

Najib: Village chiefs shouldn't play the crony game
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By Hazlan Zakaria

Village chiefs must stay away from cronyism in order to uplift the image of their institution, said Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

"Do not have factions around you. Do not have people around you (that you favour).

"Don't put your gang (friends) first. As leaders you must be fair," he told 510 village heads and chiefs from all over Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur today.

Najib was opening a seminar on how to strengthen the Peninsular Malaysia Association of Village Heads and Chiefs.

The prime minister also called upon the village heads and chiefs to mirror the loyalty that their predecessor once gave to the Malay sultans by serving the present civilian government loyally.

"Village chiefs had served the Sultans and now the present government under the umbrella of the Malay rulers."

Above being loyal, Najib also wants them to be the conduit between the government and the rakyat in order to explain and implement the policies and programmes of the powers that be.

"You must ensure that it reach all target groups.

"I want village chiefs and heads to support the implementation of the national transformation."

Stressing his recognition of their vital role in as "father" to local communities and hard work, Najib also agreed to consider rising their allowances and government pay grades.

"About the allowance and others, I understand, I support. Give me time, tomorrow during the cabinet meeting, I and (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department) Jamil Khir Baharom will table it.

"I shall consult with the Finance Ministry and if it is feasible, I shall announce it when it is time.

"But when, I cannot say... But I hope that when the time comes, you will also help to fulfill my request, too," he said.

Allocation of RM500,000 for the association

Najib also announced that the government will give an allocation of RM500,000 to the association for its activities, a considerable jump which is more than double from the RM200,000 granted to them last year.

Jamil Khir was also present during the launch of the seminar by Najib, he being one of those

who had conducted briefings to the village heads and chiefs.

Fuad Jamaluddin, the president of the association, had earlier asked for an increase of allowances and pay grades for the 528 village heads and chiefs in the peninsular, citing the huge scope of their duties which is considerable as opposed to the meagre RM200 allowance they are currently receiving.

The village heads and chiefs are another electoral segment being approached by Najib as he braces for the upcoming general election, with an event featuring groups almost every week.

Prior to this Najib had held consultations and distributed what is seen to be pre-election goodies to taxi drivers, small and medium scale businesses, students and others.

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