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More authority for Sarawak

State govt knows what is best for its people, says Najib

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SEMATAN: More decision-making powers will be given to the Sarawak government, said "Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The measures include giving directors of federal departments the power to decide on matters relating to the state without having to refer to Putrajaya.

"This is because they know better what is happening on the ground and what is best for the state," he said when launching the Telok Melano-Sematan stretch of the Pan Borneo Highway here yesterday.

The state government will also be given the authority to determine which projects, including infrastructure and rural development ones, should start first.

On the Pan Borneo Highway, Najib said it would be a game changer for Sarawak.

"It will be a catalyst for economic growth. New centres will spring up along the highway, opening up more job and business opportunities for the people," he said.

Najib reiterated that although the highway was funded by the Federal



Developing Sarawak: Najib and Adenan showing the milestone from Telok Melano to Sematan at the launch of the 33km-stretch in Sematan.

Government at a cost of RM18bil, its implementation would be done by Sarawak companies.

A contractor for the Telok Melano-Sematan stretch had been proposed by the Works Ministry and would be decided soon.

"Rest assured, it will be a Sarawakian contractor," he said.

Construction of the RM700mil Telok Melano-Sematan stretch will take 39 months and is scheduled to be completed in December 2018.

The single-carriageway stretch will connect Telok Melano village at the southern tip of Sarawak to the small coastal town of Sematan, about HOKm from Kuching.

The stretch will be environmentally friendly, preserving biodiversity in the nearby Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary and the Tanjung Datu National Park.

Najib also said that the Government would continue to ensure fair and equitable development throughout the country.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem welcomed the devolution of powers to the state.

"We want decisions involving Sarawak to be made in Kuching, not only in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

He also credited Najib with fulfilling his promise to build the highway, which he made in the Barisan manifesto in 2009.

Separately, in his Malaysia Day message, Najib urged Malaysians not to forget the historic date of Sept 16 when Sabah and Sarawak joined Malaysia.

He said the "marriage" and union under Jalur Gemilang was never an easy road. At that time, the nation faced various challenges, including those from outside the country.

However, Malaysia overcame the obstacles to become a prosperous nation "that has thrived on different cultures and traditions".