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# Najib unperturbed by criticism

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Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** receiving a souvenir from Malaysian Institute of Management chairman **Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther** (right) at the 26th Tunku Abdul Rahman Lecture Series in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are MIM president **Tun Haniff Omar** (second from left) and MIM vice-chairman **Datuk Ng Tleh Chuan**. Pic by **Khairull Azry Bidin**

**U**NPERTURBED by attacks from detractors, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak last night vowed to continue leading the nation as its democratically-elected leader.

He said it was unbecoming of some people to call for him to step down so that they could pursue their self-serving agendas.

"As prime minister, however, it is my responsibility to make the right decisions for all Malaysians. More than that, it is my duty. It is a sacred trust, and no one should attempt to interfere with or hijack that obligation to lead.

"For it is the people who elected me, and I am proud and humbled to bear that mandate, which is for the people to give or take away," said Najib, who was speaking at the 26th Tunku Abdul Rahman Lecture here yesterday.

Responding to critics, he said many had tried to undermine the benefits of government endeavours, particularly the Malaysia Development Bhd (IMDB). Taking a jab against former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his spate of attacks, Najib said he would not back down from serving the people.

"It has been stressed repeatedly that any wrongdoing at IMDB will be dealt with severely. There can hardly be a company that has ever been so

thoroughly investigated. We must await the results of the Auditor General's investigation.

"IMDB has also explained in detail, many times over, the progress of its rationalisation plan, which will significantly reduce its debt and make the most of its considerable assets, and the results will be plain to see in the future.

Najib said his administration had worked hard to better the people's lives despite challenges.

"From 2009 to last year, Malaysia's gross national income grew by 47.7 per cent. Approximately 1.8 million jobs have been created since the establishment of the Economic Transformation Programme in 2010.

"We have reduced the deficit for six years running, and in each of the last five years, total investments have reached new records.

"It has always been our priority to make sure that our growth is sustainable and equitable. Since 2009, the income of the bottom 40 per cent households has increased by a compound annual growth rate of 12 per cent, even higher than the national average of eight per cent."

Najib said, contrary to some claims, Malaysia had gone through many reforms to allow freedom of expression.

"Economic reforms have been matched by those in other areas. As well as the Internal Security Act and the Emergency Ordinances, we repealed the Banishment Act and the Restricted Residences Act.

"We passed the Peaceful Assembly Act, changed the law to allow students to participate in politics, and amended the Printing Presses and Publications Act. This was the great-

est expansion of civil liberties in Malaysia's history.

"Yet, some outsiders have attacked us for not taking care of the people's rights. And Dr Mahathir has said, somewhat outrageously, that 'democracy is dead' in Malaysia."

The prime minister said if anyone doubted that Malaysians were not at liberty to find fault with the government, they should spend a few moments browsing online.

"We are acutely aware of the criticism levelled at the government and we are listening. Unlike other countries in the developing world, however, no one will ever be arrested or prosecuted for the legitimate expression of their opinions."

However, Najib noted that freedom came with responsibility.

"People who are ill-informed, on the other hand, will tum to half-

truths and lies, and depend on unreliable sources who distort and sensationalise information. This is extremely dangerous.

"This is why my government intends to implement international standards to regulate the Internet and I specifically say regulate, not restrict, so that none should have to suffer being criminally defamed, and that the Internet does not become an ungoverned platform dominated by insults and untruths."

Najib paid tribute to Malaysia's past leaders, who were bold enough to take action regardless of whether it was popular, and they focused on what was urgent and necessary.

This, he said, was exemplified by his father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (second prime minister), who was known for his firm action and less talk.