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RM82m in grants for Indians

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'NOT LEFT BEHIND':
Community must be independent and compete with others, says PM

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THE government has approved RM82 million worth of grants under the Special Unit for Socioeconomic Development of the Indian Community (Sedic) programme to assist the community.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the assistance was given to ensure the country's development was inclusive, sustainable and fair to all.

"We want to make sure that all ethnic groups, big or small, can enjoy the country's development and do not feel as if they are left behind," he said at the Sedic grant presentation ceremony yesterday.

Najib called on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to play a bigger role in the effort, adding that the government had undertaken programmes for the Indian community in the past six years.

"This is nothing new (to help the Indian community). I chaired the cabinet committee on Indian community affairs in 2009 and even earlier than that, when I was the deputy prime minister.

"The programmes, which I may say were comprehensive and organised actively, have been carried out since 2009 and part of the efforts involved NGOs representing the Indian community.

"This is to ensure they (the NGOs) would also play their role together with the government to improve the



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** giving a book, 'My Hope', to **Thinesh Kumar** at the Special Unit for Socioeconomic Development of the Indian Community (Sedic) programme grant presentation ceremony in Putra World Trade Centre yesterday. Najib is flanked by **Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam** and Sedic director **Prof Datuk Dr N.S. Rajendran**. Pic by Yazit Razali

Indian community's socioeconomic status," he said.

Najib said the government would continue to provide assistance through several initiatives announced under the 2016 Budget, including a RM50 million allocation for Indian small and medium enterprises and greater funding for Tekun Nasional and Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia.

He called on the Indians to address structural problems in their community so that they could stand independently and compete with others.

"Datuk Seri Subra (MIC president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam) said the community's problems are chronic.

"I would interpret it as the Indian community is having structural, val-

ue, attitude and cultural problems that we have to think on how to address.

"Not only (by) giving projects, but the Indian community also needs a cultural or mindset change so that they would have the ability to compete, be independent and to move vigorously to achieve more meaningful success."

Earlier in his opening speech, Dr Subramaniam said the Indian community had "chronic" problems, which could be seen in the "imbalanced" support given to the government compared to the amount of aid the government had been giving to the community.

"Despite continuous aid that has been given to the Indian community since 2009, there is a disconnect in the support for

the government.

"In the history of Malaysia, I don't think there has been a prime minister that has shown so much concern for the Indian community as you (Najib) have.

"You have done it and there is evidence of it, but my greatest fear is that this might not continue if you are not there," he said, adding that the Indian community should realise this and not take things for granted.

At the event, Najib presented the first batch of 30 grants worth RM8,892,441 million to various NGOs. Among programmes that would be organised under Sedic are Strengthening the Minds of Youth, Creative Content, Anak Malaysia Registration and Hindu Pre-Marital seminar.