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PM: Women fare better

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EMPOWERING: 'Their corporate positions will boost economy'

SYED UMAR ARIFF
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, at the launch of Pasarnita in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With them is Special Adviser to the Prime Minister for Women and Social Development Affairs Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil (left). Pic by Yazit Razali

THE inclusion of more women professionals, especially in the corporate world, will spur the country's economy and determine the success of organisations and companies.

In reiterating the importance of women in the corporate sector, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said research had shown companies with a considerable percentage of women professionals at the top performed better than those with hierarchies dominated by men.

"We need to move forward with the inclusion of more women as corporate leaders.

"Research has shown that companies with a fair percentage of women decision-makers perform admirably.

"More important is their involvement as decision-makers. We need a diverse business composition to propel our economy forward," Najib said yesterday in announcing the setting up of a marketplace by Pasarnita, an initiative to provide business platforms for women entrepreneurs.

Najib said efforts to rally more women to the corporate sector began last year, when he instructed Bursa Malaysia and the Securities Commission to increase its intake of women in its boards of directors.

In line with the recently unveiled 11th Malaysia Plan, Najib said the two companies also had to include

a "diversity index" on gender as a way to empower women as decision-makers.

"In the future, I want to increase the involvement of women in the corporate field, not only in Bursa Malaysia or the Securities Commission, to 30 per cent."

Najib, however, said such aims should not be perceived as a "threat" by companies, especially male-dominated ones.

"The aim to move more women up the ladder should not be construed as a threat.

"It is neither a social responsibility nor charity. In fact, it is good for business. That is 'smart' business," said Najib to cheers from a large number of women entrepreneurs present at the event.

Najib also urged more women to take part in business modules and platforms, including those online.

Present were Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister for Women and Social Development Affairs Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul

Jalil and Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansur.

On Pasarnita, Najib said a parking lot near Bukit Nenas in Ampang would be earmarked as a permanent venue for the commercial area designated for women entrepreneurs.

Later, Najib witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Pasarnita and Asean Retail Franchise Federation to assist women entrepreneurs involved in Pasarnita.