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NEWS

# PM: We have gained from Africa

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**SMART TIES:** Najib says Malaysia's influence in the continent has grown a great deal

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**M**ALAYSIA'S influence and reach in the African continent have grown tremendously over the years, thanks to the Smart Partnership Dialogue, the prime minister said yesterday.

This has benefited the country in the form of numerous opportunities for its companies and entrepreneurs.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak said these companies had achieved successes which may not be widely known in the country.

He cited as an example a Malaysian company in Kampala which imported furniture worth millions of ringgit annually from Malaysia for the Ugandan market.

"Petronas' ventures in Sudan are also a result of Malaysia's focus on Africa," he told Malaysian newsmen at a press conference at the Global Smart Partnership Dialogue 2013 at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre here yesterday.

"There is also Limkokwing Uni-

versity of Creative Technology, which has branch campuses in Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, with a new one proposed for Tanzania."

Earlier, Najib attended a dialogue session on "Leveraging Technology for Smart Growth in Socio-Economic Transformation" with leaders and delegates.

He told newsmen that he shared Malaysia's experience — its successes and weaknesses — in applying technology towards meeting its goals and aspirations.

"But each country must determine for itself the kind of measures it needs to implement because no one formula can be applied in its entirety in several nations."

The prime minister said he also emphasised the importance of having a science, technology and innovation policy.

"Each African nation must have this to set the direction for growth.

"Not only that, the formulation of policies must be based on empirical data, and this can be done properly only if technology is used to gather the information."

The gearing of human capital



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak arriving at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre yesterday. Bernama pic

and financial resources to scientific and innovative pursuits required strong political leadership, Najib added.

"If the leadership does not have the vision, there is little a nation can achieve."

Earlier, Najib had a bilateral

meeting with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The prime minister said Rajapaksa formally invited him to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka in November.

The Sri Lankan leader also ex-

pressed his hope that other countries would make a fair assessment of what was happening in Sri Lanka and not rush to judgment based on "unfounded allegations".

The Global Smart Partnership Dialogue, which ends tomorrow, is being attended by heads of state and government from Africa, as well as business leaders, scientists, academicians and students.

Najib is accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Najib also held a bilateral meetings with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre.

Yesterday, when opening the dialogue, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete spoke about the lack of development in African nations, and how this kept their people in poverty.

While science was anchored in the processes of many other countries, the same could not be said of African states.

He said technological advancements could solve a lot of the problems facing them, but the cost was beyond what the people and the governments could afford.

Najib said African nations were very keen to learn about Malaysia's economic transformation programmes.

He said this was the result of deliberations at the Putarajaya Smart Partnership Dialogue in 2011, adding that Botswana, too, was interested in the transformation agenda, in particular the steps that Malaysia was going to take beyond 2020.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala, who was also present, said he had conducted workshops for the entire Tanzanian cabinet.