

Affirmative action stays, says PM
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The government will not do away with its affirmative action policy but it will be carried out in a fairer and more transparent manner to improve the lives of Malaysians in the bottom 40 per cent of the population, Najib Abdul Razak said tonight.

NONEThe Prime Minister said the implementation of the policy would be more market-friendly, more merit-based and also more on a needs basis.

"For example, I say if you want to eradicate poverty, if you want to address the lower 40 per cent population with income below RM1,500 a month, you must also take care of the non-Malays or non-bumiputeras as well.

"When you talk about bumiputeras, it is not synonymous with Malays. What about the Iban, Kadazan, Bidayuh and the like? They are also bumiputeras and they have the same rights," he said in an exclusive interview aired by Bernama TV tonight in conjunction with his first year in office.

The special interview on "Setahun di Aras 5: Temubual Khas Bersama Perdana Menteri" (One Year on Level 5: Special Interview with the Prime Minister) was helmed by Bernama's Deputy Editor-in-Chief Zulkefli Salleh and Economic Service Editor Mikhail Raj Abdullah.

'One nation, one people'

"Let us not be too corrupt with a certain way of looking at things but let us look at ways that really create the sense of belonging that we are together as one nation and one people."

NONENajib was responding to a question on Perkasa, the Malay non-governmental organisation, which said that 67 per cent of the country's wealth should belong to the community.

Najib said the government's goal to raise per capita income from US\$7,000 to US\$15,000 in 10 years, as outlined in the New Economic Model (NEM), referred to average income.

"Obviously not everyone will be earning US\$15,000. This we have to understand. It is the same in any country. There will be rich people and there will be poor people. But what we want is that the poor should not be overly poor to the point of being destitute," he said.

Paradigm shift

The Prime Minister also called on employers to improve the working environment and set higher salaries to entice Malaysians to take on jobs considered dirty and dangerous that were currently dominated by cheap foreign labour.

NONE"I believe employers should do this and not make it too easy for them to have foreign workers. And if we can increase the levy on foreign workers to be commensurate with the number that they want to hire, then there comes a point where it makes more business and economic sense to engage Malaysians, not foreigners," he added.

Najib also spoke of a paradigm shift to move Malaysia out of being a low-cost producer to

an innovative economy in order to draw talents, including Malaysians who were working abroad because of better wages.

The way forward was to raise wages to a much higher level for the people to enjoy better income and quality of life, and as well as to attract global talents, he said.

The salaries of the 1.2 million civil servants too would be adjusted if their productivity increased, he added.

- Bernama

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