

**Najib: We'll never leave Sabah and Sarawak behind**  
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As Malaysia marks the 50th year since its formation, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today vowed that the development of Sabah and Sarawak, the first and third most poorest state in terms average household income, is the nation's priority.

In his Malaysia Day message, he said that this, however, does not mean that the two Borneo states were ever sidelined by the federal administration.

"As prime minister, I have always strived to ensure that equal development for all states.... Our efforts to develop Sabah and Sarawak's economy will always be the government's priority.

"Indeed life in these two states have changed drastically over the 50 years, in line with global development," he said in the message published on his official website.

He said that proof that the government cares about Sabah and Sarawak can be seen through the federal allocation of RM2 billion for 79 infrastructure projects in the state in 2010.

He said these include projects under the Sarawak Renewable Energy Corridor (Score) and the Sabah Development Corridor.

Autonomous rights acknowledged

Meanwhile, Najib acknowledged that the formation of Malaysia on Sept 16, 1963 was a "compromise reached in order to safeguard the interests of Sabah, Sarawak and the Federation of Malaya".

This, he said, included the autonomous rights of Sabah and Sarawak as outlined by the 20-point agreement formulated by the Cobbold Commission.

Putrajaya's alleged reneging of the 20-point agreement was often claimed by opposition parties in the last general election campaign, particularly in Sabah where allegations of unfair oil royalty agreements were raised.

According to the Department of Statistics' latest household income survey, Sabah has the highest percentage of households living under the poverty line at 8.1 percent.

However, this has improved from 23 percent in 2004 and 16 percent in 2007.

According to the Economic Planning Unit, households living under the poverty line for Sabah survive on RM1,048 per month.

Meanwhile 2.4 percent of Sarawak households are poor, with the poverty line there set at RM912 a month per household.

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