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PM lauds quality of Parliament debates

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SPEAKER'S TASK VITAL:

Culture of open debate must be boosted, says Najib

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PARLIAMENT is an effective institution to formulate laws of the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, adding that he appreciated the quality of debates, as well as motions moved by members.

He said Parliament and the state legislative assemblies' Speakers were responsible for the effectiveness of the institutions and ensure that the laws passed were of the highest quality.

"While laws are introduced by the executive, the legislatures could also give their views and proposals and sometimes, the proposals are accepted and made into amendments to the bill for debate.

"I have never assumed Parliament as a rubber stamp," he said in his speech, when launching the two-day Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies Speakers' Conference yesterday.

He said Speakers were generally responsible for decorum to be maintained to ensure that debates produced the best outcome for the country, and parliamentary practices, like decorum and standing order were being fol-

lowed by its members.

"The main challenge faced by Speakers in fulfilling their duties is to manage prejudice, perception, and handling the political parties (from both sides).

"It is undeniable that the contributions from the honourable guests present today are crucial, especially in monitoring the flow of council meetings, although there were times when sessions were dragged on until late at night, like the recent debate in Dewan Rakyat which ended at 4.20am."

He added that the Speakers' conference was mainly a platform to convey and share parliamentary practices at both the Parliament and state legislative assembly levels and to strengthen the functions and status of the institutions.

While stressing that the culture of open debate should be further enhanced, Najib hoped that all speakers would benefit from the conference to exchange views and share experiences to improve the proceedings.

Najib also announced that he would table the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) in Dewan Rakyat on May 21.

He said the five-year development plan would be the final endeavour towards achieving a high-income nation status by 2020 and in improving the wellbeing of Malaysians.

"Malaysia is gearing towards becoming a High Income Advanced Economy nation by 2020 or earlier, Insya-Allah (God willing).

"I am grateful and proud because Parliament and state legislative as-

semblies have also played their roles to ensure a check-and-balance towards government programmes, including the Government Transformation Plan (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP), among others."

"Of late, our Parliament is seen as unique and interesting and had attracted public attention.

"The public is now more enthusiastic to follow the developments of the Dewan sitting that shape their lives and the future of the nation."

Furthermore, Najib said, the debate sessions in both Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara were aired 'live' through TV1 and was managed by the Communications and Multimedia Ministry.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia, in his speech earlier, said he had observed the high commitment shown by Members of Parliament in raising concerns and issues that were of public interest.

"Dewan Rakyat's role as a judicial institution and as a platform for a check-and-balance must always be upheld and brought to a more encouraging level.

"We hope that the Members of Parliament and assemblymen will make use of the institution responsibly and not just as one that passed bills to ensure it is a holistic check-and-balance stage."

He also announced that the 23rd Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth would be held from Jan 9 to Jan 14 next year at Magellan Sutura Resort in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.