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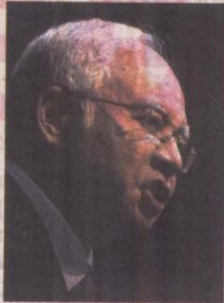
English proficiency
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unsatisfactory: PM

> M'sia must improve to be a knowledge-driven economy and to compete globally

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KUALA LUMPUR: The need to be proficient in English is important for Malaysia to develop as a knowledge-driven economy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak (pix) said yesterday.

Speaking at the Khazanah Megatrends Forum 2015 here, he said proficiency in English among Malaysians has yet to reach a satisfactory level and more effort should be made in this regard to ensure the nation can compete globally. He said the emphasis on


 teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in English is important to cultivate future talent and develop a sustainable innovative ecosystem that will thrive on a

global scale. "And I want this to be carried through the education system because this is key to our ability to compete, innovate and control the modern economy. We must be strong in STEM subjects," he said.

Najib also talked about international and domestic economic headwinds that have made the task of moving towards an innovation economy an "almost losing battle".

He said challenges such as the devaluing of the Chinese yuan and the declining commodity prices have also affected the ringgit.

"The government was able to stimulate growth after the 2008 global financial crisis via the RM7 billion and RM60 billion stimulus packages, but we now have a more limited public fiscal scope," he said.

"This limitation is due to our goal to reduce our fiscal deficit and our sovereign debt levels. Sometimes it is almost a losing battle when you become the prime minister," Najib said.