

# Legislative Incorporation and Dissolution of Regional Governance: The Case of Pahang Tenggara Development Authority, Malaysia

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## Abstract

The aftermath of the May 13, 1969 racial riot in Malaysia saw the realignment of the Federal Government through the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) that was embedded in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975), focusing on poverty eradication, social reorganization and suppression of communist insurgency. Through NEP, seven regional development authorities, namely Pahang Tenggara Development Authority (DARA), Johor Tenggara Development Authority (KEJORA), Terengganu Tengah Development Authority (KETENGAH), Kelantan Selatan Development Authority (KESEDAR), Kedah Development Authority (KEDA), Penang Development Authority (PERDA) and Jengka Regional Development Authority (LKWJ) were established between 1972 and 1983 in the states of Pahang, Johor, Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Pulau Pinang by the Federal Government under specific parliamentary legislations to regulate their structure, jurisdictions and operations. Despite the fact that the Federal Government and State Governments have their exclusive and concurrent powers clearly spelt out under the Malaysian Federal Constitution, the establishment of the aforementioned regional development authorities also underwent jurisdictional and bureaucratic conflicts between the two Governments which resulted in certain governance issues, particularly in the state of Pahang where DARA and LKWJ were located and thereafter dissolved under Acts 569 and 567 respectively in the year 1997. While the idea to revive DARA and LKWJ was mooted by the Federal Government through the Ministry of Rural Development in 2019, these two entities remain legally dormant as opposed to KEJORA, KETENGAH, KESEDAR, KEDA and PERDA that are still in existence. This paper specifically explores the legislative justifications, political considerations and other related factors behind the incorporation and dissolution of DARA that covered 1.01 million hectares of land, Malaysia's largest regional development authority during its establishment under Act 68 on March 30, 1972.

*Keywords:* regional governance, federal-state relations, statutory authority

## Introduction

When the Federation of Malaysia was proclaimed as the world's youngest nation on September 16, 1963, the new country, which was a merger of the independent Federation of Malaya and the former British Crown Colonies of North Borneo (renamed Sabah), Sarawak and Singapore faced not only armed opposition from the neighboring Republic of Indonesia despite worldwide recognition of its nationhood, but also numerous domestic challenges. Out of these challenges, communist insurgency, political instability, rural development and socioeconomic disparity were the most pressing ones. Whilst the external threat from Indonesia's Ganyang Malaysia (Crush Malaysia) confrontation campaign was successfully neutralized through the signing of a peace treaty on August 11, 1966, the internal political instability continued to escalate especially between the Federal Government in Kuala Lumpur and the Singapore State Government. The increasing