

'Councils need only eight councillors to carry on'

IT IS very much a guessing game as to who will be in the new line-up of councillors in Selangor, although the tenure of the current board ends on Dec 31, because the new list of councillors is not finalised.

In a recent news report, the Local Government and Research Committee chairman Datuk Teng Chang Kim said each local council would be provided with at least eight councillors by January 2014.

"This will enable the councils to operate as 'usual'," he was quoted as saying.

Petaling Jaya mayor Datin Paduka Alinah Ahmad said the state government had confirmed that the council could operate with just eight councillors and a president or a mayor.

"All council meetings can take place as usual with just eight councillors. However only the One-StopCentre (OSC) meeting cannot be

held," she said.

The OSC meeting is where all decisions related to development approvals are made.

Alinah said the state had not provided the council with any details on the new set of councillors.

Ironically, the final empty slot for the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) councillor for the 2012/2013 session was sworn in yesterday.

The newly elected councillor Sean Onn Chong Ling, 49, will serve for only 25 days because his tenure will also end on Dec 31.

According to a reliable source, some of the MBPJ councillors who filled the non-governmental organisation (NGO) seats since the 2008 general election will not be reappointed in 2014.

Among them are Derek Fernandez, Anthony Thanasayan, Cynthia Gabriel and Chan Chee Kong.

Gabriel is a member of Suaram

while Chan is a social activist.

Fernandez, a lawyer by profession, was the one who spotted anomalies in the Petaling Jaya Draft Local Plan Two (RTPJ 2) where land status in parts of the city, including the PKNS field in Kelana Jaya, was changed without any approvals.

When *StarMetro* contacted him, he said he had given his best service and was entirely up to the state to reappoint him.

He highlighted that it was important for the Pakatan Rakyat-led Selangor government to ensure civil society was represented by NGOs and the professionals.

"In no case should members of political parties be used to fill NGOs or professional quotas.

"A balance is required between political and public interest in decision making to safeguard residents' interest," he said.

"My reappointment is not impor-

tant. The state government must choose qualified and talented candidates to be councillors. It will be ideal if the new batch of Petaling Jaya councillors are from this city.

"This will enable them to know the issues well and they will be able to serve the public well," he added.

Bukit Gasing assemblyman Rajiv Rishyakaran said of Fernandez, "I hope he will be retained as he had served the public in the Bukit Gasing zone well."

Councillor Anthony Thanasayan, who who champions the rights of the disabled, said he too heard from a reliable source that he might not be reappointed in the new term.

"The disabled need a voice and I hope there will be a seat allocated for us. The NGOs play an important role and they cannot be sidelined," he said.