

Najib celebrates 58th birthday with 'pulut kuning'
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Kedah Umno held a birthday reception for Prime Minister Najib Razak upon arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport here for a one-day visit to Perlis.

Najib turns 58 today. He was born on July 23, 1953.

Present were Perlis Menteri Besar Dr Md Isa Sabu, Kedah Umno liaison committee chairman Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah, Kedah and Perlis Barisan Nasional component party leaders and about 2,000 people.

Subsequently, those present sang a birthday song for Najib who then cut a two-tiered "pulut kuning" cake.

After the ceremony, the prime minister, his wife and entourage left for Perlis to begin his working visit.

The prime minister's first programme in Perlis was a walkabout at the "nat" market or day market in Balai Baru, Beseri, near Kangar.

Najib, accompanied Md Isa, spent about half-an-hour mingling with traders and the public.

Packed schedule

He then dropped by for a tea at a stall operated by Jamil Salleh, 62, before proceeding to Istana Arau for an audience with the Raja of Perlis, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Putra Jamalullail, and Raja Perempuan of Perlis Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid.

Najib, who returned home yesterday from a visit to Turkmenistan, United Kingdom and Italy, wasted no time in going to the ground to meet the grassroots.

A packed schedule awaits the prime minister in Perlis where he is scheduled to join 10,000 people for a feast at Dewan 2020 and later meet BN component party leaders.

He is also scheduled to visit the Behor Pulai Industrial Training Institute to hand over contributions to mosques and religious schools, followed by a visit to Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina Hwa Aik in Arau.

He will also meet two local activists before returning home to Kuala Lumpur tonight.

'I am doing my utmost for the people'

Later in Kangar, Najib said that he also wished that all the big plans the government had for Malaysia will be realised.

Najib, on a day-long visit to Perlis, regarded today as a normal working day despite it being his birthday.

"Today is a normal day for me and I wanted to visit Perlis ... whether it's my birthday or not I am doing my utmost for the people," he said to reporters after meeting leaders of Perlis BN component parties.

He was asked to comment on a Global Peace Index 2011 report which put Malaysia as 19th safest of 153 countries in the world, the most peaceful in Southeast Asia, and fourth in Asia-Pacific after New Zealand, Japan and Australia.

Najib said that Malaysia achieved the ranking through its own efforts and the security and values systems it created.

"The values system that we have been fostering make almost all Malaysians hate violence.

"It is the best protection of all that we reject extremism, militancy and violence," he said.

On his meeting with state BN leaders, Najib said he hoped the coalition would win all three parliamentary and 15 state seats in the next general election.

In 2008, the Perlis BN won all seats except two state constituencies.

Vernacular schools not sidelined

At a meeting with management personnel of Chinese and Indian National Type Primary Schools in Arau, Najib said the unity of races would contribute towards making Malaysia a developed nation.

He said the government had never sidelined Chinese and Tamil schools as it appreciated the contributions of Malaysians of all races.

"Others may claim to have contributed to Chinese and Tamil schools but the fact is that the government has given much more," he said.

The prime minister presented RM10,000 each to seven schools.

- Bernama