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Najib looks at more autonomy for Sarawak

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KUCHING: The Prime Minister might have found his support base in Sarawak intact but the Chief Minister was not without demands.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak told a rally of more than 10,000 Sarawakians yesterday that what the state wants, he will consider.

"Whatever the Barisan state government asks for, I'll try to make it successful. I'll work on it," he said during the "Sarawak for Najib" rally at Stadium Perpaduan here.

"This morning over breakfast, we discussed how we can have devolution of power, meaning, if all this while a lot of power was held by departments in Putrajaya, then now is the time to let Sarawak make these decisions. If the state administration can do it, we'll let it," Najib said.

On the Pan Borneo Highway, approved at a cost of RM15bil, more components could be added, such as more underpasses and flyovers, to make a "super highway".

Najib also said that discussions over increasing oil and gas royalty were under way.

"On more royalty, we see first, we



Strong support:
Najib and Adenan waving at Barisan supporters during the 'Sarawak for Najib' rally at Stadium Perpaduan in Kuching.

negotiate properly. I'm not rejecting. I'm studying. If can, I definitely want to give it to Sarawak as part of a package," he said.

The Prime Minister and Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem spoke for about 20 minutes.

In pledging support for Najib, Adenan said Sarawak deserved an equal level of development compared to the peninsula, and spoke

up for state "autonomy" a number of times.

"Najib has a soft spot for Sarawak. All of us, we ask the Federal Government to recognise the autonomy of Sarawak. We are in discussions so that the power that is with the federal level is returned to Sarawak. There are certain things we can do better," he said.

"This 'is what we ask for so that

our autonomy is meaningful."

On oil royalty, Adenan said the request for more was reasonable.

"We are not asking for much. We are not asking for all sorts of things. I think all Sarawakians want the royalty to be increased. This is not a condition to support you, no, just asking, give a bit more," he said, adding that more funds were needed for rural development.