

Najib: Let's get closer to NGOs
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KUALA LUMPUR: Non-governmental organisations are becoming important in the community and the Government needs to bring itself closer to them rather than wait for the NGOs to come to it.

"Our approach must focus on making NGOs our strategic and smart partners in caring for the people's well-being.

"NGOs spend a lot of energy, time and money to fulfil their objectives, whether it is fighting for women's rights, the welfare of disabled persons or protecting our children," said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"They are becoming a more important part in our community today compared to before.

"We need to bring the Government closer to the NGOs and not wait for them to come to us," he said at a gathering under the 1Malaysia people's welfare programme (KAR1SMA) here yesterday.

About 17,000 people from over 1,600 NGOs attended the event at the Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

Present were Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and her deputy Datuk Heng Seai Kie.

Najib also launched an NGO database, known as Gedung NGO, and heard organisation representatives expressing their support for him and their wishes for the community.

He agreed that those who were less fortunate were not looking for sympathy but rather equal opportunities and employment.

Touched by the big turnout, Najib said KAR1SMA – which aims to improve the lives of 500,000 underprivileged people – reflected the Government's "people first" approach and commitment.

He added that the outreach programme needed to be enhanced to ensure decisions would help the NGOs work for the people.

"If we make a promise, we make sure it can be fulfilled.

"We do not make empty promises," he said, adding that aid for NGOs would be increased whenever possible.

Najib also stressed the importance of having a social safety net for the people, as opposed to becoming a welfare state that could cause loss of productivity and competitive edge.

In her speech, Shahrizat said the KAR1SMA-NGO programme was to give due recognition to the organisations as well as enable them to meet the prime minister to express their views.

"They have a long tradition of service and sacrifice. We are nowhere without the NGOs.

"Their contributions cannot be measured with money," she said, adding that about 4,000 NGOs were in a smart partnership with her ministry.

On the Gedung NGO, Shahrizat said the comprehensive directory would help facilitate aid and training for the NGOs.

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