

# No obligation to heed Zuraida's directive

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*Minister says Sarawak's local councils are not under federal jurisdiction based on Local Authorities Ordinance 1996*



*Dato Sri Dr Sim Kui Hian*

KUCHING: The federal government's directive to local councils to review and increase their assessment fees is not applicable to Sarawak, says Local Government and Housing Minister Dato Sri Dr Sim Kui Hian.

He asserted that the state's local councils are not covered under the directive, since Sarawak has autonomy over its local councils under the Local Authorities Ordinance 1996.

"In Sarawak, the local councils' assessment (rates) have not increased since 1970, despite the significant increase in the costs (of) grass cutting, rubbish collections and (maintenance of) street lighting.

"Under (former chief minister) Pehin Sri Adenan Satem's administration, 70 per cent of houses benefited from the decrease or zero-assessment rates – a people-centric policy which continues today," he said in a Facebook post yesterday.

The post was in response to the directive issued by federal Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin for all local councils nationwide to review their assessment rates next year.

Zuraida advised local councils not to wait for 20 to 30 years before increasing the assessment as it will burden the councils, adding that any increase in assessment tax for local authorities will not burden the people.

In his post, Dr Sim disclosed that the state cabinet recently approved the review of assessment rates for all government buildings belonging to both federal and state governments, as part of 'revenue re-engineering'. Despite Zuraida's directive, he said the rates for all commercial buildings and houses will not be increased.