

**Najib launches rural development master plan**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today launched the Rural Development Master Plan, a initiative to transform the country's rural area.

He said the plan proved that the Malaysian government was committed towards changing the lives of the rural people for the better.

He said the government had also introduced the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) which targeted to improve the well-being of the people, including those in the rural area.

"Most of the allocations under the GTP are for rural infrastructure ... road, water supply, electricity and housing, which cost a lot of money.

"But that's alright. As the finance minister, I said that this is the responsibility of the government to change the lives of the people in the rural area so that we can provide a balanced development for all," he said in his speech at the launch of the master plan and gathering with members of the Village Development and Security Committee at Stadium Putra, Bukit Jalil near Kuala Lumpur.



He said Malaysia had the best record in rural development programmes compared to other countries, including developed countries like the United States.

Najib (*left*) added that although the people's average income was not high, people in the rural areas could still live in relative comfort due to the development programmes brought by the government.

"Most of the rural areas in the country have been provided with basic facilities. There are schools in the rural area, with designs that impress even visitors from abroad," he said.

Najib said the government had also managed to reduce the hardcore poverty level, with the number of households earning a monthly income of RM440 and below declining by 49 per cent, from 44,643 in December 2008 to 22,198 as of Sept 30 this year.

"The government strives to reduce the number by end of this year and when the remaining 22,000 or so households are no longer in the hardcore poor group, we will re-look into the situation in case there are still people who have not been covered by the poverty eradication programmes.

"We will continue to implement the programmes until there will be no more households in the hardcore poor category in Malaysia," he said.

Numerous constraints

The prime minister said that there were numerous constraints in developing certain areas but promised that most of the government's rural development agenda could be realised within the next 10 years.

Najib also called on the rural people to venture into economic activities to generate extra income.

"I want to see transformation in the rural area. I wouldn't want to see farmers living in difficult condition ... they must strive to find a better living, open up idle land, for instance, and generate a higher income," he said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister called for an up-to-date database to facilitate implementations of projects and development programmes in villages throughout the country.

"Do it like the way we implemented the Buku Merah (Red Book) programme in the 60's in which the details of every village were available in the book," he said.

The prime minister also presented award to three villages which are winners of the national-level excellent village award, namely Kampung Permatang Duku, Benut, Pontian, Johor; Kampung Alor Limbat, Marang, Terengganu, and Kampung Uma Belor, Sungai Asap, Belaga, Kapit in Sarawak.

- Bernama

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