

**Najib to be back in S'wak next month**  
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Hardly has the dust settled on the trail of Najib Razak's whirlwind visit to Sarawak early this week, he will be back on March 2 to officially open the 12th Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) Convention in Kuching.

On the same day the prime minister is also scheduled to open the newly completed RM200-million Borneo Convention centre Kuching (BCCK), the venue for the triennial general meeting of the state BN backbone.

While his recent two-day trip, mostly to visit remote longhouses in Sri Aman, Saratok and Kanowit and the riverine bazaar of Simunjan, was in keeping up with an earlier pledge to make frequent visits to Sarawak, the forthcoming one will be to gauge the people's mood in preparation for the state election.

His presence at the PBB event apparently to get an accurate picture of the reality on the ground is expected to give an indication of the timing of the state polls, due by July next year at the latest.

Pertinent issues that will be brought up during the convention, include the government's stand on land-related policies, such as that on Native Customary Rights (NCR), which remain "thorny issues" at any election.

The delegates were expected to return to their longhouses and villages to explain these issues to the people, said PBB convention publicity and information subcommittee member Peter Minos.

### **Customary walkabouts**

Even when speaking at a Chinese New Year luncheon in Sibu on Tuesday, Najib said that being close to the people should be the fundamental of being a leader, citing his customary walkabouts at the various places he visited.

At the Sibu Central Market, he described the reception he received as "overwhelmingly enthusiastic". The same applied to the warm hospitality at the Iban longhouses he visited where he gamely joined in the traditional "miring" ceremony.

"To be an effective leader, you have to feel the pulse of the people and the nation," the prime minister had said, adding that he had promised the people of Sarawak he wanted to make difference by seeing first-hand the problems faced by the people, including rural infrastructure development.

He announced special allocations for projects to improve the living condition in four resettlement schemes in the Rajang Security Command (Rascom) area near Sibu besides infrastructure, including longhouse repairs and road and clinic construction.

Meanwhile, hotel security guard, Manggoi Narum, 60, who hails from Balingian, Mukah, said Najib was a caring leader, especially in wanting to follow in his late father, second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein's footsteps to frequently come to Sarawak.

"It is very rare for a prime minister to visit an Iban longhouse to see the real situation faced

by the people," he told *Bernama*.

His colleague, Ridzuan Abdullah, 45, said that since becoming prime minister in April last year it was the second time that Najib had officiated a function at the RH Hotel in Sibu, where he currently worked.

Najib had also said that his visits to Sarawak gave him the opportunity to assess what the people wanted and what the government could do to deliver them.

"I have been to many places, shaken hands with so many people in such a short time but I find gratification from a sense of reward and personal satisfaction," he said of his recent trip to the state.

- *Bernama*

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