

Najib's new master plan to transform rural Malaysia
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KUALA LUMPUR - Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on Tuesday launched the Rural Development Master Plan, an initiative to transform the country's rural area and improve the well-being of rural folk.

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

He said the government had also introduced the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) which is 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 all right. 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 here.

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

He 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. — *Bernama*

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