

PM visits longhouse, fishing crucial Iban votes
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Najib Abdul Razak made a visit to a longhouse in the Rejang valley near Sibuh today and gave an assurance the Barisan Nasional (BN) government is committed to improving the living standard of rural folk, especially in Sarawak and Sabah.

The prime minister said the government was aware rural people needed help to improve their lives and that only the BN had the capability to do this.

"The people living outside Sibuh need to make a wise choice as to who would be their best candidate to represent them in Sunday's by-election in the parliamentary constituency in order to protect their future," he said when visiting and mingling with Iban residents of the Rh Sebastian Onggoh longhouse in Pasai Besai, about a 30-minute land journey from Sibuh.

Also present were Sarawak's deputy chief ministers George Chan and Alfred Jabu, federal and state ministers as well as the BN candidate in the Sibuh by-election, Robert Lau Hui Yew.

Hui Yew is facing the DAP's Wong Ho Leng and independent candidate Nawawi Haron in the by-election, which has been called following the death of the incumbent, Robert Lau Hoi Chew.

"This by-election gives an opportunity to us to choose someone we can trust to change our lives for the better," said Najib.

On the BN candidate, he said Hui Yew was a very highly qualified person with a strong desire to help others, especially people in rural areas.

"He is my representative. Not any other person but Robert Lau Hui Yew, who is the BN representative," he said while describing Hui Yew as a person who was very committed to the cause of helping people to progress.

At the function, Najib also said Felcra would develop 6,000 hectares of idle native customary land in the area on a commercial scale following requests from the 2,500 residents of the longhouse.

The people living in the Pasai Siong area would also be getting better basic infrastructure once upgrading of the access road there was carried out under the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015), which would entail a cost of RM34 million, he said.

"The government is making deliberations on this project in view of the huge cost involved," he said.

Najib added that the BN government had outlined a well-structured plan for progress in rural areas in consultation with the various state governments to ensure a better life for those who had been left out of mainstream development.

The longhouse's headman, Sebastian Onggoh, who represented 19 other longhouse headmen, said Najib's visit showed that the prime minister truly cared about development in rural areas.

A resident of the longhouse, Junai Bali, 68, who has six grandchildren, said she was very

happy and proud because it was the first time a prime minister had come to visit them.

She said she hoped the government would provide them piped-water, 24-hour electricity and better roads.

The prime minister later joined civil servants working in Sibul for lunch at a hotel in Sibul before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

- Bernama

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