

Work with NGOs, Ruler urges diplomats

Sultan Nazrin: Effective cooperation between all parties will advance national interests

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KUALA LUMPUR: Diplomats must work effectively with civil societies and NGOs to advance national interests.

This is because these organisations have become key players in the international realm, said the Sultan of Perak.

Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah said diplomats now have to share the international stage with many more actors, including civil society organisations.

“National interest is best served when diplomats work together with civil society and NGOs to advance shared interests,” Sultan Nazrin said in a keynote address at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here.

In his speech titled “Transformation for 21st Century Diplomats”, the Sultan said long-established and



Bright future: Sultan Nazrin talking to participants at an event in the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Kuala Lumpur.

reputable cause-and-issue oriented international NGOs make invaluable contributions to alleviating human suffering.

They include Amnesty Interna-

tional, Care International, Oxfam International, Doctors Without Borders and Mercy Malaysia.

Sultan Nazrin acknowledged that working with NGOs may not always

be easy, especially on the domestic scene.

“Things can get uncomfortable when governments become sensitive to critical scrutiny by assertive and vocal NGOs.

“This is especially the case in developing countries with authoritarian tendencies or where democratic practices are still evolving.”

The existence of genuine political and socio-economic issues can aggravate matters further, but diplomats must continue efforts to engage civil society.

“An initial focus by NGOs on non-political and less sensitive areas can help reduce trust deficits, and contribute to a stronger culture of cooperation between government and civil society.

“This can be pursued under the rubric of the Blueprint for the Asean Socio-Cultural Community,” the Sultan said.

Multinational companies, social

media and international news media are other key actors in 21st century diplomacy which Malaysia’s diplomats must be able to engage with, said Sultan Nazrin.

The Sultan also noted that the opening decades of this century have not been encouraging due to terrorism and violent conflicts.

“Unless there is a radical shift in the way in which the international order functions, the 21st century does not look like it is going to be any different,” he said.

Sultan Nazrin said Malaysian foreign policy should continue to strive for a better regional and world order that places the welfare of the human person, not the state, at the centre.

Watch the video
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