

'Give rakyat a say in decision-making'

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■ **By Shamini Darshni**
darshni@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: In order to implement good governance, the people must be involved. Today's *rakyat* want to be part of the decision-making that affects their lives and livelihood, said the Raja Muda of Perak, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah.

"They demand more from the government but trust it less. They demand a progressive and representative form of government. They are more interested in achieving outcomes rather than in obeying rules.

"They welcome and appreciate a government that is approachable and consultative, one that guides rather than one that directs."

The Raja Muda was delivering the keynote address at the International Conference on the Challenges of Democratisation and Good Governance



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*Raja Dr Nazrin Shah
Raja Muda of Perak*

in the Malaysian Public Sector, organised by the Universiti Malaya. It ends today.

Spelling out his idea of how to achieve good governance, Raja Nazrin said it would have to accord fully with the rule of law and the spirit of the law.

"It does not result from, nor can it be justified by illegal or even legally-suspect actions.

Unless the governors live well within the law, there can be no hope that the governed will do so."

Good governance, he said, was at odds with unprincipled, immoral and unethical behaviour, and could not exist if there was a lack of integrity.

"Attitudes and behaviour based on the principles of in-

tegrity are arguably the most important elements in good governance.

"Their absence can undermine the legitimacy of public institutions and disrupt policy goals."

For good governance to exist, Raja Nazrin said, there must be transparency and openness.

"The system of governance," he said, "must encourage the free flow of and easy access to information as the well-informed are in a better position to make informed decisions.

"Conversely, those who are badly informed will rely on half-truths and lies. They will have to depend on non-credible sources of information or they may have to remain ignorant."

This, he added, could cause attention to be directed to frivolous matters, while the government's positive and commendable efforts might go unseen.

Lending his thoughts on the view that good governance means less government, Raja Nazrin said that in some countries, the state intervened heavily in setting prices and taking over productive enterprises.

"When it has worked well,

the result has been a developmental state. When it has not worked well, state intervention has verged on the predatory, extracting resources and providing nothing much of value in return."

While in a number of developing countries where efforts at good governance had failed as a result of poor political will at the top and unco-operative and corrupt bureaucracy from below, Malaysia has stayed on track.

Malaysia, he said, could be assured of a bright future if its governance system was able to adapt to changing realities both in and outside the country.

"I would suggest that if we are to realise a system of good governance in Malaysia, we will need to keep firmly on our minds and in our sights, what good governance is. Perhaps then, the process of change which has begun can accelerate."