

PM Advises District Officers to Value-add Their Role

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PUTRAJAYA, June 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Monday advised district officers to do much more than just discharge their traditional duty as administrators to provide a more relevant and effective service.

He said the district officers should, among others, engage with the people and be able to 'feel their pulse' as part of this value-added feature.

District officers should not regard themselves as being superior, but look at themselves as leaders, facilitators and partners and be with the people all the time, he said.

"As administrative officers, we have to understand what the people actually want, and not just consider based on the needs determined by Kuala Lumpur or the state capitals," Najib said when opening the 8th Conference of District Officers at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) in Putrajaya.

Prime Minister advised district officers not to be too self-centred but to go down to the ground to understand the problems faced by the people.

"Do not be extremely conscious about position," he said.

Najib said the role of district officers, including residents, would undergo an evolution as it became extensive in scope and more challenging.

"As administrators, we no longer sit in our offices and behind our desks and handle the administration and take and implement instructions from the state and federal levels. If we remain purely and simply administrators, we may not necessarily be effective district officers in the present challenging times," he said.

Najib said district officers who displayed effective leadership could become leaders who were close to the people and well liked by them.

"We have to be close to the people to understand their needs, what they are thinking about and what obstacles they are facing," he said, adding that the term 'on the ground'

could also be directed at state secretaries, menteri besar and government departments.

Najib advised district officers to rise above party politics in caring for the people.

He also wanted them to have a good understanding of current issues, including the proposed implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and government policies, so as to be able to translate them into development planning in the districts.

He said providing proper explanation was important, for example, in ensuring that the people understood that GST was aimed at raising the national revenue for their benefit in terms of development planning, particularly in the rural areas.

"An increase in national revenue can intensify rural development, such as construction of village roads, provision of water supply and renovation of longhouses, so that rural development matches urban development," he said.

Najib said district officers must make use of their wisdom to tackle sensitive issues that could not be taken lightly, pertaining to such matters as customary land and collective applications for land.

Najib said district officers should advise the people on matters pertaining to land grants.

Meanwhile, Land and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal welcomed the guidelines outlined by the prime minister pertaining to the role of district officers.

"What the prime minister said should be taken heed of by all district officers to ensure that they play a more effective role and give priority to the people," he said.

Mohd Shafie said the conference served as the best platform to discuss the efforts to empower the role of district officers.

The one-day conference, organised by the Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA), is aimed at disseminating information on the implementation of development programmes for the rural people this year.

Also present at the event were Deputy Land and Regional Development Minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa and Public Service Department director-general Tan Sri Mohamad Zabidi Zainal.

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