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PM: Everyone can make a difference to country

BIGGER ROLE: Era of 'government knows best' truly over, he tells UK-based Malaysians

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CONNECT more closely with Malaysia and play a bigger role in national development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak told Malaysians in the United Kingdom yesterday.

"This can be done either by returning home or — less ambitiously, but no less importantly — by sharing your considerable expertise with our national institutions from your base in Britain.

He said this in a keynote address at a luncheon to launch Friends of Barisan Nasional UK (FBNUK) yesterday at the House of Lords.

Najib, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, arrived yesterday on an overnight official visit to London to attend a reception today hosted by Prince Charles for the Royal Charter Award to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, of which Najib is a member of the high council.

"There is room under the Malaysian sun for all our countrymen and women, whoever they are and however they choose to contribute. Everyone has a part to play; everyone can make a difference and everyone can grow and prosper."

Najib said, as a young nation, the journey ahead was an exciting one.

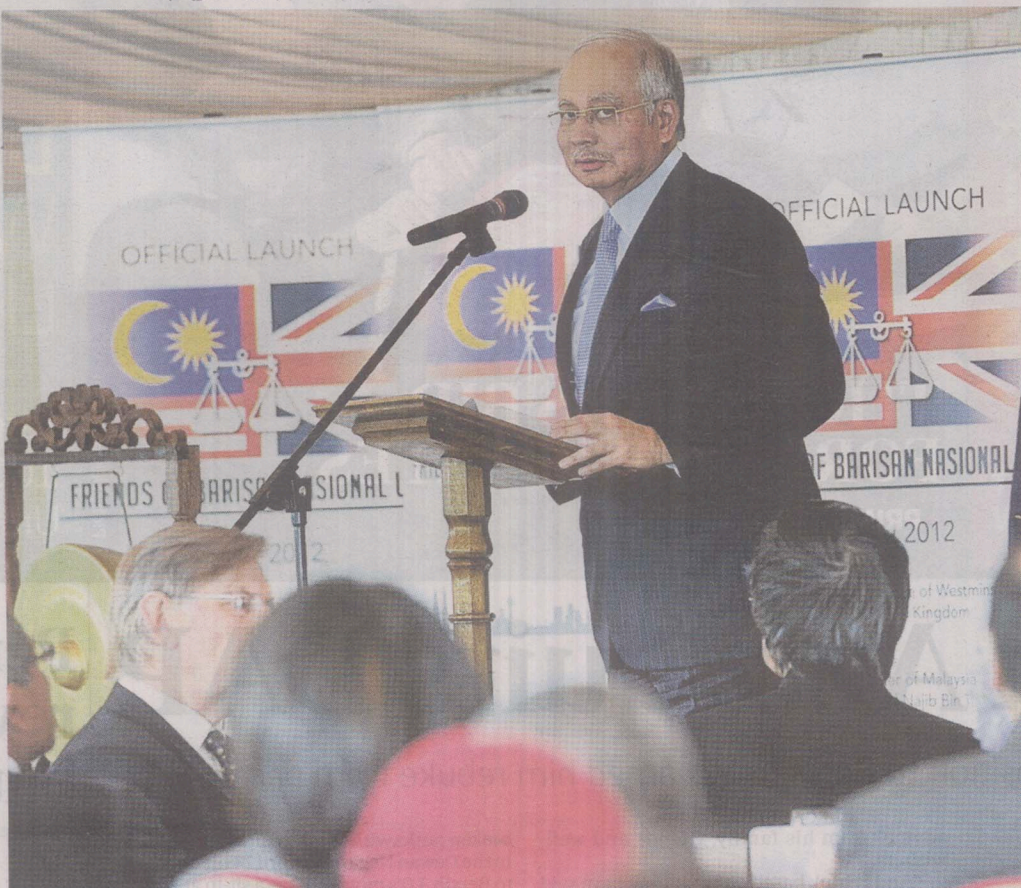
"So, I urge you, keep abreast of what is happening at home and be ready to step up and play your part. I have said before that the era of 'government knows best' is well and truly over.

"The most important job of government today is not just to listen, but to truly hear the people's voice... and that means yours as well."

The sad truth, said Najib, was that Malaysians overseas had felt ignored for far too long.

He hoped that FBNUK would help to not only promote closer links and ties with Britain, but also disseminate reliable, timely and accurate information to the Malaysian diaspora in the UK.

"It's good to know that Barisan Nasional has many friends in the UK," said Najib, adding, however that like all friendships, it needed



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak delivering his speech at the official launch of Friends of Barisan Nasional UK in London yesterday. Bernama pic

to be nurtured and developed.

Members of FBNUK include Malaysians in the UK and also friends of Malaysians in the UK, some of whom are prominent supporters of Malaysia, like Lord Howell of Guildford, Lord and Lady Sheikh, Lord Charles Powell and member of parliament Brian Binley.

"I would like to invite the Friends of BN in UK to be a part of the journey of success in Malaysia," said Najib, adding that they could help spread the true story about the actual situation in Malaysia.

Reflecting on the strong relation-

ship with Britain, Najib said: "Ever since the East India Company first set up its regional base in Penang more than 200 years ago, Malaysia's trade links with the UK have been strong — and they are getting stronger, with Prime Minister (David) Cameron's visit to our country last month putting an end, in his words, to the era of 'benign neglect'.

"The bonds of friendship, cooperation and compassion between Malaysia and Britain are surely a cause for celebration and in this diamond jubilee year of Her Majesty the Queen (Elizabeth II), there can be

no better moment to mark the ties, both big and small, that bind us and to renew them for our times. And it is certainly true that Britain stands to this day as a great friend to Malaysia."

He voiced his appreciation for the overwhelming support by the British people for Ashraf Haziq, the Malaysian student who was assaulted and robbed during the London riots.

"I would like to express my gratitude to everyone in Britain who reached out to this young Malaysian in his hour of need.

"This incident was proof, as if any were needed, that Britain and Malaysia are united in our values — but we are equally united in our commitment to uphold the rule of law."

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Datuk Seri Najib Razak