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Indians' continued rise assured

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LOFTIER HEIGHTS:
PM's vision to economically empower 'sons and daughters of the soil'

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THE government will continue to put in place initiatives to ensure the continued progress of the Malaysian Indian community.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib

Razak said it was the government's responsibility to make sure that the community was able to safeguard its language and culture while moving forward.

"They are the sons and daughters of this soil and we will ensure that they continue to progress and, at the same time, safeguard their language and culture," he said in his speech at the 9th International Conference-Seminar on Tamil Studies at the Dewan Tunku Canselor in Universiti Maiaya here yesterday.

He said the Indian community in Malaysia had contributed significantly to the progress of the country and progressed in tandem with the nation.

Najib said the socio-economic status of the Indian community had changed significantly over the years, especially after Merdeka.

"For example, Malaysian Indians make up 11.1 per cent of the professionals in the country; many in the legal profession are from the Indian community."

He added that the community had also given rise to many towering figures in the fields of education, business and sports.

"The progress and transformation of the Indian community is a continuous journey and there are many more milestones to be achieved."

Najib said the government, working under the tenets of IMalaysia, would see to it that the Malaysian Indian community continued to flourish in all sectors.

"We have created the Special Secretariat for the Empowerment of Indian Entrepreneurs (SEED) to provide Malaysian Indian entrepreneurs with access to financial

assistance as part of my vision of economic empowerment for the Indian community."

He said the government had also very recently created the Unit for Socio-Economic Development of Indian community under the Prime Minister's Department.

"The main aim of this unit is to manage, distribute and monitor the government's special allocation for the socio-economic development of the Indian community."

Najib also pointed out that the government had always promoted a multicultural and multilingual policy in Malaysia.

"We have continued to encourage the use of the mother tongue, especially in the education system, and to give all necessary assistance to the various ethnic groups to ensure that their (respective) lan-

guages are practised and preserved."

The prime minister also announced the government's approval for six new Tamil primary schools in the country.

"In April this year, a new Tamil school in Lunas, Kedah, will begin operations."

Najib said there were currently 523 Tamil primary schools in the country, while 2016 would mark 200 years since Tamil schools were established in the country.

"Students in Malaysia have the opportunity to learn Tamil from pre-school to tertiary level."

The government had also set up the Action Plan for Future of Tamil Schools under the Prime Minister's Department to ensure the comprehensive and sustainable growth of Tamil schools in Malaysia, he said.