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PM: Each free to retain identity

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's biggest success had been its ability to transform "a potential Achilles heel" into a competitive advantage, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday.

He said that the nation had veered away from the quick fix of the "melting pot" approach to develop the country.

"As such, there is no need to change the name Samy Vellu to Suhaimi or Sazali; Chua Soi Lek to

Salleh, So'ud or Ayoub; John Ambrose can remain the same without changing it to Johan Ambrose.

"We should be proud as we are the only country in the world which allows the existence of Chinese and Tamil schools which use their mother tongue as the medium of instruction."

Najib, the Barisan Nasional chairman, was giving his keynote address at its convention at Wisma MCA, here.

He said the government had not carried out any attempts to scrap any culture or change anyone's origins.

"Each is free to retain his identity."

In his speech, Najib also captivated the delegates by expressing phrases in several languages.

He started his speech with *Salam 1 Malaysia* and repeated the word "1 Malaysia" as, *yige Malaysia* (Mandarin), *oray Malaysia* (Tamil), *ndi Malaysia* (Bidayuh), *Ji Malaysia* (Orang Ulu), *ise Malaysia*

(Kadazan/Dusun), *saumi Malaysia* (Murut) and *sato Malaysia* (Iban).

Najib also called on all in BN to prioritise the interest of the people.

"There is a Chinese saying '*Xian tian xia zhi you er you, hou tian xia zhi le er le*' (resolve the people's problems before they suffer difficulties), Bring joy to the people before everyone is able to live happily."

Later, Najib quoted a Tamil saying "*yipadai thorkin, yeapadai vehlum*" which urged the people to strive

wholeheartedly to achieve success,

"It means, if this team cannot win the battle, no other team can," said Najib to cheers from the delegates.

On nation-building, the prime minister said: "When the time comes, each of us can rest assured that our children and grandchildren and, in turn, their children, will have a better future, a higher standard of living, a better quality of life, and be able to realise their dreams and their God-given potential."