

Love thy neighbour, preaches Najib

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The Residents' Representative Committees (JPP) have been launched to tackle the issue of "emotional disconnection" between city dwellers and the federal government.

In launching the initiative today, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak lamented the lack of neighbourliness in cities and pointed out how rural areas practised the spirit of mutual cooperation (semangat gotong-royong).

"Rarely is there the spirit of neighbourliness in the city. If there is, people will say they are busy bodies.

"The emotional connection is weak," he said.

Commenting on the audience today, comprising mostly of JPP members who cheered on his arrival to the event and whenever his name was mentioned, Najib said their spirit was astounding.

"You clap loudly whenever the name of your state is announced. You clap for the (Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister (Abdul Rahman Dahlan) and for the deputy minister (Halimah Mohamed Sadique) even louder.

"I want the JPP to be an important machinery," he said.

Asserting that the JPP were the "true leaders", Najib said that as the prime minister, he promised to assist them whenever possible, and was responded with loud cheers.

"As the government leader, I will help. If there is more revenue, as finance minister, I will increase the allocation.

"If the JPP wants to conduct programmes and it does not have enough allocation, I will see. If there is more revenue, who knows," he added.

Leaders for urban areas

Before beginning his speech, Najib joked about the audience's warm reception.

"What? Is it because you just received your allowances? If the allowances are increased, I'm sure you will clap louder," he said, to laughter from the crowd.

One man could be heard saying, "No, it's because we love you, Datuk Seri".

Meanwhile, Najib said the JPP will, in a way, play a role similar to village chiefs in rural

areas.

"However, the issues you will face will be more complex and the challenges, bigger, as you are faced with a more educated society, whose expectations are higher.

"If there are potholes on the road and the drains are blocked, you can't expect the city dwellers to wait for the problem to be solved in a month's time," he said.

Commenting on his recent trip to Japan, Najib said the people there not only took care of their own houses, but also the roads outside their homes as well.

"This means the level of public consciousness is higher. This is what we want.

"This means, don't only complain to the government, but we must be committed to be a society which has good values," he said.

The JPP, which was set up to look after the welfare of city dwellers, has an allocation of RM63 million a year.

Each has 10 members, made up of a chairperson and a secretary, as well as eight committee members.

The idea, which was mooted by the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry, sees its minister, Abdul Rahman Dahlan, ensuring that the JPP's roles would not overlap with municipal councils' role in urban areas.