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PM's word to Sarawak folk

PROTECTING CULTURE:

Najib, Adenan in talks to grant more land titles to locals

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, cutting a cake at the Sarawak Dayak National Union's 59th anniversary dinner in Kuching yesterday. With them is Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem (fourth from left). Bernama pic

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has promised to reserve more native customary land rights for indigenous peoples in Sarawak to protect their heritage and culture.

In a gesture seen as a token of appreciation for the state's unending support for his leadership, Najib said he had been in talks with Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem to deliver more land titles to locals.

"I have discussed the matter with the chief minister. We must help them (Sarawak folk). I told him we must work together and deliver more native customary land rights to the people of Sarawak," Najib said at the Sarawak Dayak National Union's (SDNU) 59th anniversary dinner here last night.

Issues on native customary land rights have become protracted over the years. Among the problems are documentation and validity on claims of ownership, since the land is informally inherited through generations.

On another matter, Najib said he was proud to visit modern longhouses in Kapit earlier yesterday, adding that he hoped to see more such longhouses in the future.

"The ones I saw in Kapit were built with tiled roofs and cornish ceilings, with air-conditioning."

He pledged to do more for the

Dayak community, which he described as an integral cog for Sarawak and the country.

"We want SDNU, particularly, to be our ally in advancing Sarawak. We want the Dayak community to work in tandem with everyone towards the country's future."

Present were Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Adenan and SDNU president Tan Sri William Mawan Ikom.

In Petra Jaya earlier, the prime minister visited Kampung Samariang Batu residents and agreed to fund the construction of a new mosque, as well as the upgrading of the village's road and drainage system.

Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, who is also Petra Jaya member of parliament, said an estimated RM15 million was needed to build the Nurul Khair Mosque to

accommodate a large congregation.

"The prime minister has agreed to help. But, we need to prepare for him more details, including the budget, before an allocation can be announced," he said after a briefing on the proposed project.

In Kapit earlier, Najib expressed his appreciation towards the state's Dayak community for its undivided support for his leadership.

Addressing a crowd of more than 3,000 people at the Gawai Dayak NgiUng Tikai (rolling of the carpet) ceremony at the Bengau longhouse in Sungai Sut in Baleh constituency, Najib described the support as the community's "approval" of his leadership and ability to bring development to rural areas, including those in Sarawak.

"I am touched to see so many people holding placards saying

'Dayak Sokong Najib' (Dayak Support Najib). The phrase is catchy. I am touched. It inspires me and gives me new spirit (to know) that the Dayak community acknowledges my leadership.

"I know the community was not forced to pledge its support, as the endorsement came about after it evaluated me since I assumed the prime minister's post," said Najib, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, to applause from the crowd.

Present was state Housing and Tourism Minister Datuk Abang Johari Openg, on behalf of Adenan, and state Land Development Minister Tan Sri James Jemut Masing, who is also Baleh assemblyman.

Najib, who is also finance minister, pledged to continue improving the lot of rural folk, saying development initiatives for rural

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