the Centre powerful and the States relevant
- To transform Federal and State Lawmakers into public complaints, welfare and social relations officers
  - leaving law-making to the Attorney-General Chambers
  - leaving policy-making to bureaucrats

# Holistic Solution

- Three issues entangled
  - Local democracy
  - Federalism / Decentralisation
    - States wont have the enthusiasm for local elections before the federal government devolve power to them
  - Parliamentary Democracy
    - capable federal and state lawmakers wont want to do local council jobs.
- Dealing with the Fear Factors
  - ethnic fear of inter-state and intra-state imbalance
    - Establish the legitimacy of democratic competitions amongst the Malay-speakers
  - secessionism of Sabah and Sarawak
    - Decentralisation checks, not aids, secession