

PM: Gov't to ensure Indians continue to progress
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The government will ensure that the Malaysian Indian community continues to progress and, at the same time, safeguards its language and culture, said Najib Abdul Razak.

The prime minister said the Indian community in Malaysia had contributed significantly to the progress of the country and had progressed in tandem with the progress of the nation.

"Malaysian Indians are the sons and daughters of this soil. The government has always made it its responsibility to ensure the well-being of all its citizens," he said in his speech at the 9th International Conference - Seminar on Tamil Studies at the Dewan Tunku Canselor of Universiti Malaya in Kuala Lumpur today.

Najib said the government had always promoted a multicultural and multilingual policy in Malaysia.

"We have continued to encourage the use of the mother tongue, especially in the education system, and give all the necessary assistance to the various ethnic groups in ensuring that their languages are practised and preserved," he said.

"I am proud to say that the Tamil community in Malaysia has successfully safeguarded its language and culture," said Najib.

He said students in Malaysia had the opportunity to learn Tamil right from the pre-school level to the tertiary level, and currently there were 523 Tamil primary schools in Malaysia, which were part of the Malaysian education system.

"In April this year, we will see an addition to this figure when a new Tamil primary school in Lunas, Padang Serai, Kedah, begins operations. Apart from this, the government has also approved the establishment of six new Tamil primary schools," he said.

Najib said the socio-economic status of the Indian community had also changed significantly over the years, especially after Malaysia gained independence.

"For example, Malaysian Indians make up 11.1 percent of the professionals in the country. Many in the legal and medical professions are from the Indian community.

"There are also many towering figures from the community who have made significant contributions and achievements in the fields of education, business and sports.

'Progress is a continuous journey'

"The progress and transformation of the Indian community is a continuous journey and

there are many more milestones to be achieved," he said.

The prime minister said the government had initiated various programmes and initiatives to assist the Indian community, realising the need to address the various issues faced by the community and to ensure that they continued to progress.

"These initiatives include the Cabinet Committee on the Indian Community, which I chair, to ensure that the community's progress is in line with the Government Transformation Programme and Economic Transformation Programme," he said.

A total of 1,500 people, among them several who would present papers, from Malaysia and 20 other countries are attending the four-day conference that started yesterday.

This is the third time Malaysia has been chosen to host this conference, after 1966 and 1987.

Malaysia's Special Envoy for Infrastructure to India and South Asia, S Samy Vellu, is the organising chairperson of the conference.

Also present was Singapore's Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education, Indranee Rajah.

- Bernama

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