

DPM: Get public opinion

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PUTRAJAYA: All local authorities need to seek public opinion before making decisions which will affect them.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said local councillors had the responsibility to get public opinion before a local authority made decisions that concerned the public.

He said the current local government structure nationwide had many weaknesses and this had caused the public to react strongly to some of the decisions made.

Najib was speaking to reporters after chairing the 55th National Council for Local Governments meeting here yesterday.

Also present were Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Health Minister Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek and state Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers.

Najib said that under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, it was agreed that the Housing and Local Government Ministry, Chief Secretary to the Government and the Public Services Department would review the local government structure and present recommendations at a

later council of local governments meeting.

He said a review did not necessarily mean that councillors would be directly elected by the public.

"Do not presume that there

will be elections," he said.

On decisions made during the meeting, Najib said all state governments had agreed to set up one-stop-centres at local council offices to give the necessary approvals for developers

using the build-and-sell concept.

He said the centres, to be set up at 38 local authorities nationwide early next year, would help cut approval time for such projects to four months.

Among the approvals the centres would handle were applications for the change of land use, sub-division, handing over of titles, planning and building plan approvals, he said.

These centres, he added, would give such developers an incentive to adopt the concept.

Under the build-and-sell concept, developers will collect a 10% deposit and complete the construction of the house before collecting the rest of the money from the purchaser.

Najib also said that all public buildings would also have to be fitted with disabled-friendly facilities.

"Local authorities will be given guidelines on approving new buildings with such facilities as well as for existing buildings to be renovated to incorporate such facilities," he said.

He said such facilities were the right of the disabled community and would allow them to contribute towards nation building.

Najib said local authorities would also have to direct owners of multi-storeyed car parks to install closed-circuit television cameras and have security guards manning the car parks.

He said there were still many shopping malls that did not have such safety measures.

He said local councils which had built separate pedestrian walkways and motorcycle lanes had successfully reduced the incidence of snatch thefts.

He urged more local councils to follow their example.