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# Gender diversity index for firms

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**NEW INITIATIVE:** It is part of govt policy to get more women into top posts, says PM

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**Datuk Seri Najib Razak** at the opening of the Asean Conference on Women in Politics in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are his wife, **Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor**, and Deputy Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi**. Pic by Abdullah Yusof

**T**HE Securities Commission has launched a new initiative requiring companies to include a gender diversity index in their annual reports, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

He said the index was introduced as part of the country's policy to raise the number of women in decision-making positions in the private and public sectors to 30 per cent by 2016.

"By next year, we will know, for each and every company, the composition of women among their board members, managerial (ranks), and employees.

"I think when you can measure success, and otherwise, we are moving in the right direction," he said when opening the Asean Conference on Women in Politics (Asean WIP KL2015).

He said the government had done its part by raising the number of women in the higher echelons of the civil service to 33 per cent, but more measures were needed to address gender disparity in politics and governance in the region as a whole.

Women, he said, made up just 18 per cent of the total number of parliamentarians and only 17 per cent of government ministers in Asia.

"With over two billion women in Asia today, that simply isn't good

enough. How can we call ourselves representative democracies if half of our populations are not adequately represented in our legislative houses?"

Najib stressed, however, that any changes to reduce gender disparity should start at home, given that women were still responsible for most childcare and household tasks, including in families where both parents worked.

"The sacred role of mothers aside, does that seem fair to you? It doesn't to me.

"If we are serious about having more equal representation for women in our legislatures, indeed, if we are serious about having a female prime minister of Malaysia one day, then the change must start

in the home — with every father, husband and son."

Najib said Malaysia had set up a Women's Advisory and Consultative Council to boost, monitor and formulate policies and legislation specific to women.

Other efforts include a career comeback programme for women returning to the workforce, plans to raise women's labour participation rate from 54 per cent to 59 per cent by 2020 and a national action plan for single mothers.

"Malaysia has a proud tradition of giving rise to strong women.

"It is this tradition that we hope to strengthen for the future, increasing the number of empowered female leaders we have in our midst today, and ensuring that all

women across our region have the same opportunities to succeed tomorrow," Najib said.

The prime-minister also lent his support for plans to set up a secretariat for women in politics, based in Kuala Lumpur, in response to a request from conference chair Wanita Barisan Nasional chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil for Asean WIP to be held annually.

"Malaysia is proud to support this channel and platform where women leaders can share their opinions and ideas towards further female representation in politics.

"Looking forward, we must create a level playing field, where women have the same opportu-

nities to succeed as their male counterparts. I believe my daughter should have the same opportunities I was granted, and indeed, that my son is granted.

"It is only when she, and all of our daughters, have these opportunities — that I will rest easy.

"For when they succeed, we all succeed," Najib said.

Present were the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.

The conference, held here for the first time, attracted some 3,500 participants as well as 125 delegates from 14 countries.