

Local governments need to step up on governance

AS part of the Government Transformation Programme, there is an urgent need for local authorities to transform their operations to better serve the needs and meet the aspirations of the people.

Local authorities are the level of government closest to the people. They are the managers of urban environments while the communities are the stakeholders.

With each passing day, local government becomes more and more significant in terms of acquiring the capacity to deal with the myriad of issues affecting the communities they serve and finding quick and effective answers to these needs.

Local authorities, instead of being the lowest level of government, should become the highest in terms of meeting the people's need

for services.

All local authorities should strive to give their best services and be accountable to the people they serve. Effective and efficient local authorities require good and transparent leadership that is accountable to the people.

Absence of local government elections means that local councillors are not the choice of the people but are appointees of the state governments.

Poorly-managed local authorities inevitably lead to bad governance. Governance means more than government or its management. It refers not only to the relationship between governments and state agencies but also among government, communities and social groups.

Good governance requires wide

participation and discussion involving not only government agencies but also diverse representatives from NGOs and civil groups which can serve with the highest integrity.

Participation by all stakeholders is a cornerstone of good governance. And stakeholder involvement is vital for local authorities to work to bridge the divide between citizens and local authorities.

Involving citizens at grassroots level is a key ingredient of good governance, and more so when we do not have elected local councils

Only genuine stakeholder involvement can give the people what they want for their cities. Citizen participation is also vital for good governance to create a society where government gains and holds the confidence of the people.

An area of public concern is the poor maintenance culture in Malaysia, which is known as a country that prides itself in providing first world infrastructure but falls short in the maintenance aspect.

All authorities and every Malaysian must make the culture of maintenance their way of life.

Let us not have first world infrastructure but a third class mentality when it comes to maintenance.

The time has come for the Government and private sector to see to the emergence of a new mindset which gives emphasis on the development of a strong maintenance and safety culture to better serve the needs of the people.

TAN SRI LEE LAM THYE
Kuala Lumpur