

PM announces reform to Welfare Dept, calls for fair distribution of aid

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After 75 years, operations of the Welfare Department will be undergoing a restructuring exercise including to better play its role in assisting various groups of needy Malaysians.

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin in his speech at the Welfare Department's 75th-anniversary dinner held at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre tonight announced three initiatives towards the effort.

"The government through the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry is committed to strengthening the department's role and its staff through implementation of various initiatives and upgrades.

"Firstly, a restructuring of the Welfare Department, including efforts to strengthen the delivery of assistance, coordination of assignments, as well as improved job distribution," he said.

Beyond ensuring better services for the people, Muhyiddin also announced a special allowance for department staff assigned to serve at risky areas such as old folks homes and OKU centres.

"And thirdly, drafting of a Social Workers Profession Act to ensure the welfare of social workers are protected, including department officers, for them to be recognised according to their expertise," said Muhyiddin.

Calling on all staff to be proactive and efficient "delivery agents" in communities, he also wanted to see less red tape in application processes and a fair distribution of aid.

"This includes improving the aid application process, reducing bureaucratic constraints and ensuring aid truly reaches those in need, regardless of religion, race and background.

"Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria for aid recipients should be treated fairly and equitably."

Muhyiddin, along with Women, Family and Community Development Minister Rina Harun, as well as her deputy Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff, also launched the Kembara Prihatin Negara programme, a nationwide initiative carried out since

last November in cooperation with NGOs and private companies.

Acknowledging the increased responsibilities of the Welfare department staff, Rina in her opening address had appealed for the prime minister to consider appointments of 2,525 additional staff, from its current force of 7,077.

On the Kembara Prihatin Negara initiative, she said up to April 7, a total of 1,173 programmes were held nationwide, involving 174,766 clients, 202 NGOs and 2,308 volunteers.

Aside from health complications, the Covid-19 pandemic has also brought on various social impacts that require services offered by the department, particularly for welfare aid.

Among others, Bukit Mertajam MP Steven Sim had recently made headlines after he shared stories of helping a single mother with 10 children, as well as a senior citizen who was out of work.

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