

Two-term limit unsuitable for Malaysia

By **Sarah Hafizah Chandra** - August 22, 2021



Dr Ammar Redza Ahmad Rizal

KUCHING: While the suggestion for elected representatives (MPs) to have a two-term limit is a good idea, it may be currently unsuitable for the democratic system in Malaysia.

In pointing this out, academician Dr Ammar Redza Ahmad Rizal from the Faculty of Language and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) said the suggestion could, however, be implemented in the appointment of the prime minister and other ministerial positions.

He said that limiting the executive power to only two terms could attract more progressive minds amongst the MPs and translate to better policy making.

"Theoretically, the democratic system provides a check and balance in electing the representatives. Good MPs will be rewarded by being re-elected while bad MPs will lose the election. It is a system where the people are given the power to decide freely and democratically.

"In my opinion, the idea of limiting MPs to only two terms is currently unsuitable because our system is much alike with the United Kingdom's Westminster system. There is no legislation that limits MPs' terms in the House of Common.

"If it is implemented for the appointment of the prime minister and other ministerial positions, it will also limit and disincentivise the idea of legacy that we have seen previously.

"A prime minister will not be able to fortify her or his position and he or she is under no pressure to appoint a suitable successor. This might be what we need to look for to enhance our political system," he said this when contacted on Sunday (Aug 22).



Ammar added the suggestion might have arisen due to the people's frustration with the current political situation.

He said the people might feel like their trust had been violated with MPs crossing parties and dishonouring the people's choice.

"Furthermore, our parliament has several MPs who have been serving more than three or four terms. Their presence, especially during the parliamentary sittings and the way they behave during the debates may have caused the people to think these MPs are obnoxious or clueless.

"Thus, comes the idea that MPs, after several fruitful and productive years, will reach a plateau and that their presence in parliament will be counter-productive and a waste of taxpayers' time as well as money," he explained.

Ammar added that the limitation concept was not new as the mechanism had been imposed in some governance structures.

"For instance, the Senator post in Dewan Negara is only for two terms. But in contrast to an MP, a Senator is appointed not elected. If we decided to impose a limit for MPs, there is going to be a new dynamic in the political parties.

"Previously, political parties are not only dependent on their brand and image to garner votes in the constituency but they also lean on the MPs' political image. That's why some of the MPs can survive elections despite facing numerous contenders," he said.

He added some MPs had high political value; he or she could pull votes and emerge as winners despite contending in different constituencies.

This was seen in the case of Lim Kit Siang, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Mohamad Sabu who had won in different constituencies.

"If we are adopting this limit, MPs are going to change every 10 years and political parties must adapt. If not, they will face a vacuum when they cannot find political figures to put as candidates during the elections," said Ammar.



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