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'More power to Sabah and Sarawak'

PM pledges to up funding and cautions against secession

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KUCHING: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has pledged more development funds and autonomy for Sarawak and Sabah but cautioned against secessionist talk.

At the launch of National Month at Padang Merdeka last night, Najib told the crowd not to heed those demanding that Sarawak secede from Malaysia.

"A small group apparently wants to bring Sarawak out of Malaysia. I agree with what Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said earlier; it defies logic. I agree with how he described it; that 'ifs just stupid talk,'" Najib said.

He pledged to give more power

back to the state governments, saying duplication in administration and resources had caused wastage.

The federal and state secretaries had already begun discussions to determine "Svhat form of empowerment that we can return to the states", he added.

On the launch of National Month, Najib said this was the first year that Aug 31 would be celebrated without reference to the number of years.

This, he explained, was because independence for peninsula was in 1957, but 1963 for the Malaysian states on Borneo.

A month-long national celebration would reduce the polemics on the different independence dates in the peninsula, Sarawak and



Guest of honour: Najib arriving to launch the month-long National Day celebration at Padang Merdeka in Kuching.

Sabah, he said.

Earlier, Adenan reiterated July 22 as Sarawak's independence day.

In his speech, he called on Sarawakians to reject secession.

"Autonomy, yes, more power to Sarawak, yes, but secession? No. We find safety, security and prosperity

in Malaysia."

Sarawak would continue to negotiate with the Federal Government to speed up development, he said, acknowledging that the pace of progress had not spread evenly in the nation.

Najib and Adenan attended

Kuching PBB's Hari Raya open house at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching later.