

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 05/09/2007

Racial unity the key to country's success

NT - 5/9/2007

KUALA LUMPUR: Unity among multi-ethnic Malaysians has been one of the key drivers of Malaysia's economic and development success in the past 50 years and will continue to be so in the next half a century, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

"Malaysia's 50 years of independence have not been plain sailing but with hiccups here and there from time to time.

"But we managed to weather the storms with our bold and pragmatic moves.

"For instance, during the financial crisis in 1997, we were a lot stronger compared with our neighbours as we re-

mained united and believed in power-sharing," he said at the closing of the Khazanah Development Seminar here yesterday.

Najib expects the next 50 years to be challenging but also exciting for Malaysians.

"I think it should be better for Malaysia in the next 50 years.

"I am basically optimistic about Malaysia's future, be it spiritual or physical. The ship is strong and will sail and reach its destination.

"We will fulfil our hopes, aspirations and dreams as a Bangsa Malaysia."

Najib said the government had already taken steps to liberalise the present systems

and policies.

For instance, he said Public Service Department scholarships, once given to Malay students, have also been given to the non-Malays who excelled in their studies.

He said the New Economic Policy implemented in 1970 was not formed to help the Bumiputeras alone but also the non-Bumiputeras.

"There is a movement (towards liberalising the policies concerning the Bumiputeras) but we just cannot abandon these policies overnight.

"I hope that one day Bumiputeras will say we are ready to compete and do not want the privileges from the government," he said.