

Headline	No need to make accounts public		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	30 Nov 2013	Color	Full Color
Section	Local News	Circulation	95,860
Page No	19	Readership	236,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	264 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	TASNIM LOKMAN	AdValue	RM 8,613
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 25,839



# 'No need to make accounts public'

TASNIM LOKMAN  
AND NOEL ACHARIAM

## NOTHING TO HIDE:

Mayor says City Hall's accounts are scrutinised by the Auditor-General's office

CITY Hall is not willing to make its accounts public as it is already subjected to the Auditor-General's scrutiny.

Kuala Lumpur Mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib said City Hall adopted standard operating procedures stipulated by the Finance Ministry, in which it underwent an auditing process that made it an open book to the public.

"Why do we need to table our accounts if we are subjected to the Auditor-General's scrutiny? If the books are made public, it defeats the purpose.

"We know we are responsible to the people and we spend prudently according to the budget," Phesal said in response to the proposal by a consumer group and a local government law expert to have City's Hall's accounts released for public

scrutiny.

On Thursday, Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations chief executive officer Datuk Paul Selvaraj and legal expert Derek Fernandez made the call following the announcement of an assessment rate hike.

Phesal said the rate increase was to ensure City Hall had enough source of income to cover projects next year.

He said a team had been set up to check on each project's progress to determine whether the services rendered and materials used were in accordance to standards.

The team comprises Kumpulan Ikram Sdn Bhd, Forest Research Institute Malaysia and Standards and Industrial Research of Malaysia.

The Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) and Forestry Department have been also roped in to monitor projects.

Phesal said City Hall's budget allocation from the Federal Government was insufficient as it planned to use large funds for road and street lighting upgrades and maintenance, and to improve its garbage collection system.

Other expenditures include maintaining low-cost houses (PPR) in 68 areas, and food courts and

shopping complexes in 61 areas.

"We are renting out a three-bedroom PPR flat for only RM124. If we were to rent it out at market rate, it would be a burden for the people.

"City Hall can't give out rental in commercial places at high prices as such premises are meant to help small-scale entrepreneurs. We help those who contribute to the economy."

Phesal said the assessment rate hike was needed to solve such teething issues and upgrade City Hall's services.

He admitted there was a possibility that the assessment rate could be lowered if the objections submitted by ratepayers were accepted during the evaluation period ending March 2014.

He said the final say, however, would be made by Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.

Phesal, who understood the concerns of the lower-income group, urged ratepayers to send their written objections before the Dec 17 deadline so that City Hall could gauge their opinion on the matter.

According to a City Hall's spokesperson, the city council had received 16,927 objections to date.



Kuala Lumpur Mayor **Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib** says City Hall **spends prudently** according to its budget