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Najib-Antarctica

VISIT TO ANTARCTICA MANIFESTS "MALAYSIA BOLEH" SPIRIT

By Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27 (Bernama) -- For Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak the Prime Minister's visit to Antarctica has left him with a deep psychological effect -- the country can succeed in all fields in line with the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit.

"The Prime Minister has always been challenging us to do something extraordinary, something that has not been thought about by others, so that it will become our culture."

"The visit to Antarctica represents an extraordinary move," he told Bernama while recalling his experience while being part of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's team which spent nine days on the huge ice-covered continent early this month.

For Najib it was a very useful and unforgettable experience.

"Meaning, that if we are bold and determined there is no work which we cannot do."

"Eventhough people are fearful when we mention Antarctica... but if we are intent on achieving the objective of a particular task, God willing, we can succeed," he said.

Najib was among three Federal Cabinet Ministers who had the opportunity to be part of the Prime Minister's team, the others being Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Heing Ding and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

He said even though there were easier ways of reaching Antarctica, the Prime Minister's team which also included Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, used an ice-breaker to go there.

"I suppose we did it the hardest way by going on board the ice-breaker. I think the Prime Minister wanted a real adventure, he did not want an easy way."

"It was truly an adventure, particularly the sea voyage... at one time it was quite rough, the ship was listing at 45 degrees."

According to Najib, "There are three ways to go there -- using the ice-breaker that we did, the second is a normal cruise ship and the third way is to go via the deep south where the Americans, Australians and New Zealanders operate special aircraft to Antarctica.

From the political aspect, Najib felt the visit would strengthen Malaysia's position in the international arena particularly when it spoke about Antarctica.

"The aim of the Prime Minister's visit, apart from being the last continent on earth for him to visit, for had visited all the other continents, is to signify the starting point of his motion that Antarctica benefit all mankind."

In 1981, Dr Mahathir directed Wisma Putra to move the motion in the United Nations and it was well received.

Following that all claims to Antarctica were set aside until 2048 while exploration for oil, minerals and so on was not allowed.

"When the Prime Minister takes such a serious view by making the longest ever trip made by any head of government, by visiting Antarctica, it certainly gives Malaysia a strong stand at the international level," Najib said.

Najib, who never thought that he would step foot on Antarctica, said the experience opened his eyes to the scenic beauty of this unique continent, which was bigger than Australia.

"It's a revelation, an experience with no comparison to others as Antarctica is a unique continent," he said.

"Antarctica is clean as can be...no sea, air or land pollution...we can see the cleanliness and beauty of the earth's surface....pure crystalline beauty with no comparison with other places," he said.

Najib was also highly impressed with Antarctica's wildlife and physical features -- icebergs, glaziers, caverns, interplay of colours not found elsewhere.

"I did not know that the iceberg appears blue or torquoise when we look from near...this is because of the sun's rays."

"When the sun's rays shine through the ice, its colours resemble the rainbow spectrum... what goes through is blue and torquoise.... that's why you see blue and torquoise."

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