

# Father's tales, lessons for Najib

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** He walked barefoot to school and learnt his Maths by scribbling on a sandy ground.

It was this hardship that shaped his determination to eradicate poverty when Tun Abdul Razak Hussein became the country's second prime minister.

In recounting his father's experience, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the lack of blackboards at a school near Sungai Pahang forced his father and other classmates to do their Maths lessons on the ground.

"My father told me and my siblings this story which I remember until this day," he said in his speech when closing the National Youth Leader convention and launching of the National Youth Council's Youth Leader training series.

Present at the function were Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Azalina Othman Said, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Noh Omar, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Malaysia Youth Council president Samsul Anuar Nasarah.

Najib said it was such an environment that shaped his father's ideology and political struggle.

"As he had seen poverty first-hand, it moulded his character. Eventually, he became a leader who worked hard to eradicate poverty."

He said the environment around a leader during his formative years would shape his character and outlook in life later.

As a result, one must have idealism to be a capable youth leader.

"The idealism must be based on the environment they were in while they were teenagers as it will shape their attitude and character development," he said.

He said the struggle for idealism was very important to

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*Datuk Seri Najib Razak*

ensure youth did not turn out to be passive leaders, but leaders who were sensitive to the needs of the community and environment.

In recounting another story, Najib, who is also the defence minister, said his South African counterpart was jailed for 14 years on Robin Island by the apartheid regime.

"During winter, it was very, very cold there. To keep warm, the prisoners huddled together in two circles — the outer rim comprising of older ANC (African National Congress) prisoners, while the inner rim consisted of younger ones.

"Such actions may be alien to us but to them, their struggles and ideology were more important and the older ones were willing to sacrifice themselves for the young to ensure their struggles continued."

On another matter, Najib said the upcoming Youth Act, which will set an age limit of 40, would not result in lack of qualified youth leaders.

He said the Act would enable leaders to identify and groom future leaders who were more in tune with the needs of youth today.