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Najib: Street rallies not the way to call for change

TAKING to the streets to call for a change of an elected government is not the way to do it, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak told a Malaysian gathering here.

"We do not want to go to the streets to topple the Government, which has the mandate to rule for five years and the time is not up yet," he said.

"You will have the chance to decide later; you must give the Government the chance to prove itself," he urged those present, making an obvious reference to the Bersih 4.0 rallies carried out from Aug 29 to 30 in Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching – and cities around the world, including New York – seeking to reform the electoral system for clean and fair elections.

Najib reminded those present that the chaos from the Arab Spring and the migrant issue in Europe today stemmed from changes which he described as "disorganised".

"It has to be managed change; it can't be brought about by people who like to go to the streets," he added.

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests and uprisings across the Middle East in early 2011 that brought down regimes.

The Prime Minister touched on various issues currently plaguing the country, including calls for secession in Sabah and Sarawak.

"Catalans were in favour of independence from Spain and Scotland almost voted to be independent (from the United Kingdom).

"We have a similar movement in Sabah and Sarawak but people must realise that our strength lies in being together, not divided," he told about 300 students and Malaysians who had been invited to meet the Prime Minister over high tea at the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to



On the right track: Najib briefing Malaysian students on the happenings in the country during the high tea gathering at the Permanent Mission of Malaysia. — LEANNE GOH/The Star

the United Nations.

He assured everyone that he and his team were working hard for the country to achieve high-income nation status by 2020 through transformation programmes so that everyone could lead a better life.

But there could be seemingly short-term pains in the process, he said, citing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as an example. Such bitter pills or "antibiotic" must be taken for recovery.

He said revenue from GST was necessary to make up for the sharp drop in revenue from the falling price of oil and commodities. And the revenue would be spent on

items that will benefit the *rakyat*.

"GST helps pay for your scholarships," he quipped.

An economy on a stronger footing – with more projects – meant more jobs for those graduating.

"I don't want to lose focus. Don't believe what you read in the portals and the blogs, which are allegations and hearsay; there are opinions that may or may not be right.

"What is important is that the Government ensures good governance continues," he said, citing the country's ranking at 12th out of 60 countries in the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2014, and Bloomberg's placing of Malaysia as one of

the top five emerging markets, among others.

Earlier, Najib thanked everyone for coming to meet him, especially the students who had come from Ohio, which is an eight-hour journey away. He spent time mingling and chatting with students over *satay*, *laksa Johor*, *teh tarik* and other Malaysian favourites.

He was joined by his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar and Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin.