

# Create a nation of readers, says Najib

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Najib Razak said there was a need to create a nation of readers that was knowledge-based, had an endless capacity for learning, research and discovery that could spur the nation to greater heights.

The deputy prime minister wants to see Malaysia joining other developed nations in embracing reading as part of their habit and lifestyle.

"Literary works have an obligation to promote not just social and economic progress, but also inter-

national understanding and peaceful co-operation.

"Reading and literary activities bring communities to the forefront, bridge social groups and bond individuals.

"It also enhances skills required in an increasingly competitive economy of the 21st century," he said at the launch of the "Kuala Lumpur International Literary Festival" and the Malaysian International Literature Society, in Bangsar here yesterday.

As such, he said the government

should continue to play its role in actively promoting reading and literary activities among the communities.

"It is often said that we are very much the product of what we read as it is essential in shaping one's character and world view.

"I believe that the government, especially so for developing countries, should continue to play the role of facilitating a healthy environment for the growth and development of a literary haven."

Among suggestions he made to

promote reading and literary activities include enhancing the development of literary infrastructure, both at the national and state levels, through establishment of a Book Village, Book Market, networks, partnerships, literary organisations, libraries and publications.

Najib also said interest in local literature can be increased by recognising and promoting local writers through awards, book launches, broadcasts and reading.